
GCSE ENGLISH/ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Higher Tier

Unit 1 Understanding and producing non-fiction texts

Insert

The three sources that follow are:

- **Source 1:** an online article called, 'Why old age need not be a burden' by Nick Trigg
- **Source 2:** an article called, 'Old Age Pirouetter! A VERY sprightly 91 is Britain's oldest ballet dancer' by Sarah Duguid
- **Source 3:** 'Granny D', an extract from a non-fiction book by Doris Haddock.

**Please open the insert fully
to see all three sources**

Source 1



Why old age need not be a burden

By Nick Trigg

Meet Daphne Bernard. She is in her 90s, but remains fit and active, playing badminton and going to her local gym every week. Last year she did a 12,000ft tandem skydive for charity.

Ms Bernard is just one of a growing band of the 'old old' – or fourth generation as they have been dubbed. There are more than 1.5 million over-85s in the UK. By 2050 they will top 5 million, dramatically changing the demography of the country, according to forecasts.

This is important. As a House of Lords committee report has suggested, the gift of longer life could cause a 'series of crises' in the public service – not only in terms of health and social care, but for pensions, housing and employment.



But much of the projections made by this committee and other bodies that have looked at the issue of the ageing population assume old age automatically means an individual becomes a burden.

That is understandable. Research suggests that while people are living longer, they are not automatically living as long with good health. In the two decades since 1990, life expectancy has risen by 4.6%, but healthy life by only 3%. Today most over-85s have between three and six long-term conditions, including everything from heart disease and diabetes to dementia.

But there is growing evidence that with better planning – by both the state and the individual – some of this can be avoided.

If the elderly are given more support in the community, they stand more chance of remaining independent and out of hospital. In Torbay, for example, health and social care budgets have been merged, encouraging a more co-ordinated approach to caring for the elderly, resulting in a fall in hospital admissions.

A report published this week by Age UK makes a similar case. It points out that while old age does bring with it challenges, it does not necessarily need to spell a downward spiral to infirmity. The report said that the majority of people over the age of 85 actually rate their health and quality of life as good. But the key to this, it said, were two factors: remaining active and maintaining friendships.

The importance of living healthily is well rehearsed. But the role of socialising is often less acknowledged. In fact, Age UK goes as far as arguing it is just as important as the physical activity bit, as loneliness is a risk factor for both cognitive and physical decline.

'Older people need to be cared about, not just cared for,' says Michelle Mitchell, of Age UK. 'This means listening and responding to an individual's views and choices so that an all-important sense of dignity and identity can be maintained throughout a person's life.'

Source 2

Old Age Pirouetter! A VERY sprightly 91 is Britain's oldest ballet dancer

By Sarah Duguid



John Lowe is flying through the air on a home-made trapeze at his bungalow. His stockinged legs are straight out behind him, his lips clamped in concentration. As he lands, he grins from ear to ear, a naughty, impish grin, as if having an audience is just the thing he thrives on. At 91, he is surely Britain's oldest practising ballet dancer.

Aside from the trapeze, there is a ballet bar lining one wall and roller skates in the corner. There are also photographs of his four children and 11 grandchildren, a painting of his adored wife Catherine who died suddenly 25 years ago, and the kind of high-backed chair that people favour in their advancing years.

'I am a whiz at DIY,' says John, a long-retired theatre manager. 'I moved into this place when I was 80 and the first thing I did was lay a wooden floor and then I installed the ballet bar.'

Eleven years on and John has three ballet classes a week. In between, he practises every day at home.

'I can't go as high as the girls,' John says. He lands in a slightly shaky move and says, 'I'm going to do that again,' whipping himself up into the air and this time landing perfectly.

'Forty years ago, I was managing a theatre in Glastonbury. We had a ballet on and as I watched from the wings I was saying to myself, I wish I could do that. And now, all this time later, here I am. I realised that if you put your mind to it, you can do almost anything.'

Source 3

At the age of 90, Doris Haddock, nicknamed Granny D, completed a walk of 3,200 miles across America, and became a national hero. Here she is three months into her journey.

Granny D

To begin a day's walk in California's Mojave Desert is like stepping into a child's drawing: odd-shaped cacti interrupt a dot pattern of endlessly repeating grey bushes; the sky is crayoned a solid, royal blue with a brilliant sun; layers of purple hills extend in endless vistas to the next valley and the next again. There are no sounds but the scented breezes whishing lightly across the brittlebush and the occasional flinch of some tiny, prehistoric creature under dry sticks a few paces ahead.

After I had walked a hundred miles of the Mojave through pleasant days and bitter cold nights, the winds began to rise. Dust blew across the highway and whipped around, more than once sending me staggering. It grabbed my straw hat repeatedly and sent it wheeling. It was my late friend Elizabeth's poor old garden hat, and it was not to last much longer – nor were my bones, I thought.

But old age is no shame in the desert: I saw no creature less wrinkled than myself.

So I walked and remembered my late husband, Jim, who had died six years earlier, though the open place that he left in my heart was still fresh. And I walked and remembered my best friend, Elizabeth, who had died just the year before after a long and difficult illness. I replayed over and over our times together as I trudged along. If my eyes were moist when I thought about the long days and nights of their deaths, the desert winds would dry them. I had been quite depressed, and this was finally my chance to walk out my memories and my grief. The landscape was right for it.

The idea of walking across the United States at my age seemed a less than perfect idea. I was foolish. The country is too big for an old woman with a bad back and arthritis and parched lips and a splintered hat. These were not so much my own thoughts but doubts planted in me by others. I was trying to resist them but the harshness of the desert was eroding my own propped-up notion of my abilities. I would remind myself that I had endlessly tramped the mountains of New Hampshire as a young woman and I was still strong enough to cross-country ski and hike with a heavy pack. Anyway, it would be better to die out here than at home in my old chair – this I repeated to myself a thousand times. So many people, even in my own family, had said I wouldn't get fifty miles. I would just think of that and let myself get a little angry. That would give me a boost.

Approaching the hills along the Colorado River, the mountains of Arizona visible through the dust storm ahead, I realised that I had indeed crossed all of California. That was something. And Sunday would be my eighty-ninth birthday – if I lived to see the end of this blowing dust and sand.

END OF SOURCES

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**Open out this page to see
Source 2 and Source 3**

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