Crabbed Age and Youth (Poem by William Shakespeare)

About the poem

A. Read to understand
1. Complete the table by using the phrases given in the box to describe youth and old age, as the poet describes them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>filled with delight</th>
<th>like winter</th>
<th>lacks strength</th>
<th>like summer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>filled with worries</td>
<td>takes risks</td>
<td>becomes careful</td>
<td>highly active</td>
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<th>Youth</th>
<th>Old age</th>
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2. Find lines from the poem that would best fit the following descriptions.
   a) The poet compares old age to the time when all earth looks bleak and barren.
      Age like winter bare

   b) The poet clearly expresses his love for youth.
      Youth, I do adore thee

   c) The poet says that old people are physically unfit.
      Age is weak and cold

   d) The poet says that young people are carefree.
      Youth is wild

3. Answer the following questions.
   a) ‘Youth is full of sport, Age’s breath is short’
      Explain this line with the help of an example.
      Ans. Youth is the time of life when one is young, and often means the time between childhood and adulthood (maturity). During this stage we are highly active and sporty. Whereas in old age we cannot even breath
properly. This is because old age is a period of decline and decline comes partly from physical and partly from psychological factors.

**Example:**
Young people are capable of doing various adventurous activities such as mountaineering, diving, skating etc. whereas old people prefer to do work which does not require much of physical activity.

b) In the line ‘Age I do defy thee’, the poet is
   i. asking young people to break free from the bonds of old people.
   ii. challenging old age to deny what he has said about it.
   iii. expressing his wish to remain young forever.

c) In the second-last line of the poem, the ‘shepherd’ probably refers to
   i. god.  ii. death  iii. a man grazing his sheep

**B. Discuss**

1. The poet says ‘Age and Youth cannot live together’. Do you agree with this idea? Do you think the young generation can learn things from the older generation and vice versa? Discuss in class.

   Ans. All generations have their own interesting qualities and contributions to the world. Old people teach younger generation key skills for living their lives successfully. However, not only the older generations have assets to teach the young, but the younger generations have things to teach the older generations too such as new technology.

2. Have you heard of these famous personalities? All of them are achievers and are still active in their respective fields. Do you think these individuals would agree with the poet’s portrayal of old age as something to be abhorred? Discuss in class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mahasweta Devi (born: 1926)</td>
<td>social activist and Bengali writer; winner of the Jnanpith Award and the Padma Vibhushan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.S Naipaul (born: 1932)</td>
<td>English writer; winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amartya Sen (born: 1933)</td>
<td>economist; winner of the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences and the Bharat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ratna

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Azim Premji (born: 1945)</th>
<th>chairman of Wipro Limited; winner of the Padma Vibhushan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indra Nooyi (born: 1955)</td>
<td>chairman and CEO of PepsiCo; winner of the Padma Bhushan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ans. No, I don’t think these individuals would agree with the poet’s portrayal of old age as something to be abhorred because growing old is part of life. One can remain active and excel in any field if one maintains a healthy lifestyle.

C. Read to appreciate
You know that youth and old age are abstract nouns or ideas. Yet, the poet refers to them as if they were living beings; for example, ‘Youth is nimble, Age is lame’.
Such representation of abstract ideas as a person or creature is called personification.

Personify the given words by using words that describe some action, feeling, or physical feature that you would normally associate with living beings. The first one is done as an example.
1. wind: The wind ran along the field, whispering into the ears of the flowers.
2. sky: The sky wept tears of joy.
3. rain: The heavy rain smashed itself down to the ground.
4. sun: The Sun smiled at us.