

NICEKit

#3

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The Truth about Old People

Elina Ellis
(Two Hoots, 2020)

NICEKit Summary

This NICEKit accompanies the picturebook *The Truth About Old People* by Elina Ellis and enables children to explore Focal Field 1: socially responsible behaviour when interacting with others, and Focal Field 3: a sense of belonging and knowing about or respecting one's own, others' and heritage cultures.

At the outset, the activities engage children's curiosity about the story context and invite them to explore peritextual features of the picturebook, including

the front cover, endpapers and back cover. These visual cues support children in making predictions about the characters and storyline and provide a meaningful purpose for listening during the read-aloud. After reading aloud, the activities encourage children to respond personally to the story, reflect on its key message and share their opinions. The NICEKit culminates in a Taking Action activity in which children prepare a display celebrating the lives, experiences and contributions of older people in their communities.



Target Learner

- » Ages 8 - 12 years old



ICE Focal Fields

- » 1: Socially responsible behaviour and interaction with others
- » 3: Sense of belonging and knowing about or respecting one's own, others', and or heritage cultures

NICE Outcomes

By the end of the NICEKit task and activity cycles, children will have opportunities to:

- » relate to and empathise with others
- » treat others with fairness, mutual respect and trust;
- » become aware of and question certain values;
- » challenge stereotypes related to age;
- » consider issues from multiple perspectives;
- » recognise how people are interdependent and interconnected;
- » contribute positively to their classroom, school, neighbourhood and wider community;
- » recognise that everyone has a responsibility to help make a positive difference in the world.

Cross-Curricular Outcomes

By the end of the NICEKit task and activity cycles, children will have opportunities to:

- » consider ageing from multiple perspectives, including their own experiences and those of older people they know;
- » develop emotional literacy by relating to and empathising with others, and by identifying and expressing a range of emotions;
- » challenge preconceptions and stereotypes about older people by comparing verbal stereotypes with visual evidence in the picturebook;

- » recognise the diversity of older people's lives, interests and abilities, rather than viewing older people as a single group;
- » contribute positively to their school community by collaboratively creating and sharing a display that celebrates older people's lives and experiences.

Language and Skills Outcomes

By the end of the NICEKit task and activity cycles, children will have opportunities to:

Grammar & Lexis

- » use lexical sets and chunks to talk about themselves and others (e.g. names, family members);
- » understand and use lexical chunks to talk about older people;
- » understand and use adjectives to describe characters;
- » understand and use verbs to describe what people can and cannot do.

Reading

- » predict what happens in the picturebook based on peritextual features, such as the title, front cover and blurb;
- » show global understanding during the first read-aloud by responding to questions;
- » show detailed understanding during the second read-aloud by giving more extended responses to questions.

Listening

- » show understanding by following instructions;
- » show understanding by responding to questions during the read-aloud and related activities;
- » identify key vocabulary during the read-aloud.

Speaking

- » brainstorm and share ideas with peers;
- » respond to questions during read-alouds;
- » talk about differences and similarities between their grandparents or other older people they know.

Writing

- » write words and short, supported sentences about what older people liked doing in the past and what they like doing now
- » express their feelings and ideas about older people, including their grandparents.

Preparation and materials

For the NICEKit lesson(s), you need:

- » a copy of the picturebook
- » audio-visual equipment
- » large paper or card for whole-class displays
- » sticky notes and mini whiteboards
- » pens, pencils, coloured pencils or crayons
- » prepared record sheets (e.g., reflection, interviews, timelines)
- » flashcards or images showing different activities and emotions
- » photographs of older people (e.g., famous people, historical figures), if used
- » access to a projector or interactive whiteboard, where available
- » materials for a class or school display (e.g., posters, photos, label)
- » *Reflect and Review* handout (Photocopiable A)
- » *Head-Heart-Hands* handout (Photocopiable B)

Assumptions and Prior Knowledge

Intercultural Citizenship Education

- » Children are aware that there are similarities and differences in how older people look.
- » Children can recognise how the illustrations and settings in the picturebook show what older people can and cannot do.

Language and Skills

- » Children are familiar with picturebooks and can use visual and textual clues to infer the story's content and identify the characters.
- » Children can express simple opinions in English in response to the story's setting, characters, plot and themes.
- » Children can recognise and use simple adjectives to describe their grandparents or other older people.
- » Children can understand meaning through visual input but may respond in their own language(s); where appropriate, the teacher can mediate and model key ideas in English.





Language toolbox

By the end of the NICEKit task and activity cycles, children will have opportunities to use some or all of the following language, according to their age and the curriculum

Describing people

» **Adjectives to describe people:** old, wrinkly, funny, slow, clumsy, bendy, quiet, romantic, adventurous, amazing

» **Describing appearance:** *I am ... / They are ... (tall, short, old, young); I have got ... / They have got ... (glasses, freckles, dark hair, grey hair)*

Talking about activities and abilities

» **Activities:** dancing, running, playing computer games, reading, playing football, playing board games, cooking, baking, teaching, travelling

» **Abilities:** *I can ... / They can ...; I can't ... / They can't ...*

Expressing opinions and feelings

I think it's a ... story because ...; I feel ... (happy, surprised, sad, interested; In my opinion, ...

Talking about likes and preferences

I like ... / I don't like ...; They like ... / They don't like ...; My grandparents like ...

Responding to others' ideas

I agree because ...; I don't agree because ...; I think something different because ...; I agree with ____, but ...; I changed my mind because

Talking about ideas and stereotypes

Some people think older people are ...; People often say that old people ...; This is not always true; This idea is not fair; This book shows that ...

Asking questions

Children may ask questions in their own language(s); key questions can be modelled in English. *Where were you born?; When were you born?; What was your job?; What can you do well?; Do you speak another language?; What was your favourite pastime when you were young?; What do you like doing now?; What is the most amazing thing you have done in your life?*

Reporting information

[name] was born in ...; [name] was a ...; [name] can ...; [name] can speak ...; When [name] was young, he/she liked ...; Now, he/she enjoys ... ♦

Picturebook summary

**Story**

In *The Truth About Old People*, a young narrator shares common stereotypes about grandparents, describing them as dull, slow and old-fashioned. However, the illustrations tell a very different story. Although the grandparents are described as having “wrinkled skin, sparse hair and quirky dentures”, they clearly defy these stereotypes through their actions. Far from being “boring”, “tired” or “stiff”, they enjoy exciting roller-coaster rides, go skating at the roller rink, practise yoga, play in a lively jazz band, dance together and go stargazing at night with their grandchild.

While the child’s words often highlight negative and unflattering ideas about ageing, the humorous illustrations consistently contradict these claims. For example, when the narrator suggests that grandparents are afraid of new experiences, the illustration shows them confidently using modern technology. When the text states that grandparents do not dance or enjoy romance, the pictures show energetic dancing and affectionate moments between the grandparents. Through this contrast between words and images, the picturebook invites children to question stereotypes and rethink what life can be like for older people.

Beyond Words

The illustrations in *The Truth About Old People* play a central role in conveying meaning. While the verbal text presents a series of negative stereotypes about older people, the images consistently challenge these ideas by showing the grandparents as active, confident and joyful. This contrast between words and pictures creates humour and invites children to question whether what is said always reflects reality.

The lively illustrations, rich use of colour and varied perspectives capture children’s attention and support their engagement with the story. The playful use of different fonts, sizes and colours in the text further

emphasises the irony between what is written and what is shown. Together, the visual and verbal elements encourage children to reflect on preconceived ideas about ageing and to develop a more positive and respectful view of older people.

The endpapers feature detailed pen-and-ink illustrations of a cluttered garage filled with travel and sports objects. These images mark the beginning and end of the visual narrative and offer children an engaging opportunity to notice details and spot differences.

Story sharing

Stage 1: Setting the Story Context

Choose one of these context setting activities according to class interests, resources and time

Activity 1: Word association warm-up

- » Say the words 'old people' and ask the children to say the first words or ideas that come to mind.
- » Give each child a Post-it note and ask them to write or draw one idea.
- » Ask the children to stick their Post-it notes onto a large piece of paper or card.
- » Invite the children to look at the ideas together and ask: *Where do these ideas come from?*
- » Explain that the picturebook offers a humorous and different way of looking at older people.
- » Use the children's language(s) where necessary and mediate ideas in English.

OR

Activity 2: Talking about older people in our lives

- » Ask the children to think about their grandparents or other older people in their lives.
- » Use a think-pair-share activity. Ask the children to talk to a partner about these questions:
 - Who is an older person in your life?
 - What do you do together?
 - How do you feel when you are with them?
- » Take brief whole-class feedback. Recast the children's ideas into English where needed.
- » Show flashcards of people doing different activities (e.g. dancing, singing, riding a bike, playing computer games, reading, cooking).
- » Elicit or pre-teach the vocabulary by matching word cards to the images.
- » Ask the children to decide whether these activities are things they do (or could do) with older people. Encourage discussion.

- » Ask each child to choose one activity and complete the sentence orally first:

When I am with my grandfather / grandmother / grandparents, I ...

- » Finally, ask the children to write the sentence on a poster or in their notebook.
(e.g. *When I am with my grandparents, I play cards. / ... I go for walks.*)

STAGE 2: Before reading aloud

Choose from these peritextual features to explore with the children – ideally, explore them all. Children may respond in their own language(s); where appropriate, rephrase or model their responses in English.

- » Hold up the picturebook so the children can clearly see the peritextual features.
- » Carry out the peritextual pondering activities either as a whole class or using a think-pair-share strategy.

Peritextual ponderings 1: The covers

The front cover (at the beginning of the read-aloud)

- » Show the front cover and ask the children the following questions. Make notes of their predictions on the board. *Who can you see in this picture? What are they doing? Do they look happy? How can you tell? What do you think the word 'truth' means in the context of this book?*

The back cover (if you have the edition with the child and grandparents dancing)

- » Show the back cover and ask the children: *Where are they? Why do you think they are dancing? How do you think they feel? What do you think the older people in this story will be doing?*
- » Invite the children to compare their ideas with the predictions made from the front cover.

Peritextual ponderings 2: The endpapers

The front endpapers (at the beginning of the read-aloud)

- » Show the front endpapers and ask the children to look closely.
- » Elicit and name some of the objects they can see (e.g., books, a bike, a parrot, masks).
- » If needed, project the endpapers so that all children can see the details clearly.

The back endpapers (at the end of the read-aloud)

- » Show the back endpapers and react with surprise.»
- » Look back at the front endpapers and ask: *How are they different?*
- » Invite the children to find and describe the differences between the front and back endpapers.
- » If possible, show copies of the endpapers on a screen or presentation to highlight the differences the children notice.
- » Use the children's language(s) where necessary and mediate ideas in English.

Peritextual ponderings 3: The dedication

- » Read the dedication aloud.
- » Clarify the meaning using the children's own language(s), if needed.
- » Ask the children to talk in pairs: *Which adjectives would you use to describe your daddy / your mummy?*
- » Take brief feedback and collect adjectives on the board.



Stage 3: While reading aloud

The first read-aloud

Use your usual picturebook-sharing routine to set up the first read-aloud.

- » Make sure all children can clearly see the picturebook and that you can make eye contact with them.
- » Refer back to the children's predictions from Stages 1 and 2 to give them a clear reason to listen and respond as you read aloud.
- » Pause at key moments to ask brief questions about the illustrations and to draw attention to the contrast between the words and the pictures.
- » When the illustrations contradict the verbal text, pause and say *"It's not true"* to highlight this contrast
- » At the end of the first read-aloud, show the back endpapers and the back cover (using a large screen, if possible) and briefly discuss what the children notice.

The second read-aloud

- » Read the picturebook aloud again and encourage the children to look more closely at the illustrations.
- » Invite them to think about the messages in the story and how the words and pictures work together.
- » While reading, pause at selected openings and use the following prompts to guide discussion.

Opening 2: Say, *In this picturebook, the words say one thing, but the pictures say something else. What do you notice that is different? Who agrees? Who sees something different? Follow up with What makes you think that? Show us in the picture.*

Openings 3 to 10: Ask some of these questions, *The words say older people are [boring / slow / not adventurous]. Do the pictures agree or disagree? Follow up with What makes you think that? Show us in the picture.*

Openings 3 to 10: Ask some of these questions, *Imagine you are the grandchild in this picture. What are you thinking right now? Would everyone think the same thing? Who thinks the child feels surprised? Who thinks happy? Why?*

Openings 11–12: Invite the children to reflect on the message the author wants to share. Ask questions such as: *What do you think the author wants us to realise? Why is it important not to judge someone just because they are older? Which adjectives would you now use to describe older people after reading the picturebook?*

Reflect and review

Use one of the following activities to help the children reflect on and review the story. Use the children's language(s) where necessary and mediate ideas in English.

Activity 1: Then and now

- » Ask the children to think back to the words they wrote at the beginning about old people.
- » Which ideas would you keep? Which ideas would you change?
- » Help the children visualize this by drawing a line on the board or on paper with two columns:
 - Before the story
 - After the story
- » Ask the children to complete one or both sentences (or draw):
 - Before the story, I thought older people were ...
 - After the story, I think older people are ...
- » Invite children to share one idea with a partner or with the class.

OR

Activity 2: Agree or disagree?

- » Read out simple statements and ask children to show:
 - » thumbs up = *I agree*
 - » thumbs down = *I don't agree*

Examples:

- » Older people are boring.
- » Older people like new experiences.
- » Older people can do fun and exciting things.
- » Ask volunteers to explain their choice:
 - *I agree because ...*
 - *I don't agree because ...*

Activity 3: One word, one picture

- » Ask the children to choose one word to describe older people after reading the book.
- » Ask them to draw a small picture to match their word.
- » Create a class display titled 'What we think about older people now'

Stage 4: After reading aloud

Choose an activity according to class interests, resources and time.

Activity 1: Then and now

- » Show the children photographs of well-known people (e.g. famous people, historical figures, athletes) when they were young and when they were older.
- » Ask the children to guess what these people did when they were younger and what they still do now (e.g. running marathons, acting, climbing mountains, training teams, playing football).
- » Discuss the children's ideas and highlight that older people can have active, interesting and fulfilling lives, as shown in the picturebook.

Extension (home or community link):

- » Ask the children to interview their grandparents or other older people they know
- » Suggested questions: *What did you like doing when you were younger? What do you like doing now?*

Story sharing (Stage 4)

» Children may carry out the interview in their own language(s).

» Invite them to share one interesting thing they learned in the next lesson.

Where appropriate, rephrase or model their discoveries in English.

OR...

Activity 2: Super older people

» Ask each child to think of one older person they know (for example, a grandparent, a neighbour, or another older family member)

» Give each child a simple outline of a person.

» Explain that they are going to create a “super” version of this older person.

» Ask the children to draw abilities, hobbies or skills that they think this person has or enjoys (e.g., reading books, playing football, playing cards, singing, dancing, watching TV, cooking, teaching, running, playing board games, baking).

» Encourage the children to include positive or surprising ideas.

» Ask the children to share their drawings with a partner or small group and explain who the person is and what makes them special.

OR

Activity 3: When I am older

» Ask the children to imagine themselves as older adults.

» Give them a moment to think quietly. Children may think and talk in their own language(s).

» Ask the children to talk to a partner about the question:

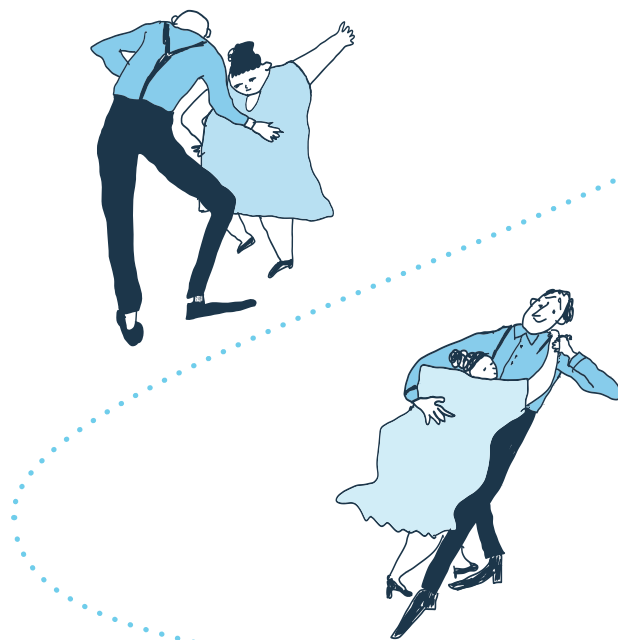
» *What would you like to do when you are older?*

» Invite a few children to share their ideas with the class. Where appropriate, rephrase or model their responses in English.

» Ask the children to make a list or draw pictures of activities they would like to do when they are older (e.g. travelling, learning new skills, helping others, spending time with family, playing sports, making music).

» Encourage children to label their drawings or lists in English, with support as needed.

» Discuss together how growing older can bring new opportunities, experiences and adventures, rather than only limitations. Where appropriate, rephrase or model their responses in English.



Reflect and review

Use the following prompts and activities to help the children reflect on their learning. Children may use their own language(s) where necessary; where appropriate, rephrase or model responses in English..

Use the 'The Truth About Old People and Me!' Record Sheet (see Photocopiable A).

1. What did I do?

- » Help the children recall the activities they did during *The Truth About Old People*.
- » Play the 'Grandma Says' game to revisit key ideas from the story and activities.
- » Say sentences such as:
 - *Grandma says old people can dance.*
 - *Grandma says old people can touch their toes.*
 - *Grandma says old people can kiss.*
 - *Grandma says old people are always tired / sleepy / angry.*
- » Ask the children to stand up if the sentence is true and remain seated if it is false.
- » Briefly discuss some of the responses together.

2. What did I learn?

Use a think–pair–share activity to help the children reflect on three things they learned.

- » After sharing as a whole class, ask the children to write or draw their ideas on *The Truth About Old People* Record Sheet.

3. How did I learn?

- » Using the prompts on the record sheet, help the children reflect on how they learned (e.g., by listening to the story, looking at the pictures, talking with others, playing games).
- » Children may discuss their ideas in their own language(s) before sharing.



4. How well did I do?

- » Help the children assess their participation and learning during *The Truth About Old People* activities.
- » Encourage them to think about effort, participation and cooperation.
- » They can circle the number of boys on a scooter.



5. What do I need to do next to improve my learning?

- » Brainstorm ideas about how the children can do better (e.g., Listen more carefully; Ask someone to help me memorise the new words)
- » Have them finish the sentence 'To do better in English, I can ...' with an idea or a drawing

Provide a place for the children to keep this record sheet to refer to later



Taking Action Cycle

eTwinning activities and beyond the book activities

The children complete this activity cycle on eTwinning (or a similar virtual exchange platform). If your school does not have access to eTwinning, the children can still go beyond the book using the activities to take action in their schools and/or communities.

Do some getting to know you and icebreaking activities for the groups of children when they first collaborate virtually.

Amazing Older People

Activity 1: Discover

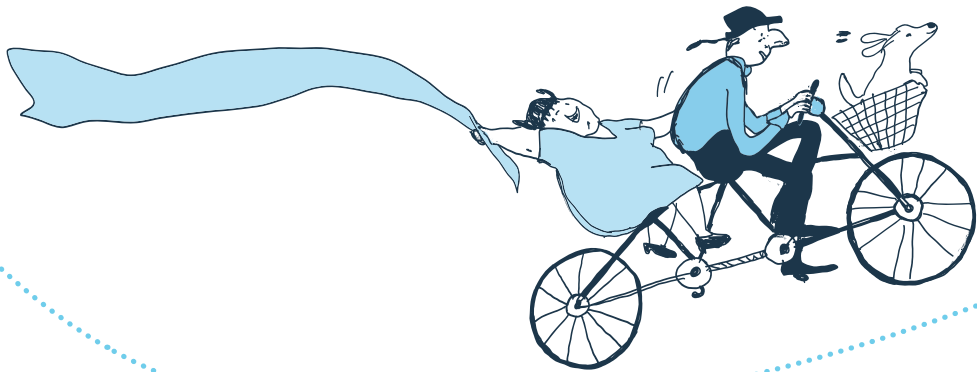
- » Ask the children:
 - *Who is the oldest person in your family?*
- » Write the children's ideas on the board or on sticky notes.
- » Ask the children to think about what makes this person amazing. For example:
 - Have they done something special or difficult?
 - Do they have interesting hobbies or skills?
 - Do you know anything about their childhood?
- » Collect and display the children's ideas.
- » Ask the children what kinds of questions they could ask older people to learn more about their lives.
- » Brainstorm together:
 - who they would like to ask, and
 - how they could collect the information.
- » Discuss different ways of gathering information, for example:
 - asking for photographs and short descriptions,
 - recording a short interview in the children's own language(s),
 - researching information online if the person is well known.

Activity 2: Share

- » Ask the children to introduce themselves to the other participants in the project.
This can be done through an online meeting or by sharing posts on a platform such as eTwinning.
- » Invite the children to share:
 1. who they will collect information from;
 2. how they will collect the information;
 3. how they plan to share what they learn with the school community.

Example task:

- » Create an ID card for an older person (a family member or a well-known person).
- » The interview questions may be asked in the children's own language(s).
- » Suggested questions:
 - Where were you born?
 - When were you born?
 - What was your job?
 - What can you do well? Do you speak another language?
 - What is your favourite pastime? What do you like doing now?
 - What is the most amazing thing you have done in your life?



Activity 3: Co-Create

- » Create a simple **to-do list** together.
- » Plan a **timeline** for completing the project tasks.
- » Decide who will be responsible for different parts of the work.

Activity 4: Take Action

- » Put the plan into action.
- » Using the information collected, create a timeline with photographs titled “**Amazing Older People: Now and Then**”.
- » Display the timeline in the school entrance or another shared space, including information in English and the children’s own language(s).
- » Encourage families, friends and members of the community to visit the display.
- » Collect feedback from visitors (e.g. comments, short messages).
- » Take photographs of the children interacting with the community and presenting their work.
- » Ask the children to share and record comments they hear from visitors.

Activity 5: Share

- » Share evidence of the project and the taking action activities during an online meeting or on a shared platform such as eTwinning.
- » Encourage the children to reflect on and share:
 - what they learned about older people, and
 - why older people can be considered amazing.

Activity 6: Review

Use one of the following activities to help the children reflect on their learning. Children may use their own language(s).

Review A: What did we learn about older people?

- » Ask the children to think about the project and the people they learned about.
- » Use a think–pair–share activity with the following prompts:
 - *One thing I learned about older people is ...*
 - *Something that surprised me was ...*
- » Invite children to share one idea with the class.
- » Record key words or ideas on the board.

OR

Review B: Our action and its impact

» Ask the children to think about the display and the feedback they received.

Discuss:

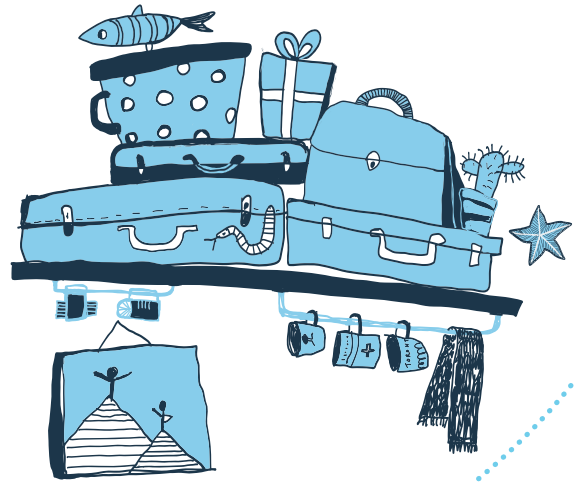
- *Who saw our work?*
- *What did people say or feel?*
- » Ask the children to complete the sentence:
- *Our project helped other people to ...*

OR

Review C: How did we work together?

» Ask the children to reflect on how they worked during the project:

- listening to others
- sharing ideas
- planning together
- asking questions
- » Ask them to complete the sentence:
- *When we worked together, I was good at ...*
- *Next time, I can try to ...*



End-of-kit

Reflective Reviewing

Head-Heart-Hands

- » Use the Head-Heart-Hands Record Sheet (see Photocopiable B).
- » The children need to complete the sentences with nouns for the head, adjectives for the heart and verbs for the hands.
- » Elicit ideas first, then ask the children to complete the sentences. If they want, they can draw their ideas too.
- » Provide a place for the children to keep a record of this activity to refer to later.



NICEPELL is an extension of the ICEPELL Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project (see icepell.eu) and aims to support practitioners in Portugal to confidently integrate intercultural citizenship education into English as a foreign language lessons and library sessions with children aged 5 to 12 years using picturebooks.

NICEPELL was a professional development course which began as a week-long, face-to-face workshop in Lisbon and continued as virtual collaboration with mentorship. It was coordinated and funded by APPIforma, the training center of APPI - Associação Portuguesa de Professores de Inglês in collaboration with CETAPS – Centre for English, Translation and Anglo Portuguese Studies, at Nova University of Lisbon. Teachers from geographically distant schools in Portugal took part in the course, developed and trialled a NICEKit and set up virtual exchange projects between their classes of students (aged 8 to 12 years old).

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My *The Truth About Old People and Me* Record Sheet

Let's reflect and review!



Name:

Date:

1. What did I learn?

Write or draw three things that you learned in the '*The Truth About Old People and Me!*' activities:

2. How did I learn? Finish the sentences to explain how you learned or draw a picture to show what helped you learn about amazing older people.

a) I learned about amazing older people by:

.....

b) I learned about amazing older people by:.....

.....

3. How well did I do? Colour the child on the scooter to show how well you did.



I did very well during the lessons!



I did well during the lessons!



I need to work harder during lessons!

4. What actions do I need to take with my friends?

Talk to your group and decide on your top action, then finish the sentence.

We need to

My Head - Heart - Hands reflection



During *The Truth About Old People*, I learnt:

One thing I can do to challenge unfair ideas about older people is ...

Learning about older people made me feel ...

My name is: