

IS AGE JUST A NUMBER?

The screen of Tom's phone suddenly lit up. A new number.

3534556677: Hello! I thought I'd test this by writing to you, before your birthday.

Tom: Who is this?

3534556677: It's your grandmother!

Tom: Gran? You've finally started using your smartphone? Wow!

Gran: Don't be cheeky, young man! I know it's taken me ages, but I got there in the end. You can teach an old dog new tricks, and I can use a smartphone perfectly well even if I'm 75. Anyway, what about your birthday? Eighteen already! All those years passing in the blink of an eye. Any plans?

Tom: What do you suggest?

Gran: You should paint the town red. You're only young once!

Tom: Are you sure you want a smartphone though? I read that social media is toxic and the root of young people's problems: reducing our concentration spans with the dual effect of getting us addicted to dopamine while destroying our social skills. Shouldn't you beware of the apparently corrupting influence of your oh-so-exciting smartphone?

Gran: qwertyyy

Tom: ... and the impact on spelling is terrible!

Gran: Sorry, Erasmus was playing with my fingers. Such a dear little cat. How about a video call so you can see him? Just give me a moment. Oh wait, he's off exploring again!

Now back to your question! Thirty years ago, people would have said television harmed the young, acting as a brake on speech development and accelerating the collapse of society, not to mention creating a generation of violence-loving idiots.

But here's a quote. Who said something like this?

"Children now love luxury; they have bad manners and contempt for authority, disrespect elders and love chatter in place of exercise."

Tom: Was it your grumpy neighbour Albert? I've seen him waving his walking stick at teenagers and giving them a piece of his mind.

Gran: No, not him. It was the Ancient Greek philosopher Socrates, who died in 399 BC. You see, people have been complaining about young people for centuries.

Tom: So Albert's continuing the tradition!

Gran: Yes, in a way he is. But you know, when old people like me give advice, you should always take it with a pinch of salt. I remember what it was like to be young, but I don't know what it's like to be young in 2022. Only people who are young now can really know that; the rest of us can only guess.

Tom: Thanks for the philosophy!

Gran: No problem! Well then, I'd better be going. I have a date with a handsome gentleman.

Tom: A date?

Gran: Yes. This smartphone has so many apps, it's mind-boggling what – and who – you can find! Speak soon!