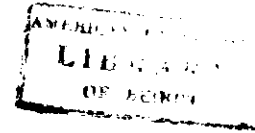


AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

English Department
English 203- Final Exam
Spring 2004- 2005

Time Allowed: 2 ½ hours



DIRECTIONS: Read the following passage and write a well-organized and well-developed summary-analysis essay of 5-6 paragraphs. Your essay should have a clear thesis statement, solid arguments, and supporting evidence. Throughout, you are required to use direct quotes and paraphrases from the passage itself.

No, You Can't Just Dodder

By HENRY FOUNTAIN

WHEN the Rolling Stones announced plans last week for another world tour, performing their 34-year-old hit "Brown Sugar" and other songs at a Manhattan news conference, it evoked the usual **snickers** about **sexagenarians**, drugs and rock 'n' roll.

But while Mick Jagger, who will be 62 when the tour begins in August, and Keith Richards, who turns 62 in December, may be aging rockers, they are also something else: active seniors.

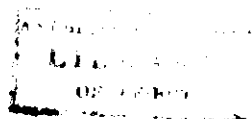
In that sense, they are not unlike millions of other people. These days, older people are not supposed to be sitting in a rocking chair, but doing things they didn't have time for in the past - studying Italian in Florence, say, or learning the difference between a demi-glacé and a velouté at the Cordon Bleu, jetting off to an archeological dig in Timbuktu or a trek in Nepal or even skydiving, as former President George H.W. Bush did last year on his 80th birthday.

But must older people aspire to bungee jump? Or to prance around singing "Jumpin' Jack Flash"? Can't a 62-year-old - or a 72-year-old or 82-year-old, for that matter - just relax?

Society likes its citizens to be busy. Parents are famously harried, and children overscheduled. And older people, these days, are often subject to the same pressure: they cannot just be retired, they must be superretired.

Because people are living longer and staying healthier for longer, of course, they can afford experiences they could only dream about in their youth. And plenty of companies offer those experiences, for a fee, of course.

But it's not just that people have the option of keeping busy. In some ways society is demanding that they do so - to be less of a drain on resources, to remain physically and



mentally fit, and as a source of support for the pharmaceutical and other aging-related industries.

The social pressure grows, too. Some sociologists and gerontologists have described a "busy ethic," a continuance of the work ethic that defines many people's careers. Older people feel compelled to say they are keeping busy, experts say, as a way of defending the leisure time they have.

David J. Ekerdt, director of the Gerontology Center at the University of Kansas, who coined the term busy ethic in a 1986 paper, said there is an expectation that old age should be filled with activity. "Contemplation and inactivity is highly suspect all through life," he said.

Dr. Ekerdt said that when he used to interview retired couples for his research, "The wives would express dismay about their husbands, saying 'He just sits around and reads all day.' "That would hardly seem to be a common complaint now.

All of this activity, however, leaves some people cold. What happened to the idea of old age as a time of slow disengagement, of contemplation of a life well lived? Must an aging person always be on the go, challenging the mind and the body? Isn't some degree of **doddering** allowed?

"I hate people who say, 'Now I'm going to university and I'm going to go bungee jumping and have sex till I'm 80,' " said Virginia Ironside, an advice columnist for *The Independent* newspaper in London who is writing a book about the pleasures of doing little in old age. "Now is the time to wind down. I've bungee jumped till I'm blue in the face, metaphorically."

Ms. Ironside, 60, whose book will be titled, "*No, I Don't Want to Join a Book Club*," said that she saw little need for great mental stimulation as she got older. "I don't want to keep my brain particularly active," she said. "I'd like to **piddle about**."

But hers is a distinctly old-fashioned concept of old age. James H. Hinterlong, a professor of social work at Florida State University, said past theories held that "healthy aging was characterized by people disengaging from meaningful life activities.

"This was considered not only good for the person, but good for society," Dr. Hinterlong said, in that it cleared the way for younger people to take over activities and roles.

That disengagement theory was eventually discarded, he said, as gerontologists realized that many older people liked to stay active. "There was a view that activity was good, but no distinction as to type of activity," Dr. Hinterlong said.

Even that view changed as life spans lengthened. "People used to consider what their legacy was going to be," he said. "Then they realized that a lot of old people had many good years ahead of them, and part of that legacy could still be established."



The Rolling Stones are still establishing their legacy, although their concerts consist mostly of old hits. (Though in announcing the tour they unveiled a new song, appropriately titled "Oh No, Not You Again.") And there is a financial incentive for staying active. The band's last tour, in 2002- 2003, grossed more than \$300 million.

But it's not just money that drives Mr. Jagger and Mr. Richards- and Charlie Watts, 63, and Ron Wood, the baby of the group at 57- to keep performing.

"That's what they know how to do," said Nancy Morrow-Howell, a professor of social work at Washington University in St. Louis. "They're going to continue to do it."

In that sense, too, they are not unlike many older people. Those who study aging say that people's patterns of behavior usually do not change just because they get older. A 70-year-old doesn't wake up one day and decide to attempt Mt. Everest; chances are she has been a risk-taker all her life.

"People are who they are throughout their life course," said Dr. Morrow-Howell. "People who are really active are going to want to continue being active."

Dr. Hinterlong noted that earlier in life many people's activities, particularly their jobs, are defined by others. So for these people, older age "is a period where they can exercise control over their lives."

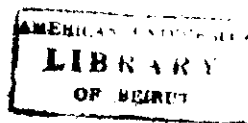
For people like Ms. Ironside, exercising control can mean less activity, not more. But for others, it doesn't necessarily mean an exotic adventure or a college course.

"It's far from me to judge anybody's wish to go bungee jumping," said James Atlas, a New York writer and book publisher and the author of a recent memoir, "*My life in the Middle Ages*." But many of those experiences are artificial, he said.

Far better, he said, to have something develop organically out of a lifelong interest. "I happen to have spent my life in reading and writing," he said. "I'm now in the book business, which emerges naturally out of my preoccupation.

"That will spare me the discomfort of having to sleep in a tent in Nepal."

New York Times
May 15, 2005



Snickers:	Laughing in a half-suppressed manner.
Sexagenarians:	In the age span 60-69.
Doddering:	Shaking, trembling (from age or weakness).
Piddle about:	Pass time wastefully.