

## Arts and cultural engagement 'linked to slower pace of biological ageing'

### Level 2: Intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

- a. There are many different activities that can have a positive impact on our physical, mental and emotional well-being. Think of the activities you, your friends and your family enjoy. Sort the activities into the categories below. Then discuss which of the activities has the biggest impact on you and why.

Creative	Physical	Social	Educational

#### 2 Key words

- a. Choose the correct word or expression to match each definition. Then find and highlight them in the article to read them in context. Some words may appear in a different form in the article.

optimism	estimate	longevity	engagement
evidence	impressive	extraordinary	sentiment
give up	link	pace	vital

- a long, full duration of life \_\_\_\_\_
- extremely important or necessary, essential \_\_\_\_\_
- to connect or join two or more things together \_\_\_\_\_
- the state of being deeply involved with or committed to something \_\_\_\_\_
- to stop trying or doing something \_\_\_\_\_
- an attitude, opinion or view shaped by emotion \_\_\_\_\_
- to make an educated guess or calculation about size or value \_\_\_\_\_
- amazing, excellent, extremely special or unusual \_\_\_\_\_
- the speed at which something happens, moves or progresses \_\_\_\_\_

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10. a mental attitude of hope and positivity \_\_\_\_\_
11. facts and data that prove or disprove a statement \_\_\_\_\_
12. worthy of admiration, respect or appreciation \_\_\_\_\_

#### b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity.

1. Do you believe that health and happiness is the key to \_\_\_\_\_?
2. Runners try to keep a consistent \_\_\_\_\_ when they train for a marathon.
3. I love detective shows – I always use the \_\_\_\_\_ to try to solve the case.
4. Clean water is \_\_\_\_\_ to the health of all living things.
5. It's a good idea to \_\_\_\_\_ the total cost of items before you buy them.
6. Teachers say better classroom \_\_\_\_\_ helps students learn more.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ is important – it lets you stay focused on the positive parts of life.
8. The \_\_\_\_\_ in the room was quite sad – everyone was upset about the loss.

#### c. Use the remaining words from task a to write your own sentences.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

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*Research from UCL suggests visiting art galleries or museums, singing and painting can help improve health outcomes*

**Denis Campbell**

**12 May, 2026**

- 1 Singing, painting or visiting a gallery or museum helps people age more slowly, according to the latest study to link arts and culture with improved health.
- 2 The findings are the first to show that both participating in arts activities and attending events, such as viewing an exhibition, lead to people staying biologically younger.
- 3 "These results show the health impact of the arts at a biological level. They provide evidence for arts and culture to be recognised as a health-promoting behaviour in a similar way to exercise," said Professor Daisy Fancourt, the lead author of the research.
- 4 Slower ageing does not necessarily mean someone will live longer. The tools used in the study to test biological ageing predict future mortality. Previous studies have also suggested a link between the arts and longer lifespan. However much more research would be needed to show causal effects on longevity.
- 5 People who take part in artistic activities the most, often slow the pace of their biological ageing the most. In the study, those who did art at least weekly slowed their ageing process by four per cent. Monthly activities slow ageing by three per cent.
- 6 Similarly, another of the tests showed that people who did an arts activity at least once a week were, on average, a year younger biologically than those who rarely participated in art. Those who exercised once a week were only six months younger.
- 7 The benefit of the arts on the pace people age is so dramatic that it is comparable to the difference between smokers and those who have given up smoking, the researchers say.
- 8 "Our study provides the first evidence that arts and cultural engagement is linked to a slower pace of biological ageing," said Dr Feifei Bu, a senior author. "This adds to other evidence about the health impact of the arts. Arts activities may reduce stress, lower inflammation and improve cardiovascular disease risk, just as exercise does."
- 9 The results of the study are based on blood test and survey response data from 3,556 adults. It uses blood samples to estimate people's biological age and the pace at which they are ageing.
- 10 Participants were asked how often over the last year they took part in singing, dancing, painting, photography or crafting, or attended an art exhibition or event, visited a heritage site such as a monument or historic building or park, or went to a museum, library or archive.
- 11 "Many of us know that taking part in creative and cultural activities is vital for a happy, meaningful life," said Hollie Smith-Charles, of Arts Council England. "These impressive new findings show how vital it is that everyone, everywhere has access to excellent and affordable culture."
- 12 Evidence suggests that the arts can improve both mental and physical health. In 2019 the World Health Organization published a report, by Fancourt and Saoirse Finn, which discussed playing music to patients before surgery and using the arts with people with dementia.
- 13 "We have known for a long time that getting creative has extraordinary benefits for our health. This latest research adds a vital new piece to the puzzle. It shows that arts and culture can even slow down the biological clock," said Mark Ball, the artistic director of the Southbank Centre, a multi-arts venue in London.
- 14 The Southbank complex was created in 1951. Ball said, "It was a recognition that, after the destruction and sadness of the second world war, the country needed to come together through the arts to find a sense of optimism and healing. That sentiment is still true and is needed now, more than ever."

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#### 3 Comprehension check

a. Read the article again. Use the words in the box to complete the summary.

biologically	exercise	monthly	weekly
access	ageing	smoked	
cardiovascular	inflammation	arts	

A new study in the UK looked at the relationship between participation in the (1) \_\_\_\_\_ and culture and physical health. The results suggested that artistic activities can slow the (2) \_\_\_\_\_ process. In other words, people who regularly take part in the arts are (3) \_\_\_\_\_ younger than those who do not. Individuals who did an arts-related activity at least once (4) \_\_\_\_\_ slowed their ageing process by four per cent. Those who participated in the arts (5) \_\_\_\_\_ slowed the pace by three per cent. These results were even more surprising when compared to the impacts of other behaviours on physical health. For example, people who did arts weekly were about a year younger biologically than those who rarely participated in the arts. In contrast, people who did (6) \_\_\_\_\_ weekly were about six months younger than those who did not. In fact, researchers suggest that the benefits of the arts on ageing are so dramatic that they can be compared to the differences between people who (7) \_\_\_\_\_ and those who gave it up. Other studies suggested that the arts can reduce stress, lower (8) \_\_\_\_\_ and improve risk for (9) \_\_\_\_\_ diseases. Supporters of the arts say that the study is evidence of need for people everywhere to have greater (10) \_\_\_\_\_ to a variety of arts and cultural opportunities.

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#### 4 Key language

a. This article uses specialised language to discuss health and medicine. Find the words below in the article. Guess the meaning from the context. Then match the words to the definitions.

- |                           |                                                                         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. biological level _____ | a. the fact that all living things must die                             |
| 2. mortality _____        | b. a physical response of redness, pain, heat or swelling               |
| 3. lifespan _____         | c. a measure of the daily repeated processes in the body                |
| 4. inflammation _____     | d. a focus on the physical part of a human (not the psychological part) |
| 5. cardiovascular _____   | e. related to the heart and the blood system                            |
| 6. dementia _____         | f. a medical condition that affects the brain, behaviour and memory     |
| 7. biological clock _____ | g. the total length of time a person or animal lives                    |

b. Complete the sentences below with a word from the activity above.

1. Dogs have an average \_\_\_\_\_ of 10 to 15 years.
2. Bob used ice to heal \_\_\_\_\_ in his arms and shoulders.
3. The woman in my favourite film had \_\_\_\_\_ and didn't recognise her husband.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ exercise increases blood flow to your heart and brain.

#### 5 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

1. The article talks about 'biological' age. What do you think this means?
2. Do you think arts and culture always slow ageing? Why or why not?
3. What other factors (physical, social or emotional) affect ageing? How?

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#### 6 In your own words

- a. Different cultures around the world have different concepts of ageing. Work in pairs. Choose a country or culture that is different from your own. Do research online or in the library. Then prepare a short presentation. Include at least one visual element, like a photo or a graph. Answer the questions below.
- How is age measured? At what age is a child considered at birth?
  - Are there any rites of passage that people in this culture experience at a certain age? What are they?
  - At what age is someone considered a legal adult? What rights does that give them?
  - How are older people generally treated by society? Are they respected? Are they given any special privileges?
- b. Share your presentation with your class. After everyone has finished their presentation, make a class list of the five most interesting facts you learnt from the presentations.