



ABOUT YOU

Answer the questions and talk about your ideas.

- 1 A favourite Victorian (19th century) expression was: *Children should be seen but not heard*. What does this tell you about the way people at that time thought about children?
- 2 What can young people learn from older people?
- 3 What can older people learn from young people?

In the story *Alice in Wonderland*, a young girl finds herself in a strange world where she gets bigger and smaller, meets strange talking animals and unusual people. Alice also finds that she doesn't remember things correctly. At one point, she tries to remember a poem called 'You are Old, Father William'.

- 1 Read the poem. As you read, think about this question. How would you describe Father William's appearance?

'You are Old, Father William' from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865)

Lewis Carroll

'You are old, Father William,' the young man said,
'And your hair has become very white;
And yet you **incessantly** stand on your head –
Do you think, at your age, it is right?'

- 5 'In my youth,' Father William replied to his son,
'I feared it might injure the brain;
But, now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,
Why, I do it again and again.'
'You are old,' said the youth, 'as I mentioned before,
- 10 And have grown most **uncommonly** fat;
Yet you did a **somersault** in at the door –
Pray, what is the reason of that?'
'In my youth,' said the **sage**, as he shook his grey **locks**,
'I kept all my **limbs** very **supple**
- 15 By the use of this **ointment** – one shilling the box –
Allow me to sell you a couple?'
'You are old,' said the youth, 'and your **jaws** are too weak
For anything tougher than **suet**;



- Yet you finished the goose, with the bones and the beak –
- 20 Pray, how did you manage to do it?'
'In my youth,' said his father, 'I studied the law,
And argued each case with my wife;
And the muscular strength, which it gave to my jaw,
Has lasted the rest of my life.'
 - 25 'You are old,' said the youth, 'one would hardly **suppose**
That your eye was as steady as ever;
Yet you balanced a fish on the end of your nose –
What made you so awfully clever?'
'I have answered three questions, and that is enough,'
 - 30 Said his father; 'don't **give yourself airs**!
Do you think I can listen all day to such stuff?
Be off, or I'll kick you downstairs!'

GLOSSARY

incessantly	doing something all the time
uncommonly	unusually
somersault	a movement in which you roll your body forwards or backwards so that your feet go over your head and come back down to the ground again
sage	a wise person
locks	hair
limbs	legs or arms of a person
supple	able to bend or move easily
ointment	a smooth, thick substance that is used on painful or damaged skin
jaws	either of the two bones in your mouth that contain your teeth
suet	fat used for cooking
suppose	think something will happen
give yourself airs	think you are more important than you really are

