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Romeo and Juliet: Non-Fiction Reading Activity

“What’s the BEST age to get married?”

4	3	2	1
Student shows literal & critical comprehension of non-fiction through summary, details, analysis, and connecting ideas/texts.	Student shows literal & critical comprehension of non-fiction through summary, synthesis, and detail questions.	Based on evidence, student shows partial literal and/or comprehension; ideas may be somewhat incomplete or incorrect.	Based on evidence, student does not show literal and/or critical comprehension; ideas may be incomplete and/or incorrect.



Clearly, no one has been able to determine ONE right answer to this question that perfectly satisfies all of the cultures, values, and other factors that can make a marriage a happy one. This question is too subjective to ever generalize to a universal level a “best” age to get married.

In Shakespeare’s England, the normal marriage age was actually close to ours – mid twenties – but boys could legally marry at 14 years old, and girls at age 12¹. This is young by today’s standards, but people also died younger in the early modern era. Plus, *Romeo and Juliet* is actually set in Italy, where younger marriages were even more common. But what is the “ideal” or “best” age to get married **now**? Can teenagers experience true love that merits a marriage, or are the reasons to wait valid enough to stall?

Step 1: Identify your bias

What is your initial opinion on this question? What is the best age to get married, and why?

Where does this opinion come from? What experiences, role models, or values caused it?

¹ <http://faculty.history.wisc.edu/sommerville/367/367-033.htm>

Do you think an “ideal age” is POSSIBLE, or will it vary not only on the culture but the individual? Explain.

Step 2: Read all about it

Article	SUMMARIZE: What are the main ideas of the article?	Questions
Sooner vs. later: Is there an ideal age for first marriage?		<p>What does John Van Epp mean when he says that medical advantages give people “invincibility”?</p> <p>What are the pros and cons of waiting until you’re “ready”?</p>
Getting Married Later is Great for College-Educated Women		<p>According to the article AND your own knowledge, what is the statistical relationship between gender, income, and the ideal marriage age?</p> <p>Based on context clues, what does the word “demographic” mean?</p>
The Case for Getting Married Young		<p>How/why does this author blame historical AND recent events for marriage trends?</p> <p>What does the Knot Yet study mean when it says that “young adults have increasingly come to see marriage as a ‘capstone’ instead of a ‘cornerstone’”?</p>

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Step 3: Synthesize

1. What concerns do all of the articles seem to share about marriage ages?
2. What are the biggest factors that all articles consider regarding the “best” age to marry?
3. Why do the articles seem to unanimously disapprove of teen marriage?
4. What do the articles suggest as an ideal window or age range to marry in the US? Explain your answer by citing at least one article.

Step 4: Reflect

Does any of this evidence change your opinion? Write below if ANY of the evidence has caused you to sway or not, and WHY. (Be very specific here. Critique logic, norms, data, or anything else you want.)

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Extra Credit: What does Shakespeare say?

On another piece of paper (that you should attach when you turn this in), explain: **what would Shakespeare say on this topic?** Dig through the play, skimming or re-reading if needed. Does William Shakespeare seem to have an opinion on how age, maturity, or other factors determine