

Hair: reading

¹ Do you have short, long or shoulder-length hair? Do you have dyed pink hair or are you naturally blond? Whatever the length or colour of your hair it says something about you.

² You don't agree? Well, imagine you're in the class and a new student comes in. He's about fifty but he has very, very long hair. What do you think? Does it seem strange to you? Do you wonder what kind of man he is? Are you a little afraid of him? Or does it seem normal to you?



³ Now imagine another new student joins you, this time a young woman. You see that she has no hair - her head is bald. What do you think? Do you stare? Do you wonder what has happened to her - perhaps she is ill and is taking medicine that makes her hair fall out? Perhaps she's an artist? Or does it seem normal to you?

⁴ Do you think that *your* hair is 'normal' for someone like you? Is it the right length and colour for your sex and age? If the answer is 'yes', then perhaps you are a conservative person. What would happen if you changed it? If you have long hair and had it all cut off, what would people say? If it's short and you stop having it cut, what is the reaction? You decide to dye your hair so that it's a very different colour - what would friends and family say? It is these comments - perhaps complaints, perhaps compliments - that prove your hair says something about you.

⁵ Think about a monk, and then think about a Sikh. One has a shaved head and the other has hair that has never been cut. But both are religious people - so why the difference? For monks shaving is a rejection of vanity. Without hair you lose your individual identity and become part of a special group. Sikhs, on the other hand, consider hair to be sacred. Hair is a gift from God and should never be cut - this is the same for men and women. So for both monks and Sikhs what they do to their hair separates them from other people, but unites them in their beliefs.

⁶ Prisoners often have their heads shaved. Soldiers too have very short hair. As a result the prisoners or soldiers lose their personality and instead of making their own decisions have to accept orders from others. In the West, skinheads choose to shave their heads as a rejection of traditional values. Their appearance is seen as aggressive and linked to football violence and right-wing politics. When you see a young man with a shaved head do you think that he is religious, or violent?

⁷ And what about long hair? During the 1960s in the West, hippies grew their hair long. For them long hair was a rejection of traditional values - just like the skinheads! But their appearance was linked to peace and left-wing politics, they were against violence and war. And it is interesting to note that historians say that many religious prophets, including Jesus, Mohammed and Moses, all had long hair. Does this mean anything?

⁸ And finally - how many students in the class, especially women, still have their original coloured hair? Why do so many people dye their hair? Perhaps to appear younger, or more attractive, or just different from everyone else? Whatever the personal reason it's because your hair says something about you - don't you agree now?