

Image conscious

Topic: Image consciousness/changing your look

Aims:

- To develop students' ability to communicate their opinion on and reaction to a text
- To develop students' ability to negotiate in a group and work as a team
- To develop students' ability to defend their position in a conflictive situation
- To expand students' vocabulary on the modern-day topic of image.

Level: Intermediate and above

Introduction

This lesson asks students to discuss ways of changing their image before reading an informative article about tattoos. They then design a new image for a client of their company and then for themselves before discussing at what age they should be allowed to take certain decisions. The themes are image-consciousness and personal choice.

Procedure

Lead-in: What do you look like?

- Bring in photos of particularly attractive/ugly/interesting examples of piercings, tattoos, earrings, hairstyles, etc for students to look at.

Tip: If issues such as body piercing and wearing earrings are sensitive where you teach, use only more moderate ways such as hairstyle, hair colour, clothes, etc.

- Ask students to look at the photos and tell you which are the most/least attractive. Can they think of any reasons why people decide to change the way they look?

Suggested answers:

To be different, to join a particular group, to identify with an idol or movement, boredom, to rebel, etc.

- Hand out **Worksheet A**. Run through the instructions and examples, clarifying any language problems. Pay particular attention to the pronunciation of sounds and word stress in: *piercing, navel, tongue, tattoo, dying, weird, accessory*.

Tip: It is always a good idea to do choral drills of new words, chunks or phrases for students to hear and practise the phonological features.

- Students work individually. When they have finished, ask for some feedback from the class on the three questions.

Tip: In cultures where knowing anyone who has done this is unlikely, for a) ask them to think of celebrities they know and how they have changed their look.

Pre reading task

- Give students plenty of time to discuss their predictions beforehand. The questions are designed for all levels. At higher levels you could ask students to speculate further about the information or draw further conclusions from the text.

Before you read about tattoos, write down a short answer to these questions:

- a) How old do you think you have to be to get a tattoo in the UK?
- b) How much do you think they cost in pounds?
- c) Do you think it hurts?
- d) Do you think you need to look after your tattoo once you have one?
- e) Is it easy or difficult to remove a tattoo nowadays? Is it 100% effective?
- f) Are temporary tattoos worth trying, or do they just look false?

This text will be quite challenging, so have some explanations prepared for, or pre-teach if desired: *tat* = trendy abbreviated form for tattoo, *Pat dry* – can be mimed, *Until it's healed* = until it stops hurting, *Henna* is a plant used for its ink to make tattoos which only last a day or two.

Hand out **Worksheet B**.

When the majority of students have finished reading, get the answers to the pre-reading questions.

Tattoos

Back in the late 18th century, the upper classes were queuing up to get tats. Nowadays, tattoo trends are often led by celebrities. Tattooed VIPs include Ben Affleck, Jennifer Aniston, David Beckham and Eminem. Even Barbie (yes, the doll) had temporary tattoos at one point.

But fashion isn't the only reason people get a tattoo. For some, it's a statement about what kind of person they are or where they're coming from. Others just love the way tattoos look or see them as a way of expressing their individuality. If you're considering one, here are some essential facts.

Getting a tattoo

- In the UK, you have to be over 18 to get a tattoo. Even with parental permission, most tattoo artists will refuse you if you're younger than 18.
- At 18, you might regret something that you did when you were 16, as our opinions change as we grow older. Think about getting that tattoo - it might seem like a good idea at the time, but you might end up hating it in 2 years time.
- Tattoos can cost anything upwards of £10.
- A tattoo is created by injecting ink into the your skin. Some people find tattoos painful, some describe it as an uncomfortable or weird sensation.
- After you've had your tattoo, keep the bandage on for two to 12 hours. Gently wash it twice a day with an antibacterial soap and pat dry, then use moisturiser. Keep it uncovered as much as possible, and avoid sunbathing, swimming, soaking in the bath and exercise until it's healed.
- Tattoos can be removed using laser surgery. However, this process is expensive and doesn't guarantee complete removal – you might be left with marks or some ink left.
- If you're not sure, you could try a (temporary) henna tattoo (a mehndi). The henna mixture is pasted onto the skin and then scraped off, leaving behind a deep red design. A professional henna artist can create amazing designs that last several days.

Answers:

- a) How old do you think you have to be to get a tattoo in the UK? **Over 18.**
- b) How much do you think they cost in pounds? **The cheapest are £10**
- c) Do you think it hurts? **For some people it does, for others it doesn't.**
- d) Do you think you need to look after your tattoo once you have one? **You have to until it has healed.**
- e) Is it easy or difficult to remove a tattoo nowadays? Is it 100% effective? **Easy, but expensive. It is not completely effective.**
- f) Are temporary tattoos worth trying, or do they just look false? **They can look amazing, so yes they are worth a try.**

Post-reading discussion

Notice that the focus here is on students' natural reaction to the text. This is to encourage an unguided, authentic response to reading materials.

Tip: It is always a good idea to board or make a note of some of the language problems students have at this stage and use this as language work in class to teach new vocabulary, phrases or grammar arising from their attempt to express themselves naturally. Do not make correction personal if done in open class, rather try and make it appropriate to the whole class. Remember that at higher levels production errors are often simply performance errors students already know and they therefore do not see the need for correction, whereas if they don't know the word for something or pronounce it inaccurately, your language feedback is invaluable to them.

Post-reading

Discuss the following in groups of three or four. You don't have to make notes, but remember what your colleagues say because your teacher will ask you to tell the class.

- a) Which facts surprised you about tattoos, if any?
- b) Would you ever consider getting one now you have this information?

Roleplay

- You will need photos of people for this activity. Hand out one per group to use with **Worksheet C**. This task is fairly open-ended and can be completed according to the level of the students. Clearly, with lower levels we can expect less articulate answers.
- Get feedback from groups when they have completed the task. If you draw attention to and respect their contributions in whole class situations, you will find that these improve as the course develops.

Tip: When students are discussing in groups, correction can be done either on the spot or noted down to be addressed later on the board with the whole class. There are advantages and disadvantages of both methods.

Role-play

You work for Image Consultants, PLC, an agency which helps people change their look. Your teacher will give you a photo of someone who wants to change their look and improve their image. In groups:

- decide what this person does in life and why they want to change their look.
- make a list of things they could do to improve their image.

Person's profession Why they want to change.....

Hair Clothes Jewellery Other

Pair work

- This activity, **Worksheet D**, is deliberately similar to the previous activity in order that students have the opportunity to practise the same language in a one-to-one situation after having had some exposure to other students' contributions and language.
- Students change their own look. With shyer or reluctant students, encourage them to simply think about a change of hairstyle or a new item of clothing, for example. When students are giving class feedback, be careful to make sure shyer or weaker students are not teased. If this is a problem, only have class feedback on the more confident students.

Tip: When students are discussing in pairs, correction is much easier and more readily accepted. Take the opportunity to monitor closely and correct individually.

Imagine you want to have a new look and you have the permission and the money to do any two things.

Student A: Tell your partner what you would do.

Student B: Take notes in the box below to tell the rest of the class what your partner would do to change their look.

Partner's name

Hair Clothes Jewellery Other

Now swap roles.

Tell the class what your partner decided. The rest of the class can agree or disagree with their choice

Family role play

- Explain the following situation to students: Student C is 15 and has changed his/her look in one of the ways mentioned without their parents' consent.
- Hand out the role cards, **Worksheet E**, put students with the same role into groups and give them a couple of minutes to write down some ideas and ask you for words they don't know how to say in English. This allows them to get some ideas and language before performing.

Tip: Success in role-plays has a lot to do with assigning the right roles to the right people. In this case, to give the activity some authenticity, it is a good idea to have stronger students in the role of parent and weaker in the role of child. This is not always the case, but here the adults need to have strong arguments.

- Have students summarise their arguments afterwards, telling you what was said and what the outcome was.

Role cards

Student A: you are Student C's father and you are outraged that your son/daughter has changed their look. Find out exactly what they have done and why and tell them what you are going to do about it.

Student B: you are Student C's mother and you think their change of look is quite attractive and shows that they care about their appearance. You think they should have told you but you want to defend your child in an argument with their father.

Student C: you have changed your look and you know your dad is going to be angry. Try to tell him why you've done it and why you think you are old enough to make your own decisions.

Discussion: Parental rules

- Hand out **Worksheet F**.

Discussion

Decide at what age you think you should be allowed to decide about...

- having a body piercing/tattoo
- drinking alcohol/smoking
- what time you should go to bed
- what you can watch on TV/what games you can play on your PC

Now discuss this with your colleagues and see if you have similar or different views.

- This is a more general discussion about parental rules. Having students put the issues in order of age can work as a prompt for discussion here if students are slow to start the task. The discussion can also be easily extended by looking at the final issue and asking students what exactly the rules are in their own homes.