

^ The word *love* tattooed on a man's back

## 1 | Protection and Color

If you took off your skin and laid it flat, it would cover an area of about 1.9 square meters (21 square feet), making it by far the body's largest organ. Covering almost the entire body, skin protects us from a variety of **external** forces, such as extremes of temperature, damaging sunlight, harmful **chemicals**, and dangerous infections. Skin is also packed with nerves, which keeps the brain in touch with the outside world.

The health of our skin and its ability to perform its protective functions are **crucial** to our well-being. However, the appearance of our skin is equally—if not more—important to many people on this planet.

Take skin color, for example. Your genes determine your skin's color, but for centuries,

humans have tried to lighten or darken their skin in an attempt to be more attractive. In the 1800s, white skin was desirable for many Europeans. Skin this color meant that its owner was a member of the upper class and did not have to work in the sun. Among darker-skinned people in some parts of the world, products used to lighten skin are still popular today. In other cultures during the 20th century, as cities grew and work moved indoors, attitudes toward light skin shifted in the opposite direction. Tanned skin began to indicate **leisure** time and health. In many places today, suntanning on the beach or in a salon<sup>2</sup> remains popular, even though people are more aware of the dangers of UV rays.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> A **salon** is a place where people have their hair cut or colored, or have beauty treatments.

<sup>3</sup> **UV rays** (or **ultraviolet rays**) are what cause your skin to become darker in color after having been in sunlight.



## Identity and Status

35 Just as people have altered their skin's color to **denote** wealth and beauty, so too have cultures around the globe marked their skin to indicate cultural **identity** or community status. Tattooing, for example, has been carried out for thousands of years. Leaders in places including ancient Egypt, Britain, and Peru wore tattoos to mark their status, or their bravery. Today, among the Maori people of New Zealand as well as in cultures in Samoa, Tahiti, and Borneo, full-facial tattoos are still used to identify the wearer as a member of a certain family and to symbolize the person's achievements in life.

50 In Japan, tattooing has been practiced since around the fifth century B.C. The government made tattooing illegal in 1870, and though there are no laws against it today, tattoos are still strongly associated with **criminals**—particularly the *yakuza*, or the Japanese mafia,<sup>4</sup> who are known for their full-body tattoos. The complex design of a *yakuza* member's tattoo usually includes symbols of character traits that the wearer wants to have. The process of getting a full-body tattoo is both slow and painful and can take up to two years to complete.

65 In some cultures, scarring—a marking caused by cutting or burning the skin—is practiced, usually among people who have darker skin on which a tattoo would be difficult to see. For many men in West Africa, for instance, scarring is a rite of passage—an act that symbolizes that a male has **matured** from a child into an adult. In Australia, among some native peoples, cuts are made on the skin of both men and women when they reach 16 or 17. Without these, members were traditionally not permitted to trade, sing ceremonial songs, or participate in other activities.

75 Not all skin markings are **permanent**, though. In countries such as Morocco and India,

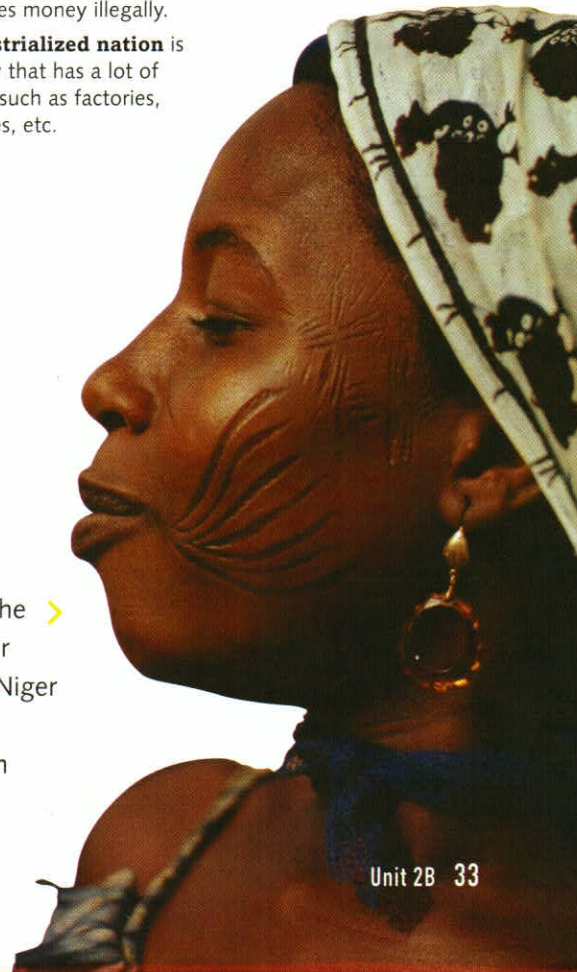
women decorate their skin with colorful henna designs for celebrations such as weddings and important religious holidays. The henna coloring, which comes from a plant, **fades** and disappears over time.

80 In recent years in many industrialized nations,<sup>5</sup> tattooing, henna body art, and, to a lesser degree, scarring, have been gaining in popularity. What makes these practices appealing to those living in modern cities? According to photographer Chris Rainier, whose book *Ancient Marks* examines body markings around the globe, people are looking for a connection with the traditional world. "There is a whole sector of modern society—people in search of identity, people in search of meaning . . .," says Rainier. "Hence, [there has been] a huge explosion of tattooing and body marking . . . [I]t's . . . mankind wanting identity, wanting a sense of place . . . and a sense of culture within their community."

4 The **mafia** is a criminal organization that makes money illegally.

5 An **industrialized nation** is a country that has a lot of industry, such as factories, businesses, etc.

The scars on the >  
face of a Gobir  
woman from Niger  
indicate her  
membership in  
the tribe.





# Reading Comprehension

**Multiple Choice.** Choose the best answer for each question.

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| Gist       | 1. What is this reading mainly about?<br>a. the skin's role in our overall health<br>b. the ways people change the appearance of their skin<br>c. the different reasons people get tattoos<br>d. cultural ceremonies that involve skin tattooing                                |
| Inference  | 2. What can we infer about the tattoos of the Maori?<br>a. Only men get facial tattoos.<br>b. Members of the same family have similar facial tattoos.<br>c. No one gets their entire face tattooed anymore.<br>d. Both men and women get facial tattoos but never body tattoos. |
| Detail     | 3. Why are tattoos disapproved of in Japanese society?<br>a. They are often associated with crime.<br>b. They are painful.<br>c. They take too long to complete.<br>d. They are illegal.  |
| Detail     | 4. In West Africa, what is done to mark a male child's reaching of adulthood?<br>a. tanning<br>b. tattooing<br>c. scarring<br>d. skin whitening   |
| Reference  | 5. In line 71, what does <i>these</i> refer to?<br>a. scars<br>b. customs<br>c. males<br>d. celebrations  |
| Detail     | 6. What is NOT true about henna designs?<br>a. They are used to celebrate religious holidays.<br>b. Some brides decorate their skin with them.<br>c. They are permanent.<br>d. They are made with plants.   |
| Vocabulary | 7. In line 93, the word <i>explosion</i> can be replaced with _____.<br>a. bombing<br>b. destruction<br>c. increase<br>d. decrease  |

## Critical Thinking

**Relating:** The passage gives an example of a rite of passage. Can you think of any other examples in your own culture?

**Discussion:** What are some other ways that people in your culture express individual identity? How do you

# Determining the Main Idea of Paragraphs

While it's important to have an overall understanding of a reading, it's equally important to be able to determine the main idea of each paragraph of the reading. You should read the first line of the paragraph and then quickly skim the rest. Some paragraphs also have headings; these headings often tell you what the main idea is.

Understanding the main idea of each paragraph can be especially useful when taking notes, or when creating a summary outline or word web of the reading.

- ✓ In many cultures, henna is traditionally used for special occasions, such as birthdays and weddings.

**Multiple Choice.** Look back at the reading on pages 32–33. What is each paragraph's main idea? Choose the correct answer.

- Paragraph 1**
  - the importance of skin
  - how to have healthy skin
- Paragraph 2**
  - the role our skin plays in our overall health
  - the importance of skin health and appearance
- Paragraph 3**
  - reasons for and ways of changing skin color
  - skin tanning as a symbol of leisure time and health
- Paragraph 4**
  - the history of facial tattooing
  - cultural reasons for tattooing
- Paragraph 5**
  - how tattoos are viewed in Japan
  - how tattooing has changed in Japan
- Paragraph 6**
  - reasons for scarring the skin
  - scarring as a rite of passage in West Africa
- Paragraph 7**
  - an example of non-permanent skin marking
  - henna in Morocco
- Paragraph 8**
  - body marking as an ancient phenomenon
  - body marking as a means of identity in modern society





## Vocabulary Practice

- A. Completion.** Complete the information using the correct form of words from the box. Four words are extra.

<b>chemical</b>	<b>criminal</b>	<b>crucial</b>	<b>denote</b>	<b>external</b>
<b>fade</b>	<b>identity</b>	<b>leisure</b>	<b>maturity</b>	<b>permanent</b>

Tattooing was traditionally a(n) **1.** \_\_\_\_\_ part of life for members of the Iban tribe of Sarawak, Malaysia. Iban tattooing was a spiritual art form, and it was believed to have powers of protecting the Iban people from harm and disease. Tattoos were also used to **2.** \_\_\_\_\_ the wearer's skills and cultural **3.** \_\_\_\_\_.

Originally, the tattooing was done using ancient recipes involving natural dyes from plants and traditional wooden tools. The dyes were **4.** \_\_\_\_\_ and could not be removed. Newly done Iban tattoos look dark, but they gradually **5.** \_\_\_\_\_ somewhat from sunlight, or as the dye is absorbed into the skin. Today, for the Iban people, Western tattoos are more popular than traditional designs, and modern tattooing machines are used. Modern **6.** \_\_\_\_\_ dyes have mainly replaced the plant-based ones.

- B. Words in Context.** Use words from the box in **A** to complete the definitions.

1. A person who breaks the law is a(n) \_\_\_\_\_.
2. A(n) \_\_\_\_\_ activity is one you enjoy doing when you are not working.
3. If something is \_\_\_\_\_, it lasts forever.
4. If something is on the outside rather than the inside, it is \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Your \_\_\_\_\_ is your distinct personality or who you are.
6. A person's \_\_\_\_\_ can be measured by his or her physical and mental development.



▲ An Iban man showing off his traditional tattoos.

**Word Link** The letters **-al** at the end of a word often mean that the word is an adjective, e.g., *chemical*, *external*, *crucial*.