

Name: _____ () Class: _____ Date: _____

Your teacher has asked you to read a feature article about the evolution of beauty.
Read the article.

Text 1 Feature article

The evolution of beauty



- ① Since the beginning of human history, we have wrestled with what it means to be beautiful. We all seem to care too much about the way we look. We've all had moments when we felt like we're falling short of some clearly defined standard of beauty. Yet, the reality is that beauty standards are fluid. What is considered beautiful at one moment is despised in another. Over the course of history, our concept of beauty has undergone a constant evolution.



Drawing of Cleopatra,
ancient Egyptian queen

- ② The ancient Egyptians, back in the third millennium BC, prized slim waists over heavier ones. In contrast, the ancient Greeks regarded heavy, broad hips as a major characteristic of beautiful women. Despite these differences, both cultures used make-up to highlight certain facial features, particularly the eyes. In Greek art, beautiful women often appear with dark-rimmed eyes. Similarly, in ancient Egypt, thick black eyeliner was considered beautiful for both men and women.



Typical sculpture
of an ancient
Greek goddess

- ③ In the Han Dynasty, which lasted from the third century BC to the third century AD, pale skin was regarded as beautiful. This was in large part because lighter skin was associated with the upper class. The wealthier members of society were more likely to have pale skin because they were not required to labour outdoors. Therefore, they had less exposure to the sun. A delicate frame was another marker of great beauty for women in this era.



Painting of a
Chinese woman in
the Han Dynasty

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4 Japan, meanwhile, had its own notions of beauty. In the Heian period (794–1185), one of the most sought-after features in a woman was very long, dark hair. Women liked to grow their hair all the way down to their toes. If a woman had grown her hair very long, she would instantly have been recognized as a member of the upper class. In this era, women also had particular ideas about how to style their eyebrows. They often shaved off their natural eyebrows. They then drew in a new set (sometimes called ‘butterfly’ eyebrows) much higher up on the forehead.



Painting of two Japanese women during the Heian period



Oil painting of a woman by Italian painter Vincenzo Catena from the Renaissance era

5 In Renaissance Europe, which roughly began in 1300 and lasted until 1700, plump figures were held up as the standard of beauty. Paintings from this period depict women and goddesses as curvy, with rounded hips and stomachs. Such curves were seen as symbols of fertility.

6 The ideal body type changed again in the twentieth century. During the 1920s, a period known as the Jazz Age, a boyish figure on a woman was all the rage. This was in direct contrast to the curvier figure favoured in earlier centuries. This revolutionary period also saw women cutting their hair short and wearing short skirts to show off their legs. Throughout the century, however, beauty standards shifted many times over. By the end of the century, beauty came to be associated with super skinny models. This has remained for several decades, but like any other notions of beauty, it will certainly prove to be fleeting.



Photo of a woman in the 1920s

7 These days, we can fall into the trap of conforming and thinking that if we were skinnier, we would be more beautiful. We might even start thinking unhealthy thoughts, like ‘If I had eaten less, I would have achieved a higher standard of beauty.’ It’s important to remember that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Rarely does one type of beauty last forever. Beauty is not a fixed concept. It is something that constantly evolves with time.

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Comprehension 1 *Your teacher wants to know if you understood the evolution of beauty. Answer her questions using information from the feature article. For multiple-choice questions, choose the best answer and blacken ONE circle only.*

- 1 Find a word in paragraph 1 that can be replaced with 'struggled'.

- 2 i) What beauty practice did the ancient Egyptians and the ancient Greeks have in common?

ii) What beauty standard did the ancient Egyptians and the ancient Greeks differ on?

- 3 In the Han Dynasty, why was pale skin connected with the upper class?

- 4 Which of the following was a beauty practice for women in the Heian period?
 - ☐ A wearing light make-up
 - ☐ B cutting hair short
 - ☐ C shaving off eyebrows
 - ☐ D wearing short skirts
- 5 In the Heian period, what are eyebrows that were drawn high up on the forehead called?

- 6 What does the expression 'all the rage' (line 43) mean?
 - ☐ A very angry
 - ☐ B very popular or fashionable
 - ☐ C very disappointing
 - ☐ D very happy
- 7 The writer mentioned that a boyish figure 'was in direct contrast to the curvier figure favoured in earlier centuries' (lines 43 & 44) to _____.
 - ☐ A emphasis that the Jazz Age was revolutionary time
 - ☐ B show that being skinny is the ultimate beauty ideal
 - ☐ C point out that it's better to be curvy than skinny
 - ☐ D stress that beauty standards are always changing
- 8 According to paragraph 6, are the following statements **True (T)**, **False (F)** or **Not Given (NG)**? Write the letter(s) in the boxes.

Statements

 - i) The 1950s are commonly referred to as the Jazz Age. ☐
 - ii) Beauty standards changed many times in the twentieth century. ☐
 - iii) The Jazz Age lasted twenty years. ☐

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9 What is the purpose of the report?

- A to explore beauty standards throughout history
 B to discuss which culture has a better beauty standard
 C to analyse today's beauty standards
 D to compare modern and ancient eras

A B C D
 ○ ○ ○ ○

10 Match the preferred body type for women (A–D) with the corresponding era on the left.
 Write the correct letter on the line next to the era.

Era**Body type**

- | | | |
|------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|
| i) Han Dynasty | _____ | A boyish figure |
| ii) Renaissance Europe | _____ | B curvy body type |
| iii) Jazz Age | _____ | C extremely skinny figure |
| iv) Late 20th century | _____ | D slender and delicate frame |

11 Complete the following timeline about beauty standards using words from the feature article. Use ONE word to complete each blank.

- 3000 BC** The ancient (i) _____ and Greeks use eyeliner as a beauty tool.
- 200 BC** In the (ii) _____ Dynasty, many regard (iii) _____ skin as a mark of beauty.
- 1000 AD** In the Heian period in (iv) _____, women (v) _____ their hair down to their toes.
- 1300–1700 AD** In Europe, rounded hips and stomachs are seen as (vi) _____ of fertility.
- 1920 AD** Women (vii) _____ their hair short and wear short skirts.

12 Complete the sentences with words from Text 1 that are similar in meaning to the words in brackets. Make sure your answers are grammatically correct.

paragraph 1	My brother used to (i) _____ (<i>hate</i>) himself for the way he looked.
paragraph 2	In the army, honour, loyalty and sense of duty are (ii) _____ (<i>treasured</i>) above everything else.
paragraph 6	For a/an (iii) _____ (<i>brief</i>) moment, she forgot about the nasty comments on her social media post and enjoyed her cup of coffee.
paragraph 7	There is often discrimination against those who do not (iv) _____ (<i>fit in</i>) to the norm.