

The Ancient Egyptians: Looking Good

Looking good was very important to the Ancient Egyptians. Both men and women would spend hours each day perfecting their hair and makeup. They were also the first civilization to look after their teeth.

Fancy hairstyles didn't just make people look good, they showed how wealthy and powerful they were. However, the wealthiest men and women never styled their own hair. Instead, they wore elaborately styled wigs. These were made out of human hair fixed with a mixture of beeswax and resin. Beneath their wigs, Ancient Egyptians often had shaved heads. This helped to keep their heads cool and avoid head lice. It also made the wigs fit better.

If you weren't wealthy enough to wear a wig, you had to make sure that your own hair looked at its best. The first barbers were found in Ancient Egypt. Men were employed to cut and groom hair and beards. They used sharpened flints and shells. Like many people today, the Ancient Egyptians did not like their grey hairs. To avoid the problem, it was common for people to dye their hair. They used natural dye made from leaves of the henna shrub.

For Ancient Egyptian men, the style of their beards was also very important. They believed that beards made them look more god-like, especially those that were tightly plaited. For many men, growing a beard bushy enough to be styled and plaited was not an option. Luckily, these men could wear fake beards. These were often made out of goat's hair.



barber : a person who cuts men's hair and shaves or trims beards for their job.

Once the Ancient Egyptians had sorted their hairdo, it was time for the make-up. Both men and women wore dark eye make-up known as kohl. They believed that this made them even more beautiful, but there were other benefits too. The kohl helped to protect the skin around their eyes from the hot desert sun. It also contained a mineral which was a good insect repellent.

Almost all Egyptians are shown with their mouths closed in Ancient Egyptian art. They may not have thought that a perfect smile added to their beauty, but we do know that they were good at looking after their teeth. In fact, the Ancient Egyptians invented toothpaste. Their toothpaste was made by grinding and mixing up salt, dried flowers, pepper, ashes, eggshells and mint. This paste was either rubbed onto the teeth with a finger or a brush made out of a frayed twig.



Questions

03

1 Who wore wigs in Ancient Egyptian times? (tick)

- ☐ only Pharaohs
- ☐ everyone
- ☐ bald people
- ☐ only the wealthiest Egyptians

2 Which fact about the wigs is true? (tick)

- ☐ They were very plain.
- ☐ They were often very fancy.
- ☐ The word elaborate means very detailed.
- ☐ They were made out of goat hair.

3 What was mixed with beeswax to fix the human hair to the wig?

4 What two things did Ancient Egyptian barbers use to cut hair and beards?

5 Why did the Ancient Egyptians use hair dye? (tick)

- ☐ To cover up their grey hairs.
- ☐ To make them look rich and powerful.
- ☐ They all wanted their hair to be exactly the same shade of black.
- ☐ To make sure that their hair colour matched the shade of their eye makeup.

- 6 What were the fake beards made out of?

- 7 Which word in the fifth paragraph is an informal word for hairstyle?

- 8 What is the name for the dark make-up that the Ancient Egyptians wore?

- 9 What helped to keep the insects away from the Ancient Egyptians? (tick)

- ☐ The beeswax used to fix the wigs.
- ☐ A mineral used in their eye makeup.
- ☐ The natural dye that was used to colour the hair.
- ☐ The goat's hair used to make the fake beards.

- 10 Which of these things was an ingredient used to make toothpaste? (tick)

- ☐ fine sand
- ☐ milk
- ☐ pepper
- ☐ disinfectant

Score:

Answers

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- 2 Which fact about the wigs is true? ☒ They were often very fancy.
- 3 What was mixed with beeswax to fix the human hair to the wig? resin
- 4 What two things did Ancient Egyptian barbers use to cut hair and beards? sharpened flints and shells
- 5 Why did the Ancient Egyptians use hair dye? ☒ To cover up their grey hairs.
- 6 What were the fake beards made out of? ☒ goat's hair
- 7 Which word in the fifth paragraph is an informal word for hairstyle? hairdo
- 8 What is the name for the dark make-up that the Ancient Egyptians wore? kohl
- 9 What helped to keep the insects away from the Ancient Egyptians? ☒ A mineral used in their eye makeup.
- 10 Which of these things was an ingredient used to make toothpaste? ☒ pepper