Hair: Teacher's notes and tips - elementary

1 Pre-reading tasks

a Ask the students if any of them have had a bad experience at the hairdresser - what happened? What went wrong?

> **Tip: personalize the topic**
> Students are more interested in a topic if they can relate it to their own experience - and it can allow the teacher to deal with appropriate vocabulary in context.

b Tell students the topic of the reading is 'hair'. Give each student a copy of the task sheet but ask them to do the first question in pairs.

c When most have finished ask for the answers: **a** true **b** false: the average scalp has 100,000 hairs (red hair - 80,000 brown or black hair - 100,000 and blond hair - 120,000) **c** false: not on your lips, palms of your hands or soles of your feet **d** false (it's an optical illusion) **e** true, and Asian men are 50% less likely to go bald than Caucasian men.

c Then give students a little while to look at each other for question 2 and decide what kind of hair most of them have. Work out the average student: shoulder-length, wavy, brown hair? Or perhaps long, straight, black hair?

> **Tip: create a team spirit in the classroom**
> Students are usually interested in each other - this gives them an opportunity to have a good look at themselves! You can also ask a student at the start of this activity to pop outside for a moment and then after a while ask the others if they can remember what his/her hair looks like.

d Write on the board: *Your hair says something about you.* Make sure students understand what this means - your hair gives information about the kind of person you are / others can know more about you from your hairstyle.

e Then ask students if they agree or disagree with the statement. Give them a few minutes in pairs to decide their opinion and why they think this.

f Then ask one student who agrees, and one who disagrees, to explain why.

g Now look at question 3. Put students into groups of 3 to discuss the question and help with the vocabulary as needed. Follow up with some comments with the whole class.

> **Tip: have some pictures handy**
> Pictures of the people (not the prophets) would save lengthy explanations and be more interesting. You could perhaps start the lesson with them - can the students, looking at the pictures, decide what the theme of the reading is?

2 First reading tasks

a Give each student a copy of the reading. They need to read as quickly as possible and decide if they still agree or disagree with the statement on the board: *Your hair says something about you.*

> **Tip: provide appropriate first reading tasks**
> Students need to read everything to get the general gist of the text but they don't need to understand every word. Always tell them they will read it again more slowly.

b Feedback: has anyone changed their mind? Why or why not?

3   **Second reading tasks**

     a   Using the vocabulary task, question 4 on the task sheet, ask students to read the text again to clarify the meaning of the words. Get them to check with each other before you ask for the answers.

     b   Feedback: **1** d **2** c **3** a **4** f **5** h **6** g **7** b **8** e

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Tip: don't miss opportunities to expand students' vocabulary
Use the feedback to highlight word formations (What is the adjective of *vanity*?), to consider cultural contexts (Do you think it's rude to stare?) and personalize (Do you often make complaints?).

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4   **Third reading tasks**

     a   There are many questions in the text that are directed towards the reader. Put the students in pairs to read the text again, this time pausing at various questions to give their own answers. They don't have to answer them all.

Tip: encourage students to react to a text
Getting students to answer these questions and discuss their thoughts together is a much more real-life activity than answering comprehension questions. As a teacher you can see if the text has been understood by the responses. Really try and get students to think about their own opinions and to disagree with the text if they want to (Are left-wing people less violent than right-wing people? Did Mohammed have long hair?).

Tip: encourage appropriate responses
Input language to show interest (Really?), to ask questions (Do you agree?) and to respond (No, I don't think so.) etc. The more practise elementary students have of give-and-take speaking activities, the more natural they will be later when their language skills have improved.

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5   **Post-reading tasks - speaking**

     a   Students, still in pairs, ask three different questions each from question 5. Early finishers can ask other questions if they want, or ask the same questions to other students.

6   **Post-reading tasks - writing**

     a   Students imagine that they suddenly have different hair - it may be very long when it used to be short, it may be very curly when it used to be straight, it may be very dark when it used to be grey … they decide the difference, but it must be a big one. They then decide the reaction of their friends and family and how the change affects their life. These ideas can be used to write a short story: *One day I woke up and my hair was very different …*

Tip: link the reading to a writing task
Give some guidance for paragraph content: In what way is the hair different? Why and how did this happen? What are people's reactions? Do they keep or change the new look?