

TATTOOS: AN ANCIENT ART GOES MAINSTREAM

Introduction

Focus

This *News in Review* story focuses on the recent resurgence of the ancient art of the tattoo in popular culture. It explores why and how we get tattoos—and how to get rid of them.

Terminology

Body suit: full coverage of a human body from the ankles and wrists to the neck
Collector: a person who gets tattoos as a hobby
Dermis: layer of skin below the epidermis, where tattoo ink is injected
Flash or flash sheets: standard tattoo designs normally posted on the walls of tattoo shops
Full sleeves: arms tattooed from shoulder to wrist
Gun: tattoo machine
Scratcher: a person who attempts to tattoo despite having no training or knowledge of safe techniques
Tat: short for tattoo



Sections marked with this symbol indicate content suitable for younger viewers.

Who has tattoos? Here are just a few personalities sporting tattoos.

- Actors: Halle Berry, Johnny Depp, Cher, Drew Barrymore, Angelina Jolie
- Sports stars: David Beckham, Dennis Rodman, Allen Iverson, Shaquille O'Neal
- Musicians: Sean Combs, Pink, Eve, 50 Cent, Eminem, Britney Spears, Gwen Stefani, Christina Aguilera

You probably know a few other famous personalities who have gone under the needle. And maybe a few friends. So now getting a tattoo is the hip thing to do. More than 39 million North Americans have at least one tattoo. That's a lot of tattoos, a very big business, and a fashion revolution. Search "tattoo" on Google, and you'll get millions of hits. No doubt about it, tattoos are hot.

The Tattoo

The word *tattoo* comes from the Tahitian word *tatau*, meaning "to mark." *To tattoo* means "to puncture the skin with a needle and insert permanent colours

for the purpose of leaving a permanent design." Tattoo artists use an electrically powered vibrating device that injects tattoo dye through needles at a rate of 50 to 3 000 punctures per minute. The needles puncture the skin repeatedly to a depth of 0.4 to 1.6 millimetres. The pain-dispensing machine rattles like a sewing machine. It hurts to get a tattoo, but most people with tattoos say it's worth it. Getting tattoos over bony areas hurts more than getting them over fleshy areas.

But Why?

An estimated one in six teenagers has tattoos. Each of them has sat through at least an hour of getting jabbed for a small to medium-sized tattoo.

Why do people go through this pain? The reasons are innumerable. For some it's a fashion statement. They get their tattoos and show them off whenever they can. A tattoo can be a great conversation starter. Some like the shock value—the look on their parents' faces. For others, getting a tattoo is a very serious, personal choice. They get the tattoo in a hidden place and reveal it to few.

To Consider

1. How have famous personalities affected the tattoo fashion trend?

2. In your view, what is the difference between the tattoo fashion trend and a popular new clothing style?

3. Do you have a tattoo? Why? Why not?

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Video Review

Complete all questions in while reviewing the video.

Did you know...

The 5 000-year-old body of Oetzi “The Iceman”—found in 1991 in the Austrian Alps—had 57 tattoos?

At one time, Maori people embalmed the heads of dead relatives and prisoners of war? Europeans traded with the Maori for these heads, which they prized for their tattoos. The trade was finally stopped in 1831.

The most tattooed men in the world are Tom Leppard of Scotland and Lucky Rich of Australia? Their bodies are 99.9 per cent covered.

One of the world’s two most tattooed women is Krystyne Kolorful—a Canadian?

1. As you view the video, you’ll hear about many people who have tattoos. List the many walks of life from which they come.

2. Why is the Borneo tattoo culture disappearing?

3. Where does the word *tattoo* come from? _____

4. What did Captain Cook have to do with the history of the tattoo?

5. How much does it cost to get a typical tattoo? _____

6. What does about half of that pay for? _____

7. How long does it take to get a typical tattoo? _____

8. How many tattoo shops are in Vancouver now?

9. According to CBC reporter Dan Bjarnason, there are two basic philosophies of tattooism. What are they?

10. According to Vince Hemmingson, men and women tend to get tattoos for different reasons. What are these reasons?

11. What percent of Americans between the ages of 25 and 29 have at least one tattoo? _____ per cent

12. According to renowned tattoo artist Lyle Tuttle, “Names aren’t smart.” What does he mean?

13. What technology does Dr. Martin Braun use to remove tattoos?

14. How much more expensive is removing tattoos compared with getting tattoos?

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A Short History of Body Art

Did you know...

Humans are the only creatures on the planet to decorate themselves? Why do you think this is so?

Warning!

Piercings are not always safe. Infections in ear cartilage can be hard to heal because the area gets so little blood that antibiotics cannot reach the site. Tongue piercings cause chipped teeth, numb tongues, and speech impediments. And there's always the risk of rings catching on something and tearing flesh.

The adult body has about 1.4 to 1.9 square metres of “canvas.” Some people may choose to keep their canvases clean. But others, from all walks of life, from all cultures, and from every period of history, have transformed their bodies. For many, the change is practical—humans must wear clothing in cold climates. But we have also used clothing to say something about ourselves. Most people enjoy wearing clothing that makes them look good.

But our desire to transform our appearance goes further than our coverings—much further. Even before we began wearing clothes, we decorated our bodies with paints. Prehistoric rock drawings show bodies decorated with markings. Then there are the permanent transformations. Just consider the following examples of body art techniques used in various cultures at different times in history:

- wearing makeup (ancient Egyptians used kohl to circle their eyes)
- wearing body and facial paint (First Nations prepared this way for battle)
- piercing with bone or metal
- scarification or branding (creating raised scars by burning or cutting)
- stretching flesh over disks (ear lobes, lower lips)
- extending necks (with brass rings, among the Paduang people of Myanmar)
- deforming bones (foot-binding in China; flattened foreheads among the Chinook Nation)
- squeezing waists with corsets (Europe)

- twisting hair into dreadlocks (originating with the Masai in Kenya; embraced by Rastafarians in Jamaica)
- implants and reductions
- liposuction, lifts, and tucks

In modern Canadian society, it is very common to cut and style hair, shave faces and legs, and put on makeup. Do these practices seem “normal” to you? In many cultures, they are not. “Normal” varies from culture to culture and society to society. In Maori society, red lips were considered ugly, so women tattooed their lips blue. Beauty also changes over time.

Let's look at two forms of body art that are becoming more common in mainstream Canadian society: body piercing and henna tattoos.

Piercing

A popular fashion trend creating some controversy is piercing. We pierce our earlobes, ear cartilage, and eyebrows. We pierce our lips, noses, and tongues. We pierce our navels, nipples, and genitals. If it's covered in skin, someone has pierced it.

Over the space of two decades, piercing has become common. Not only kids but also young professionals sport unusual piercings. Although many companies have a “no visible piercings” rule, some professions are a little more accepting. One young high school English teacher sports a variety of piercings on her face. Luckily, the southern Ontario school where she teaches allows her to do this. The students she teaches think she's cool for having them. So the piercings may actually help her do her job.

Did you know...

In a special ritual, Hindu brides get intricate henna tattoos on their hands and feet just before their weddings?

Henna Tattoos

Henna, also called mehndi, is a process of staining the skin. This orange to reddish-brown powder has been used to make skin designs in India and North Africa for 7 000 years. Its swirls and dot designs are now becoming popular in North America, as famous personalities such as Prince, Demi Moore, and Erykah Badu get henna tattoos. Here's how you get a henna tattoo that should last about three weeks:

- The artist cleans the skin with Ethiopian machlabia oil to make the pores more receptive to the henna.
- The artist puts the henna into a small bag much like an icing bag used for decorating cakes. He or she squeezes out a design on the recipient's skin.
- The henna tattoo is coated with lemon juice and then sets for about five hours.
- After the henna is washed off, the design takes about 48 hours to darken.

Activities

1. Create a three-column list of body art. You could use the following headings:

Temporary Minor Body Alterations Major Body Alterations

Find examples of each type of body art in the text above. Think of additional examples.

2. Which types of body art do you believe would be acceptable in mainstream Canadian society? Does this make it "good."? Explain your opinion.
3. Create a Venn diagram to compare liposuction, breast enhancement, or face lifts with tattoos. Think about the reasons why people get these procedures done.
4. Did you know that six Canadian prisons have tattoo shops? How would you explain this fact?

Extension

5. Choose one of the forms of body art listed above. Research the history of this practice to create a brief report that a) describes the technique, b) recounts the history, and c) shows pictures or illustrations of this form of body art.

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The Very Long History of the Tattoo

Cultural Influence

The spread of tattoos from Polynesia shows how a small society can influence world culture. Can you think of other examples where small nations have influenced the cultural habits of larger nations?

Over the years tattoos have had a varied reputation. The Greeks and Romans thought tattooing was barbaric. They used tattoos to label thieves and slaves. Athenians tattooed prisoners of war with pictures of their ships. Tattoos were so despised that the Greek word for tattoo, *stigma*, came to mean “shame.”

In Japan around the year 700, tattoos indicated a person’s high status. The intricate, colourful swirls of traditional Japanese tattoos usually covered the back and arms. The imagery included interlocking wind, waves, flowers, and dragons. The beautiful designs illustrated a person’s merits, such as courage and loyalty. By the 17th century, however, the tattoo had been embraced by the Yakuza—organized crime.

In India, tattoos were often used to indicate caste, or social group. They had no negative connotation. This was not the case in Europe. A reference in Leviticus of the Old Testament warns against tattooing, so during the Middle Ages, tattooing in Europe disappeared.

At the same time, in the Samoan and Maori cultures of the South Pacific, the tattoo was the privilege of highly respected individuals. The elaborate tattoos that covered their faces and bodies with swirls were witness to their family, history, and virtues. In 1768, Britain’s Captain James Cook visited the Marquesa Islands. Here his expedition artist, Sydney Parkinson, sketched people’s tattoos. His drawings were displayed in a museum. Europe was enthralled. They were also thrilled with the heavily tattooed Tahitian, called M’ai, who came to Europe with Cook.

A Long Underground Road

The sailors on Cook’s ships were also impressed, not only by the effect, but also by the pain people went through to get a tattoo. They began getting tattoos themselves.

- A sailor who had crossed the equator would sport a turtle.
- An anchor meant that he had sailed across the Atlantic.
- A dragon meant the sailor had visited China.
- Many sailors sported religious scenes on their backs in the hopes that no one would dare whip them.

By the 19th century, 90 per cent of U.S. navy sailors had tattoos. This was typical of sailors from many countries. And sailors travelled the world, spreading the tattoo fad far and wide.

Because sailors frequented rundown ports, where criminals and prostitutes were common, tattoos soon acquired a seedy reputation. For a long time, tattoos remained a mysterious rarity among the middle and upper classes. Royalty such as King George V of England kept them hidden. In the 1930s, people flocked to “freak shows” to see “tattooed ladies” who claimed to have been tattooed against their will. (In fact, people were so desperate for work during the Depression that men and women alike went under the needle in hopes of getting work in a circus.)

Gradually tattoos became more popular among certain social groups. Criminals, gang members, and motorcycle club members began wearing them. The tattoo became the badge of the outcasts—those who lived in society’s underbelly.

Did you know...

A teardrop tattoo is often worn by people who have committed murder, served time, or have lost a fellow gang member to violence? Some women get a teardrop tattoo for every year that their boyfriends or husbands spent in jail.

Did you know...

Sixty-one per cent of tattooed Canadian teens are girls?

Did you know...

A recent trend in North America is tattooed makeup? Some people opt for permanent lipstick, eyeliner, or lip liner. Believe it or not, the godfather of soul, James Brown, has the tattoo artist Sheila May to thank for his eyebrows.

Women Embrace the Tattoo

In the 1970s, tattoos became popular with women from all walks of life when the women's liberation movement was growing strong. Tattoos became a popular aspect of the counterculture for women wanting to rebel or reinvent themselves. It was a way of saying, "This is my body, and I'll decorate it as I choose." Women admired and copied their idols. For example, more than 100 female fans followed the example of Janice Joplin: they enlisted the famous tattoo artist Lyle Tuttle to give them a heart, just like Janice's, after she died of a drug overdose.

Mass Non-conformity

Through the 1970s and 1980s, tattooing gradually spread among music fans. It became wildly popular with punk rock

bands and their fans. Eventually, the tattoos appearing repeatedly on MTV gave them the cachet they needed. The tattoo became a statement of youth culture. Everyone wanted to belong to the "tribe" of non-conformists. Everyone wanted to be different. So began the massive fashion trend of the tattoo.

The Largest Growing Market

You might be surprised to learn that the largest growing market for tattoos is suburban moms. Some get a tattoo to mark a divorce. Others enjoy the tattoo as an outward expression of inner being—reminiscent of their hippie days. Some use tattoos to mask disfiguring mastectomy scars. As breast cancer survivor Marcia Rasner put it, getting her tattoo was a way of spitting in the face of death.

To Consider

1. What episode in the history of the tattoo do you find particularly interesting? Explain your opinion.
2. What are three examples of ways that the tattoo has been used to express allegiance to a group?
3. Women involved in gangs often have the phrase "Property of . . . [the gang name]" tattooed. How is this demeaning to women?
4. Tattoos can serve many different purposes. For example, they can be a very compact souvenir of a trip to a distant land. In a small group, brainstorm a list of other purposes that tattoos have served both in Canadian culture and in other countries and other times.
5. Think of five tattoo designs that you think people might regret getting later in life.

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What People Say

Did you know...

In a recent poll, 20 per cent of Canadian male teenagers want a tattoo, while 22 per cent of female teenagers want one?

People tend to hold strong opinions about tattoos. High school students who attend Birchmount Park Collegiate Institute in Ontario were asked their opinions about tattoos. Read them and indicate whether you agree or disagree. Be prepared to explain your choices.

“A lot of tattoos are very detailed and creative. They are art.” — 15-year-old female who wants a tattoo in the future
Agree _____ **Disagree** _____

“I think girls should not get tattoos on their arms. I hate that.” — 14-year-old female who wants a tattoo in the future
Agree _____ **Disagree** _____

“I don’t like huge tattoos or stupid ones though. I like small, more conservative, tasteful tattoos.” — 14-year-old female who wants a tattoo in the future
Agree _____ **Disagree** _____

“I honestly don’t like tattoos very much because they are permanent (unless you have laser treatment to remove them). I’ve just always imagined it to be painful.” — 14-year-old female who does not want a tattoo
Agree _____ **Disagree** _____

“Well, tattoos are pretty cool, and a way of expressing what kind of person you are. Tattoos should be thought about before getting them, and mean something to the person wearing it.” — 15-year-old male who wants a tattoo in the future
Agree _____ **Disagree** _____

“Tattoos look better on younger people. But [an older person with a tattoo]

shows that they once had a wild side.” — 15-year-old female who wants a tattoo in the future
Agree _____ **Disagree** _____

“Sometimes tattoos [on older people] get wrinkled over and just look like a thing from a drunk night 20 years ago.” — 14-year-old female who wants a tattoo in the future
Agree _____ **Disagree** _____

“No, [it should not be legal for minors to get a tattoo without parental consent] because sometimes kids do things because other people are doing it, and they may regret it.” — 14-year-old female who wants a tattoo in the future
Agree _____ **Disagree** _____

“Regardless if I want one or not, I do feel that it should be legal for teenagers to get [tattoos] without parental consent. It’s the teen’s body, not the parent’s.” — 14-year-old female who does not want a tattoo in the future
Agree _____ **Disagree** _____

“I don’t think [parental consent should be required], but I don’t think small children should get tattoos, either. Thirteen would be a good age.” — 15-year-old male who wants a tattoo in the future
Agree _____ **Disagree** _____

“I think a [parental consent requirement] is somewhat good because it does stop irresponsible people from getting tattoos. But those teens who are responsible should not be punished because of wussy parents.” — 14-year-old female who wants a tattoo in the future
Agree _____ **Disagree** _____

Quote

"tattoos are a totally personal decision. Don't tell someone not to get one, don't tell someone to get one either. i thought about mine for 13 years before doing it, i guess you could say i wanted to be sure." (sic) — Posted by "Half Full" on March 15, 2005 on www.discovervancouver.com/forum/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=753.

Further Research

To see Health Canada's Special Report on Youth, Piercing, Tattooing and Hepatitis C, go to www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hepc/hepatitis_c/pdf/youthPiercings.

Digging Deeper

1. Read the opinions on the previous page. Decide which two you agree with most. Explain why you agree with them. Decide which two you disagree with most. Explain why you disagree with them.
2. If you're considering getting a tattoo, you should first ask yourself a few questions. If you're female, for example, how would you feel about a shoulder tattoo showing when you wear a formal dress? In a small group, produce a list of at least five questions a person should ask himself or herself before making a final decision.
3. Temporary tattoos are easy to buy now, not only for children but also for young people looking to make a splash at a party. How would this trend affect young people's opinions about permanent tattoos?
4. In 2001, Health Canada published a study it had financed about Canadian teens. The study discovered that teens with tattoos are four times as likely to smoke cigarettes as other teens, and twice as likely to drink alcohol at least once a week. A study of U.S. teens done at about the same time discovered that teens with tattoos are four times more likely to engage in sexual intercourse, and twice as likely to drop out of school or engage in violent behaviour. Teens with tattoos also tend to listen to goth, punk, metal, and electronica music. What do you think comes first—the tattoo or the behaviour? Do these facts suggest that it might not be a good idea to get a tattoo? Discuss this question in a small group.

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Tattoo Health

Did you know...

A recent study shows that people with tattoos are nine times more likely to have hepatitis C than people without tattoos? A Health Canada study of Canadian teens found that only four per cent of the teens surveyed realized that Hepatitis C is a risk when getting a tattoo or a piercing.

Want a tattoo? Here's the worst thing you can do: go out to the art-supply store for a \$3 bottle of India ink and give it to a trusted friend to poke into your skin with a sharpened paper clip. Chances are the "artwork" will be crudely executed and will look, well, amateurish.

So if you don't get infected, you go to a tattoo shop to get it "covered up." This is much more expensive than starting from scratch. You cross your fingers your friend didn't give you a blood-borne disease.

Tattoo professionals, unlike amateurs, know the regulations. Most of them autoclave (sterilize) their equipment, use new packs of ink and new needles for each customer, wear gloves, and know exactly how deep to go and how much ink to use. They know the procedures that will protect you against contracting diseases such as hepatitis B and C, HIV, and tetanus. Most professional tattooists are experienced artists. They'll help you choose or develop a design that's right for you, and they'll execute it professionally. The last thing you want on your skin is a permanent mistake.

The Dangers

What are the dangers that you want to avoid? There are a number. Any time you pierce the skin, you allow for the possibility of bacteria getting into your body.

- **Blood-borne diseases:** If needles are reused or equipment is not sterilized properly in an autoclave, you run the risk of getting a disease from a person who was tattooed earlier. These

diseases include hepatitis B and C, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), herpes, and tetanus. Hepatitis B and C are both diseases of the liver. Some sufferers require a liver transplant to survive.

- **Infection:** If bacteria or viruses are on the equipment or your skin, they can enter your body with the needle and cause an infection. *Streptococcus* and *Staphylococcus* are two examples of this. Infection can cause unsightly scars.
 - **Allergies:** The strong tattoo pigments can cause an allergic skin reaction or a life-long allergy.
 - **Reaction to foreign substances:** Teens sometimes use India ink, mascara, ballpoint-pen ink, food colouring, and even soot to make home-made tattoos. None of these substances were made to go inside your body. They're poisons. Don't use them.
 - **High levels of lead:** The pigment used in tattoos may contain very high levels of lead and seven other metals. Levels vary.
 - **Ink at the wrong depth:** Amateurs usually tattoo too shallow or too deep. This creates a blurry tattoo that will fade quickly. As well, your body has to cope with all the ink that doesn't stay in your skin—not a good thing.
- Even people who have tattoos don't seem to be aware of the risks. Several studies show that people are more worried about the risk of angering their parents than they are about the risk of getting a crippling disease.

Did you know...

The Canadian Blood Services takes seriously the threat of blood-borne diseases in people with tattoos? It forbids people who have had a tattoo or piercing from giving blood for a period of 12 months after the piercing.

Further Research

To read about Health Canada's *Infection Prevention and Control Practices for Personal Services: Tattooing, Ear/Body Piercing, and Electrolysis*, go to www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/ccdr-rmtc/99pdf/cdr25s3e.pdf.

Finding the Right Tattoo Shop

The right tattoo shop will follow procedures that reduce your health risks. But not all tattoo shops respect professional standards. Shops are inspected annually, and Health Canada distributes guidelines. But there is no guarantee that all tattoo artists will follow these guidelines. So how can you be sure that you'll be safe? Here are a few questions to ask before you let anyone put a needle in you.

- Is the shop clean and bright?
- Where is the autoclave (sterilizer)? Ask to see it.
- Do the artists open the needle package in front of each customer? (Needles should never be reused.)
- Do they use approved tattoo pigments?
- Do they use a new pot of ink for each customer?
- Do the tattoo artists wear medical gloves during the procedure?
- Do they sterilize the skin?
- Do they provide instructions for after-care?
- Do they follow Health Canada's Infection Control Guidelines?

If you're even a little unsure, walk away. There are plenty of tattoo shops. Educate yourself a little more about

tattoo safety. Take your time to find a shop and an artist you can trust. Or take the safest route: no tattoo at all.

The more reputable shops require a parent's written consent—and sometimes their presence—for any tattooing on teenagers who have not yet reached the age of majority.

Health Canada Warning about Black Henna

Generally, henna is considered much safer than traditional tattoos, because it dyes the surface of the skin rather than puncturing the skin. Nonetheless, so-called black henna tattooing does pose health problems. In 2003, Health Canada warned the public about it. Traditional henna, which comes from a plant, is quite safe. But traditional henna takes a long time to set before the paste can be removed. Henna artists started using black henna, which sometimes includes an ingredient called para-phenylenediamine (PPD). PPD creates a darker tattoo, and sets quickly. However, it can cause severe allergic reactions, with symptoms such as red rashes, swelling, itching, blistering, open sores, and scarring. It may also lead to life-long allergies. So always ask about the ingredients of the henna before getting a black henna tattoo.

Analysis

1. What are the health risks of getting a tattoo?
2. You can get a tattoo at home by an amateur. Or you can go to a professional tattoo shop. Which strategy poses less risk to your health? Explain.
3. How can you increase your chances of avoiding health problems connected to your tattoo?
4. Health Canada now recommends that tattoo parlours require parental consent before minors can get tattoos. Should teenagers be able to get tattoos without parental consent?

Make a table to compare arguments for and against. Think about health and legal considerations. Think about how teenagers' tastes and opinions may change over the coming decades.

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Getting Rid of Your Tattoo

FYI

You can include Johnny Depp among the people who regret a tattoo. When in a relationship with Winona Ryder, he got a tattoo that said "Winona Forever." After they broke up, he had it changed to "Wino Forever."

FYI

Scientists began studying laser technology in 1986 as a way to remove port wine stain birthmarks. As an afterthought, they realized it would work on tattoos too.

"I definitely wish I hadn't done it. I am different now. I wish they were gone. . . . It's depressing. When I was in high school, I needed to have these tattoos so badly. I thought I was so cool. Now I'm paying a huge price." — Fawna Nelson, 23, quoted in John DiConsiglio, "Bodily Harm: Does the rebel in you want a tattoo? Beware." *Scholastic Choices*, January 1, 2005

"We had a young, female employee who had a tattoo slightly above her breast. We were extremely upset, as was our client, when she was in their trade show booth wearing a shirt under a suit jacket that allowed it to occasionally be seen. . . . We certainly would not hire her back." — anonymous, Chagrin Falls, quoted in "Are tattoos appropriate in the workplace?" *Crain's Cleveland Business*, January 24, 2005

A 2002 study in the British *Journal of Dermatology* showed that 75 per cent of the people who have tattoos eventually regret having them.

People change. That SpongeBob SquarePants tattoo may be important to you when you're 16. But it might not seem so cool when you're 37. What if you want to get a job in a company that wouldn't want to hire a person with a lizard tattoo? Or maybe your tattoo dedicates your love to an old girlfriend,

Sherrie Lee. It might not go over so well with the new girlfriend, Darla.

At one time, getting rid of a tattoo was impossible. Now there are options, but none is perfect.

Dermabrasion: Freezing and then sanding the skin to its deeper layers. This is very painful but it's cheap. It can leave scars.

Surgery: Cutting out the tattoo. Sometimes this involves replacing the skin with a graft from another part of the body. This is not always viable, especially with larger tattoos. It usually leaves a scar.

Cover-ups: An expert can sometimes cover up an unwanted tattoo by tattooing another design on top.

Laser Technology: Shatters the ink particles, so that the body can then get rid of them. Different lasers work for different colours. It's a very lengthy process involving as many as 10 treatments that feel like hot oil hitting the skin. And it's expensive, running as high as \$5 000. About a third of patients end up with clear skin. More than 10 per cent end up with scars. Green and yellow inks are particularly hard to get rid of. The treatment is most successful for tattoos on light skin.

Activities

1. Write a list of rules for a tattoo parlour. Expand on the information offered above by researching on the Internet. Or, create a fact sheet about tattoos that lists the risks and costs of tattooing and tattoo removal. Be sure to cover information about how personal taste changes.
2. Draw a sketch of a tattooed image. Imagine the person who has it gains a lot of weight. Draw an "after" sketch to show how the tattoo would change.

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Activity

"I didn't mind the tattoo, but it was flash art, which was on the walls of the tattoo place. I ended up running into someone with the same exact tattoo in the same spot. . . . I know now that you should make all your tattoos originals. And that's why my back is completely original." — Thomas V. Gilbert III, 27, quoted in "The Temptation of the Tattoo," *The Post-Standard*, March 28, 2004 (Syracuse, New York)

There are few people who are flippant about getting a tattoo. Most people who put something permanent on their body want it to be something of great personal significance.

People from virtually every culture create symbols or artwork that they feel represents them. The Haida create totems indicating family lineage and history. Aristocratic European families had crests designed with colours and symbols meaningful to the members of the family. Early humans painted in caves images of great importance to them. Countries have flags; sports teams have their logos; and fashion lines have their stylized brand names.

People use art as a way of expressing who they are, both collectively and personally. Why not create a design or symbol that is of particular importance to you? It doesn't have to be for a tattoo. You could create a personal crest to post in your locker or on the first page of your journal. You could scan it and use it as your visual representation in a chat room, or on the main page of your blog. You could make a design to apply as a henna tattoo.

Designing Your Own Symbol

1. First look around the Internet to see examples of tattoo art. You will find everything from the crude to the discreet, from the artistic to the bombastic, from the beautiful to the truly frightening. Be careful. Some tattoo sites contain images that may be offensive to you.
2. Think about what is important to you. It could be a sport, your ethnic background, your faith, or perhaps an ideal. It could be a human quality you admire. What do you feel passionate about?
3. Think of a design you could develop to represent what is important to you. For example, you might choose a design of a pine tree to remind you of summers at camp. You might choose a Celtic design to remind you of your heritage. You might choose a musical instrument, dance shoes, or a hockey stick to represent an extracurricular activity that you love. You might choose a flower to remind you of the ephemeral nature of youth. You might want to incorporate some text, perhaps scripture, of particular significance to you.
4. Get your idea reviewed by your teacher, and then create your design. Write a brief description of the significance of your design to you.