

# Coming of age

## 1 Becoming an adult

- a) Look at photo 1.  
What statement do you think the person is trying to make with his appearance? What do you think?
- b) Now look at photos 2 and 3.  
What do you think these body markings show?
- c) Now read the lines below. Were you right?

In many (traditional) societies, when a child becomes an adult, he or she is marked in some way to show that they are now a full member of that society. These are coming-of-age rituals. (Today this is often done with paint, so that the mark is not lifelong.)

- d) Sometimes becoming an adult is marked by a party, or special presents – or even an ad in the local paper. Look at the ad on the right. Do you think this is a good idea? Why/Why not?

### COMING OF AGE

**TOM BARNET-JONES**  
18 today!!!

Happy Birthday Tom!  
Have a great day!



- e) What do young people in your country do when they become adults?



1



2



3

## 2 Coming of age in Japan

- a) Read the text and explain what is happening in the photo to a partner.

In Japan young people are not allowed to vote, drink or smoke under the age of 20. Every year on the second Monday in January it is *Seijin Shiki* (Adults' Day), which is a national holiday. The young people who become 20 years old that year take part in an important ceremony. For this ceremony many of them dress in traditional Japanese clothes. The ceremony takes place at a school or other state building. There are speeches about the rights and duties of adults, and at the end the new adults are given a small present. Then they often have a party with their family.



- b) Imagine you are a Japanese 19-year-old about to turn 20. Would you want to take part in *Seijin Shiki*? Would you enjoy it? Explain why/why not. Talk about it to your partner.

## 3 14, 16, 18, 21?

- a) This information appears on a police website in Britain. Compare it with what you know about young people and the law in the US and Germany.

**At 13:** You are allowed to work for a few hours a week.

**At 14:** You can go to a pub but not buy or drink alcohol; you are responsible for wearing a seat belt.

**At 16:** You can get a licence to ride a moped; leave school; leave home, if your parents agree; choose your own doctor; buy a lottery ticket; get married (if one parent agrees); work full-time; drink wine or beer with a meal in a restaurant; join the army.

**At 17:** You can get a licence to drive a car; leave home even if your parents don't want you to.

**At 18:** You can buy a knife, razor blade or axe; you can vote in elections; buy fireworks; be a blood donor; change your name; buy alcohol; drink alcohol in a pub.

**At 21:** Get a licence to ride a big motorbike.

- b) Most people in Britain think of 18 as 'coming of age'. Which of the rights that you have at 18 do you think is the most important one?
- c) At any age you have the right to say no to having sex. But it is illegal to have sex with anyone under a certain age. This age (the 'age of consent') is different in different countries. What do you think the age of consent should be? Give reasons.

### AGE OF CONSENT AROUND THE WORLD

Argentina – 15

Bahamas – 16

Canada – 14

Colombia – male 14, female 12

India – 18

Indonesia – male 19, female 16

Hungary – 14

Germany – 14

Spain – 13

Tunisia – 20

UK – 16

US – (federal age) 16

- d) As well as having rights, being an adult means having duties, being responsible for things. What examples can you think of?

**consent** [kən'sent] Zustimmung

## Lösungen/Lösungsvorschläge

1

- a) He might think he's cool, like a rock star, with his tattoos. He might want to show he isn't conservative. He might want to show what sort of music, or which group of people, he likes.
- b) The people in pictures 2 and 3 are from traditional societies / tribes. The markings show that the people are now adults.
- c), d), e) *Individuelle Lösungen*

2

- a) The young people in the picture are going to an 'Adults' Day' ceremony in Japan. On this special day many of them dress in beautiful traditional Japanese clothes.
- b) – I like the idea of a special ceremony with traditional clothes. I think I would enjoy it because it marks a special day and all your friends of the same age are doing it too.  
– I don't think I would enjoy it. There's no need for a ceremony like that and if you don't wear traditional clothes on any other day, why would you want to wear them on that day?

3

- a) *Individuelle Lösungen*
- b) The most important right that you get at 18 should be the right to vote in elections. However, many young people don't know anything about politics and don't think it's important to vote, but it's the only way you can be involved in what happens in your country and in Europe.
- c) In different societies young people may have to become adults at an earlier age: that means having rights but also responsibilities, and treating other people with respect. For example, if young people have sex, are they old enough and responsible enough to treat each other with respect in a relationship, to guard against disease, or to look after a baby? In our society 12 is probably too young for that.
- d) Other responsibilities are to have respect for the environment and natural resources: not to waste things without thinking; to take part in the political life of your area and your country (politicians want to please the voters); to try to help other people when they need it.