Ejercicios resueltos > Write in your own words

Skin Art

Prehistoric man was thought to have practised tattooing, that is, puncturing the skin with tools dipped in pigment that left a permanent mark. And mummies with decorative tattoos have been discovered in many parts of the world. Yet for nearly as long as there has been tattooing, there has been condemnation. The Romans considered decorative tattooing barbaric, which is still evident in the Latin word for tattoo, stigma, and used tattoos to mark slaves and criminals. Despite its deep roots in ancient cultures, tattooing had fallen out of practice in Europe by the time Britain's Captain Cook set sail for the Polynesian Islands in 1768.

Though Cook and his men were not the first Europeans to encounter Oceanic tattooing, they were the first to record the practice systematically. Cook also introduced to the English language the word tattoo, taken from the Tahitian. Cook's men did not fully understand the significance of tattooing among the Oceanic people, for whom the designs were symbolic protection against earthly enemies. Yet the sailors were fascinated and eager to be marked themselves. They adopted the practice with gusto, designing mariner motifs of their own. A turtle meant a sailor had crossed the equator, and an anchor that he had sailed the Atlantic. Crucifixion scenes were also popular motifs --a vain attempt to avoid being beaten, as it was hoped no one would dare hit the image of Christ.

Today, all types of people get tattooed. Though the art was adopted from distant cultures and adapted to suit Western tastes, the attraction of tattooing has changed very little.

In your own words and based on the ideas in the text, answer the following questions. (?)

a) *Why did the Polynesian Islanders get tattooed?*

The Polynesian people used tattoos as symbols to protect themselves against enemies.

Ayuda: La respuesta la encontramos en el segundo párrafo, donde explica que estas gentes utilizaban los tatuajes como protección simbólica frente a sus enemigos.

Vocabulario: *"protect"*: proteger; *"against "*: contra.

b) *Why did the sailors choose to have crosses tattooed?.*

Sailors had crosses tattooed on their bodies because they thought no enemies would try to hit the image of Christ and so they would not get hurt that way.

Ayuda: En el segundo párrafo nos explica los símbolos que utilizaban los marineros en sus tatuajes. Las cruces (*crucifixion scenes*), como símbolo de Cristo, intentaban evitar que fueran golpeados por enemigos temerosos de atentar contra su imagen.

Vocabulario: *"sailors":* marineros ; *"hit":* golpear ; *"get hurt":* ser herido.