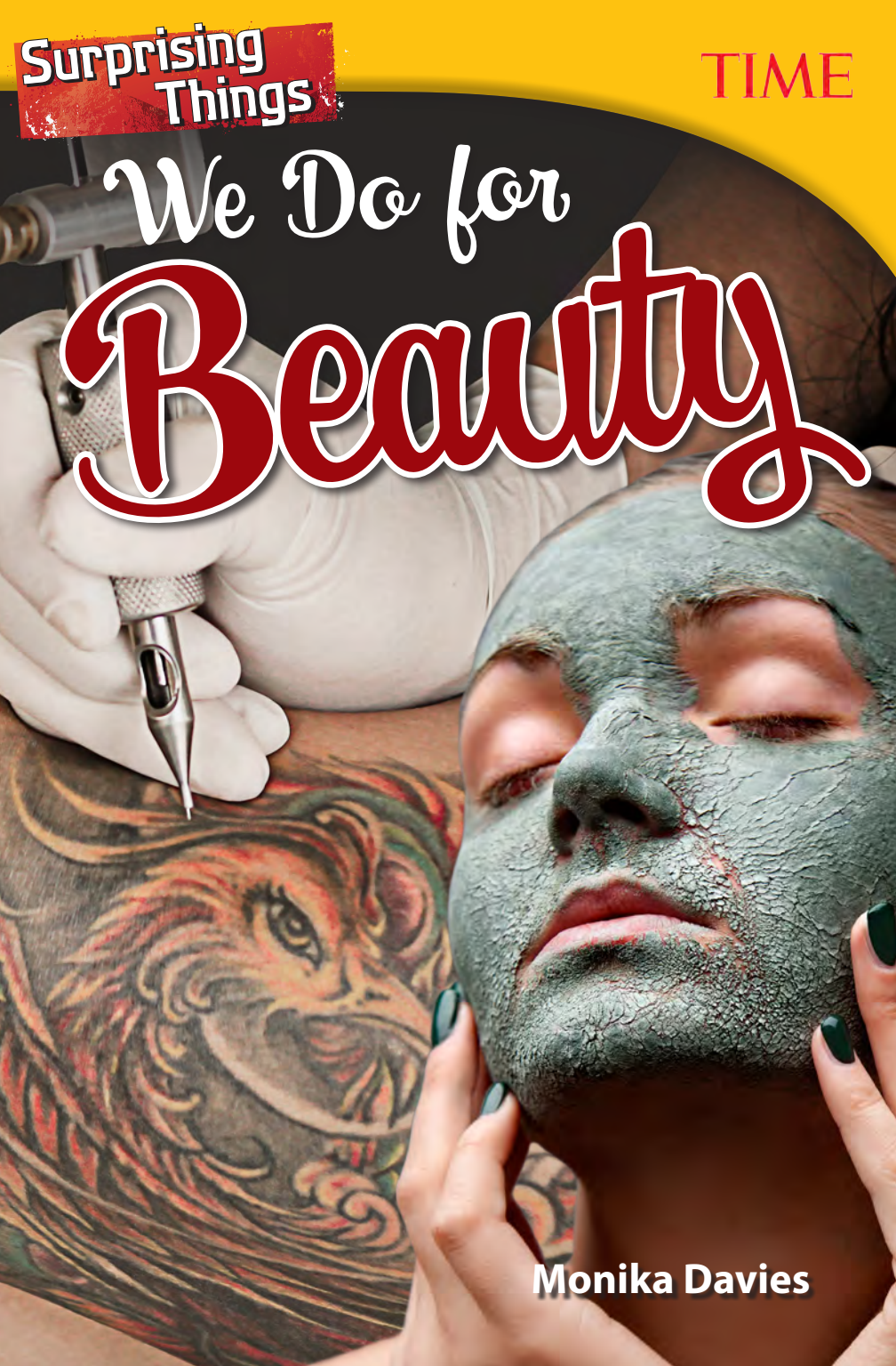
Surprising Things

TIME

We Do for Beauty



Monika Davies

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Unconventional Approaches

People have done some pretty surprising things in the name of beauty. Glance through any style magazine and you'll find no lack of creative beauty routines to try. A quick Internet search will show eye-popping photos of the most bizarre ways people have enhanced their looks over the years.

Around the world, beauty fanatics have smeared their faces with **dehydrated** bird droppings and willingly stuck needles through their skin to wear jewelry. Rewind history, and you'll glimpse sky-high hair and eye shadow made of ground-up gemstones.

Beauty itself is a weird idea. The perception of beauty, of course, varies from person to person and culture to culture. Our idea of beauty reflects our lifestyle and values. Learning more about another culture's interpretation of what makes people beautiful gives meaningful insight into that culture's way of life.

Settle in, and investigate some of the most intriguing beauty practices—both ancient and current—around the world.

Is It Art?

Is a tattoo that winds and weaves a tale on a person's spine considered art? How about a face carefully painted with makeup? If we think of these beauty practices as art forms, does that change our opinions of their values?



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Digging into Makeup Bags

Examining a makeup bag from another country—or another time—is a fascinating glimpse into a lifestyle different from one's own. Let's take a look to see what people have tucked into their cosmetic totes.

Korea

Two Cleansers

Many Koreans take pride in having flawless complexions, a direct result of a 10-step (yes, 10!) skin-care routine. The process begins with an oil-based cleanser, followed with a foaming cleanser. Koreans are gentle with their faces, using circular motions to cleanse a day's grime away.

Essence

Uniquely Korean, essence is a highly concentrated liquid. Full of beneficial properties, such as **glycerin**, essence hydrates your skin. A staple in the Asian beauty regime, essence is said to promote a wrinkle-free complexion.



Sheet Masks

While sheet masks can make you look like a mummy, Koreans swear by this unique skin-care solution. Sheet masks are treasure troves of skin-friendly vitamins. Letting the mask settle on your face allows the vitamins to absorb, ideally giving you the glow that's advertised!

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Kimchi

The famous saying "you are what you eat" is also a part of Korean skin care. Kimchi is a beloved Korean superfood. This spicy fermented cabbage is loaded with **antioxidants**, which create a clear complexion.

A Lucrative Market

In 2014, the world's spending on cosmetics was a robust $460 billion, and that number continues to climb.



In Asian countries, there is an emphasis on having pale skin, and many beauty products are created to brighten and lighten the complexion. However, Americans tend to idolize a tan complexion and spend their dollars on self-tanners.

- Why do you think the ideal complexions in American and Asian cultures are so different?
- What are some beauty ideals from around the world that directly contrast with your country's own?
- What kind of cultural influences affect these beauty ideals?

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India

Coconut Oil

In India, as in many places, beauty secrets for both men and women are passed from one generation to the next, ensuring traditions live on through the family tree. This holds true for coconut oil, which is responsible for Indian women's proudest feature—lush hair. Grab a scoop of coconut oil in your hands and work it through your hair. Leave the oil on overnight, and shampoo the next day. This is guaranteed to leave you with a soft and smooth mane.

Rose Water

History's princesses reportedly used rose water for its special qualities. While rose water has a simple ingredient list, the liquid holds its own as a soothing, firming skin beautifier and a sweet mood-booster. Red, inflamed skin has met its ultimate enemy.

Turmeric

Yellow turmeric powder, native to India, can be found on both kitchen and bathroom shelves. Mostly used to spice up dishes, turmeric is also believed to help with common colds and indigestion. In the beauty world, turmeric is a job juggler. It is alternatively known as a skin healer, an anti-aging wizard, and a great foe of oily skin.

Gram Flour

Also known as *besan*, gram flour is the go-to **exfoliating** agent in India. Gram flour is made of chickpeas and can transform a dull complexion to one that glows.



Haldi Ceremony

Turmeric (*haldi*) is the superstar of a traditional bridal ceremony in India. On the morning of the wedding, both bridal partners are covered in turmeric paste to brighten their complexions for the ceremony, while also keeping evil spirits at bay.

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Reader's Guide

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1. Why do people place such a strong emphasis on appearance?
2. Consider the different cultures described in this book. Why do their respective definitions of beauty differ?
3. What beauty traditions are surprising in your country?
4. Some of the beauty practices desribed in this book can be painful and even dangerous. Despite this, they are common in the cultures identified in this book. Why?

