



Wigs

Talk about wigs with your class.

Children who hate to comb their hair will enjoy these questions and answers!

- Do people have their own hair underneath? [Answer: Yes.]
- Do people take off their wigs at night? [Answer: Yes, they mount them on wig stands.]
- How much do wigs weigh? [Answer: 2 to 5 pounds/4.5 to 11 kilograms.]
- How do they keep their shape? [Answer: rags to fill in the hair, pins to keep it in place.]
- Was the hair all human? [Answer: some of it came from horse tails.]
- Why are wigs white? [Answer: flour or lead compound was blown onto the hair by servants in the “powder room” — a name we still use today.]
- How did the powder stick to the wig? [Answer: using pig’s fat. Imagine the smell of rancid fat, and you can see why perfume was invented in France!]
- How did people move with high wigs balanced on their heads? [Answer: Inside the wig was lever they could use to lower the hair.]
- What is the purpose of wigs? [Answer: to give stature and elegance to the wearer.]
- What about lice? [Answer: Lice were indeed prevalent. It is often said that the 18th century was the “century of scratching.” At elegant dinners, each place setting would include a silver claw for scratching at the lice that thrived on the flour and pig’s fat in the wigs.]

After the Baroque era, wigs became shorter. We see this in Mozart’s small pony-tail and Beethoven’s wild natural hair. Wigs fell out of fashion by the end of the 1700s.

