The Rituals of Life Events

Weddings and births have always been important moments for families and society. Not surprisingly, they involve celebrations and rituals. Apart from the religious rituals in many cultures for both of these events, typical celebrations also include the bridal shower and the baby shower. Many people think of these showers as modern rituals, but in fact both of them have their **roots** in history.

[ ] the woman who is getting married, and they are usually organized by a close friend. The people invited are female friends and members of her family. There will be food and drinks, and the women will share stories, express their good wishes, and sometimes give advice. But perhaps the most important ritual is the "showering of gifts," when the guests all give presents to the bride-to-be.

[ ] is believed to have begun in Holland in the 16th century. The story is that the daughter of a rich man fell in love with a poor man, but her father didn't want her to marry him. He **refused** to give her a **dowry** if she married the poor man. So her friends and family and people from the village all gave her gifts so that she could get married. Since then, it has been a custom for the bride to receive presents from her family and friends before her wedding. However, the word *shower* wasn't used until the 18th century, when it became popular to put the gifts in an open paper **parasol** and "shower" them over the bride.

[ ] mothers were always **accompanied** by a group of women during and after the birth. One of their rituals was to offer gifts to the goddess of birth after the baby was born, as well as give useful gifts and food to the new mother. Pregnant women continued to be celebrated over the years, and in the 19th century the celebration developed into a tea party with gifts and games, after the birth of the baby. Finally, in the 20th century, after the Second World War, baby showers became more like they are today. Friends and family organize a shower before the baby is born, and people give the mother-to-be practical gifts to help her and the baby. The gift giving and the fun games are two customs that remain part of the baby shower ritual.

[ ] often involve men, too. At a wedding shower, close friends and family sometimes celebrate the couple together before their marriage. And at a baby shower, both future parents might be there. There may also be male guests. Although the way we celebrate these important moments has changed over time, baby showers and bridal or wedding showers are part of the rituals surrounding these two important life events.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

A Look at the title and the photo. What is a ritual? What do you think the woman in the photo is celebrating? Discuss in pairs.

B Scan the article and write the phrases in the correct paragraph.

a. Turning to baby showers, in Ancient Greece and Egypt,

b. Bridal showers celebrate the bride,

c. Nowadays, both celebrations

d. This tradition of giving gifts to the bride

C Read the article. Circle **T** for *true* or **F** for *false*.

1.	Bridal and baby showers are modern rituals.	**T**	**F**
2.	The bride's family usually organizes the shower.	**T**	**F**
3.	The tradition of playing games at a baby shower began in the 19th century.	**T**	**F**
4.	People have always given gifts before the baby is born.	**T**	**F**
5.	Baby showers help people get the things they need for their new baby.	**T**	**F**
6.	The future father is always invited to the shower these days.	**T**	**F**

GOAL CHECK

Discuss the questions in groups.

1. What do baby and wedding showers have in common?
2. What do you think about men being involved in wedding and baby showers (as the future husbands or fathers, or as guests)?
3. How do you think baby and wedding showers might change over the next twenty years?
4. What special rituals for weddings and births are there in your country?

LIVEWORKSHEETS