



A Baby's First Haircut



In many cultures and religions around the world, a baby's first haircut is an important event. It can be the occasion for a big party and the giving of gifts or money, or both. The first haircut can also have a special meaning.

When a Hindu baby in India is either one or three years old, it is the custom to shave the baby's head. The hair on the baby's head represents a past life, so shaving the head represents moving from the past to the future. Usually, just a small amount of hair is left at the top of the head. This is said to protect the brain. Some Hindus may go to a river for the haircut ceremony. Some even travel to the holy River Ganges for the haircut. They watch the cut locks of hair go away on the river. A Hindu girl's first haircut is especially important because the girl's first haircut may be her last! Hindu women do not cut their hair again.

The native peoples of Peru have a big party or fiesta to celebrate the baby's first haircut. At the fiesta there is lots of food, music, and dancing. The parents do not cut the baby's hair for a couple of years. They then invite relatives and friends to the fiesta. On this special day, the baby sits on a high chair like a king or queen. The baby's hair is then separated into locks. The number of locks is the same as the number of guests at the fiesta. Each guest then cuts off a lock of hair and makes a gift of money. The Peruvian culture is not the only one where guests "pay" for a lock of the baby's hair. In some cultures, they weigh the lock of hair. The guests then give the weight of the hair in gold.

An old custom in Poland was for a boy to have his first haircut when he was between the ages of 7 and 10. Before his haircut, the boy did not look very different from a girl. Until this time, the boy was the responsibility of his mother. After his haircut, the boy no longer looked or acted like a girl, and his father took more responsibility for his life.



Instructions: Refer to the reading "A Baby's First Haircut." For each statement, answer

True or False.

- 1. When a Hindu baby has his or her first haircut, the head is not completely shaved.
- 2. The Hindu religion requires all parents to take the baby to a river for his or her first haircut.
- 3. Hindu girls have a special haircutting ceremony at several different ages when they are children.
- 4. In some parts of Peru, the first haircut is an occasion to have a lot of fun.
- 5. Peruvians invite a king or queen to the first haircutting ceremony.
- 6. All the guests at the Peruvian haircutting ceremony are involved in cutting the baby's hair.
- 7. Peruvian guests "pay" to cut the baby's hair during the ceremony.
- 8. The Peruvians give gold to receive a lock of the baby's hair.
- 9. In Poland in the past, girls and boys looked like each other after their first haircut.
- 10. In the past, after their sons had their first haircut in Poland, fathers became more responsible for them.

