BEAUTY MYTH

1 Beauty is one of the first concepts which we learn when we are children. Almost all children know what “pretty” is. Butterflies are pretty; Mommy is pretty; flowers are pretty. “Beauty” has always been in our lives, but in the last 30 years, with advertisements and television programs promoting the beauty myth, people, especially young girls have started to be obsessed with being beautiful.

2 The modern concept of feminine beauty puts a lot of pressure on women because of the standard description of it. Being physically perfect equals being beautiful. We are bombarded with media images of the “perfect” woman. She is usually a gorgeous blonde, although very rarely brunettes, redheads and exotic women are also shown. She is taller and slender, weighing at least 20% less than what her height requires. She does not have visible flaws on her skin, and her hair or clothes are always immaculate. All perfect women look alike. They are essentially like mannequins on shop windows, not like human beings.

3 These media images are not real, but they cause a lot of miseries in women’s lives. Women forget that underweight models in such pictures are usually girls between 15-20 years old with professional make-up and fashionable clothes. Even when we see photos of aged actresses, we know that they have character lines on their faces which cannot be covered even by professional make-up. However, imperfections are never shown: These women’s images are artificially and digitally improved. So, what we are shown in the media should not actually make women upset.

4 The understanding of the perfect weight is also very interesting to explore. If you watch a movie made in the 50s and 60s, you will see women and girls in the most popular movies actually look like real women. Judged by today’s standards, we look at these movies and may think that the women in them look a little fat with more curvy bodies. It is striking to notice that the beautiful women shown in movies and television today have a boyish look with narrow hips and flat stomachs. We have all been trained to believe that this boyish silhouette is the way healthy women should look, but the reality is that healthy women rarely look this way.

5 In the 80s and 90s, media forced a powerful female image: nothing should stop a woman and nothing should get in her way. This contributes to women’s guilt about their bodies by saying that if you do not look perfect, you have only yourself to blame: if you do not look as skinny as the fashion models than you should starve or exercise to get that way. If you have lines on your face, you should have them cut or burned off; if your breasts are small inject them with chemicals. In other words, the culture of today puts incredible pressure on women to look beautiful, whatever that really means. It maintains that if you do not look perfect, there must be something wrong with your self-discipline because if you really wanted to do so, you could.
Today, in every part of the world, there is an image of beauty that women feel they have to conform to. The global reach of Western media – movies, television and magazines – is changing the concept of what is beautiful in other parts of the world. For example, in India, obsession with being skinny has become more common among youngsters. It is beginning to happen everywhere in the world. Eating disorders are on the rise in China. According to one poll in Bali, eating disorders tripled after the American show “90210” had been on television for a few months.

According to research in the United States, girls as young as 13 or 23 are trying to remake themselves. By the 7th grade half the girls are already saying that they do not like the way they look. The majority, now, are dieting, using food substitutes in order to lose weight. Young girls are taking extreme measures, using laxatives, or vomiting, or using dieting pills. It is found through research that between 50-70% of young women who describe themselves as overweight are actually of normal weight. Self-esteem expert Nancy Etcoff states, “These women have self-esteem problems. I have spoken to many young girls and it is very obvious when women have a self-esteem problem, they are afraid of what people may say or think about them. They never trust in themselves.”

Etcoff says parents, especially mothers can help their daughters find their real beauty. “One is to be a role-model,” she says. “Mothers have to show their girls that they have confidence in themselves, that they see the beauty in their daughter, that they are not following the stereotypes of beauty themselves. So, women have to really do some self-examination here. How have these media influences impacted them? What support would they have liked as a young girl from their mother?”

Every woman has the right to develop her own concept of beauty, and it also starts in the family. If the mother hates her body, the daughter will absolutely hate her body. If the mother says to her mother every minute “If you are skinny, everything will work out with you,” then the daughter will be skinny and obsessed with being skinny. So, mothers and fathers should pass on a different idea of true beauty, and this idea should not be based on their skinniness or fullness, but on their intelligence, their heart, their spirit, their ability to take risks.

If women do not respect their bodies and accept themselves the way they are, they are wasting their resources and missing out on more important goals in life. Instead of fixing their bodies, women should start to work on fixing their attitude towards life.
A. Answer the questions below according to the information in the text. DO NOT write more than ONE sentence.

1. What is the definition of beauty these at present?

2. Why do older women in the media look so perfect?

3. Why do women in the films of the 50s and 60s look more real?

B. Complete the sentences below according to the information in the text. DO NOT write more than 2 words.

4. Because of the effect of media in the 80s and the 90s, women started to think they could look beautiful if they had enough ________________ ________________.

5. Women images presented by the Western media make women suffer from ________________ ________________.

6. Research says many young women who are trying to remake themselves do not have weight problems, but they actually need to improve their ________________ ________________ ________________.

C. Complete the following summary of paragraphs 8-9 of the text. DO NOT write more than 2 words.

To help their children develop a healthy concept of beauty, parents must serve as
(7) __________________________. If mothers without enough confidence try to be
(8) __________________________, then their daughters will do the same to reach the set standards of beauty. Parents have to teach their children that real beauty is not related with body or weight, but it is related with (9) __________________________.

D. Which of the statements below best gives the MAIN IDEA of the text? Tick (v) only ONE.

Many young women have strong desire to look beautiful, but they suffer from some physical and psychological consequences. _____

Instead of trying to change their bodies to look beautiful, women should try to understand the real meaning of beauty. _____

As media has the power to shape people’s perception of beauty, many women are obsessed with the way they look. _____

Women in the past looked more beautiful than they are today because they did not care much about the beauty image presented in the media. _____
Why do many women want to look (more) beautiful?

Write an essay of your opinion. (300-350 words)

You may use the following prompts or your own ideas:

→ media pressure
→ better relationships
→ higher self-confidence / happiness
→ job opportunities
SPEAKING SECTION

You will be asked 2-3 questions similar to the ones given below:

SHOPPING

- Do you think women are more interested in shopping than men?
  - Why do you think so? (Why do they usually do shopping?)
  - What kind of items do they (women / men) usually like buying?
  - Compare their shopping habits. (What is the difference between the shopping habits of men and women?)
  - What kind of problems may shopping cause between couples?

PROBLEM-SOLVING

- How good are you at handling day-to-day challenges? Can you think of an example?
  - Why is it important to think of more than one solution to a problem?
  - When you are faced with a problem, can you think creatively, or do you have trouble thinking of solutions? How do you usually take care of the problems?
  - Do you ever ignore problems until the last minute?
  - Have you ever had someone help you with your homework?
  - What subject? What sort of HW? Why did you ask for help? Were you able to work on it alone?
A. Answer the questions below according to the information in the text. DO NOT write more than ONE sentence.

1. What is the definition of beauty these at present?
   Being physically perfect equals being beautiful

2. Why do older women in the media look so perfect?
   Imperfections are never shown: These women’s images are artificially and digitally improved

3. Why do women in the films of the 50s and 60s look more real?
   The women in them look a little fat with more curvy bodies

B. Complete the sentences below according to the information in the text. DO NOT write more than 2 words.

4. Because of the effect of media in the 80s and the 90s, women started to think they could look beautiful if they had enough _______ self-discipline ____________.

5. Women images presented by the Western media make women suffer from __ eating disorders __.

6. Research says many young women who are trying to remake themselves do not have weight problems, but they actually need to improve their _______ self-esteem __________.

C. Complete the following summary of paragraphs 8-9 of the text. DO NOT write more than 2 words.

To help their children develop a healthy concept of beauty, parents must serve as
(7) _______ role-model _________________. If mothers without enough confidence try to be
(8) ____________ stereotypes _________________, then their daughters will do the same to reach the set standards of beauty. Parents have to teach their children that real beauty is not related with body or weight, but it is related with (9) ___ intelligence / heart / spirit / ability to take risks _________________.

D. Which of the statements below best gives the MAIN IDEA of the text? Tick (v) only ONE.

Many young women have strong desire to look beautiful, but they suffer from some physical and psychological consequences. ______

Instead of trying to change their bodies to look beautiful, women should try to understand the real meaning of beauty. __v__

As media has the power to shape people’s perception of beauty, many women are obsessed with the way they look. ______

Women in the past looked more beautiful than they are today because they did not care much about the beauty image presented in the media. ______