

FOR HEIDI WITH BLUE HAIR (Fleur Adcock)

When you dyed your hair blue
(or, at least ultramarine
for the clipped sides, with a crest
of jet-black spikes on top)
you were sent home from school

because, as the headmistress put it,
although dyed hair was not
specifically forbidden, yours
was, apart from anything else,
not done in the school colours.

Tears in the kitchen, telephone-calls
to school from your freedom-loving father:
'She's not a punk in her behaviour;
it's just a style.' (You wiped your eyes,
also not in a school colour.)

'She discussed it with me first -
we checked the rules.' 'And anyway, Dad,
it cost twenty-five dollars.
Tell them it won't wash out -
not even if I wanted to try.'

It would have been unfair to mention
your mother's death, but that
shimmered behind the arguments.
The school had nothing else against you;
the teachers twittered and gave in.

Next day your black friend had hers done
in grey, white and flaxen yellow -
the school colours precisely:
an act of solidarity, a witty
tease. The battle was already won.



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ACTIVITIES

1. Find the following words. What do you think they mean? Use a dictionary when necessary.
 - a. Dye
 - b. Spikes
 - c. Forbidden
 - d. Wipe
 - e. Shimmer
 - f. Twitter
2. Answer these questions about the poem:
 - a. What colour did the girl dye her hair?
 - b. What happened at school?
 - c. What was her father's opinion?
 - d. What did her friend do the following day?
3. Does the poem rhyme? Why do you think that is? Is the vocabulary simple or complex? Is it formal or informal?
4. What are the main themes of this poem?
5. Discuss:
 - a. Why do people dye their hair?
 - b. What are the most common colours?
 - c. What unusual colours have you seen?
 - d. Would you dye your hair in any colour?

KEY

1. Find the following words. What do you think they mean? Use a dictionary when necessary.
 - a. Dye
 - b. Spikes
 - c. Forbidden
 - d. Wipe
 - e. Shimmer
 - f. Twitter
2. Answer these questions about the poem:
 - a. What colour did the girl dye her hair? **Blue**
 - b. What happened at school? **They sent her back home**
 - c. What was her father's opinion? **He thought it wasn't against the schools rules and it wasn't a problem because she behaved well.**
 - d. What did her friend do the following day? **She dyed her hair too.**
3. Does the poem rhyme? Why do you think that is? **No; it expresses rebelliousness.**
4. Is the vocabulary simple or complex? Is it formal or informal? **Simple and informal (e.g. the use of brackets)**
5. What are the main themes of this poem? **Rebellion, individuality, solidarity, friendship**
6. Discuss:
 - a. Why do people dye their hair?
 - b. What are the most common colours?
 - c. What unusual colours have you seen?
 - d. Would you dye your hair in any colour?