

The Ban·dage Pole

Do you know how the red and white striped pole became the sign of a bar·ber·shop? Many years ago, bar·berS not only cut hair but also served as doc·torS. Their main work as doc·torS was bleed·ing peo·ple. At that time, it was be·lie·ved that bleed·ing help·ed cure the sick. The white stripes on the pole rep·re·sent the ban·da·ges with which bar·berS wrap·ped pa·tientS af·ter bleed·ing them. The red stripes rep·re·sent the blood. Long ago, a ba·sin hung be·neath the striped pole. This ba·sin stood for the real ba·sin uSed by bar·berS to catch the blood. Al·though bar·berS no lon·ger do this kind of work, many have kept the ban·dage sign.

Our word bar·ber comeS from "bar·ba," a ver·y old word mean·ing "beard." Bar·berS still shave and trim men's beards. Their chief work, how·ev·er, iS cut·ting hair. When wo·men first be·gan hav·ing their long hair cut, they went to bar·ber shops. Af·ter shops that spe·cial·ized in cut·ting wo·men's hair ap·pear·ed, bar·berS served most·ly men. To·day a·no·ther change iS hap·pen·ing. Many bar·ber shops now cut wo·men's hair a·gain.