

Synthesis Essay #1

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time – 2 hours and 15 minutes

Question 1

Suggested reading and writing time – 55 minutes

It is suggested you spend 15 minutes reading the question, analyzing and evaluating the sources, and 40 minutes writing your response.

Assignment

Read the following sources (including any introductory information) carefully. **Then, in an essay that synthesizes at least three of the sources for support, take a position that defends, challenges, or qualifies the claim that the concept of beauty is more inclusive than ever before**

Source A (Reilly)

Source B (Piercy)

Source C (Bible)

Source D (Petri)

Source E (Idealist Style Blog)

Source F (Evolution Dove Soap Commercial)

Source G (*Economic Times*)

Source H (Givhan)

Source A (Sydney Herald)

Pink's VMA speech wasn't just powerful, it was the beginning of a revolution

By Natalie Reilly Updated September 2, 2017

When Pink accepted her Michael Jackson Video Vanguard award at the VMAs last week, few expected her speech to include anything other than the usual platitudes. But by the time she left the stage the audience had been visibly moved.

The singer began by relaying an anecdote about her six year-old daughter feeling ugly, specifically “like a boy with long hair”.

After her initial shock, Pink said she went home, made a PowerPoint presentation of every androgynous celebrity she could think of, from Prince to Annie Lennox. Then she turned to her daughter.

“And I said to her, ‘Do you see me growing my hair?’ She said, ‘No, mama.’ I said, ‘Do you see me changing my body?’ ‘No, mama.’ ‘Do you see me changing the way I present myself to the world?’ ‘No, mama.’ ‘Do you see me selling out arenas all over the world?’ ‘Yes, Mama.’ ‘OK! So, baby girl. We don’t change. We take the gravel and the shell and we make a pearl. And we help other people to change so they can see more kinds of beauty.’”

The speech was quickly picked up by several major media outlets, including *Time*, which reprinted it in full. Social media groaned underneath the weight of praise for Pink, and her progressive view of beauty.

And it is progressive, not just because we inhabit a world that has normalized cosmetic surgery amid a billion duck-faced, highly-filtered, body enhanced selfies. But because we seem to be at a loss as to how to translate this world for our daughters.

When beauty standards narrowed ever more in the 1990s, due to the supermodels and the dawn of the internet, and when they narrowed again in the early 2000s, presenting us with a swathe of tan, blonde teenagers with the sort of abdominal muscles normally found on Olympians – Britney Spears, Paris Hilton, Christina Aguilera and yes, Pink – among them, mothers began to panic.

“What will I tell my daughter?”

Meanwhile, girls as young as five were complaining about feeling ugly or overweight. These anecdotes were backed up by [research](#), which suggests that disordered eating has increased worldwide over the last 30 years.

The panic quickly coalesced into a militaristic determination to make sure our daughters understood that they were strong, smart, capable, kind, clever – anything, really, except beautiful. To call our daughters beautiful, to even so much as comment on their appearance, was to reduce them to what we saw unfolding in our pop culture landscape – rabid objectification.

The word “beautiful” became loaded, as if we were cursing our girls to a life of exploitative reality TV appearances, replete with sex tape scandal and a brazen disregard for their value as a complete person.

All of this was noble. The only problem was that kids, like the rest of the human race, can smell fear. By omitting beauty from our compliments, we only increase its power. And make no mistake, beauty is powerful, it carries enormous privilege. The celebrity industrial complex runs on it.

If we give our child a nice car but forbid them from learning how to drive it, we can expect they will crash it. Similarly, if we leave beauty out of our conversations with our daughters, they may never know how to handle the power structures that surround it, and, when someone finally does call them beautiful, (because love and lust guarantees it) they may only see themselves as beautiful in the eyes of that particular person. The result may be that they see themselves as valuable only when that person is around.

Pink offered us mothers and our daughters an alternative. Pink has never subscribed to the narrow ideal of beauty held up by other female pop stars. But, let’s be real, she hasn’t strayed too far away from it either. When she recounted for her daughter the insults aimed at her looks, what she was really highlighting was how, in a society over-run with a specific hatred of women, trolls will always go after a woman’s physicality -no matter what she looks like - to take her down.

But when Pink spoke about teaching others what it is to be beautiful, she hit on a revolutionary point. We don’t have to omit beauty from the conversation, but what we can do is demonstrate how little society’s narrow definition of what is beautiful impacts us. Rather than saying “You’re strong” to our daughters we can say “you’re beautiful” because our definitions belong to us. While there is still work to be done, the response to Pink’s speech shows us that a backlash to the narrowing standards has begun and beauty is more inclusive than it’s ever been.



Pink, right, and her daughter Willow arrive at the MTV Video Music Awards at The Forum on Sunday, Aug. 27, 2017, in Inglewood, Calif. (Photo by Jordan Strauss/Invision/AP)

Source B (Piercy)

Barbie Doll by Marge Piercy

This girlchild was born as usual
and presented dolls that did pee-pee
and miniature GE stoves and irons
and wee lipsticks the color of cherry candy.
5 Then in the magic of puberty, a classmate said:
You have a great big nose and fat legs.

She was healthy, tested intelligent,
possessed strong arms and back,
abundant sexual drive and manual dexterity.
10 She went to and fro apologizing.
Everyone saw a fat nose on thick legs.

She was advised to play coy,
exhorted to come on hearty,
exercise, diet, smile and wheedle.
15 Her good nature wore out
like a fan belt.
So she cut off her nose and her legs
and offered them up.

In the casket displayed on satin she lay
20 with the undertaker's cosmetics painted on,
a turned-up putty nose,
dressed in a pink and white nightie.
Doesn't she look pretty? everyone said.
Consummation at last.
25 To every woman a happy ending.

Source C (Bible)

Proverbs 31:10-31 ESV (English Standard Version)

The Woman Who Feels the Lord

10 An excellent wife who can find?
She is far more precious than ^vjewels.
11 The heart of her husband trusts in her,
and he will have no lack of gain.
12 She does him good, and not harm,
all the days of her life.
13 She seeks wool and flax,
and works with willing hands.
14 She is like the ships of the merchant;
she brings her food from afar.
15 She rises while it is yet night
and provides food for her household
and portions for her maidens.
16 She considers a field and buys it;
with the fruit of her hands she plants a
vineyard.
17 She dresses herself with strength
and makes her arms strong.
18 She perceives that her merchandise is
profitable.
Her lamp does not go out at night.
19 She puts her hands to the distaff,
and her hands hold the spindle.
20 She opens her hand to the poor
and reaches out her hands to the needy.

21 She is not afraid of snow for her household,
for all her household are clothed in scarlet.
22 She makes bed coverings for herself;
her clothing is fine linen and purple.
23 Her husband is known in ^gthe gates
when he sits among the elders of the land.
24 She makes linen garments and sells them;
she delivers sashes to the merchant.
25 Strength and dignity are her clothing,
and she laughs at the time to come.
26 She opens her mouth with wisdom,
and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.
27 She looks well to the ways of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness.
28 Her children rise up and call her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her:
29 “Many women have done ^kexcellently,
but you surpass them all.”
30 Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be
praised.
31 Give her of the fruit of her hands,
and let her works praise her in the gates.

1 Peter 3:3-4

3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. **4** Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.

Source D (Petri)

Barbie is past saving

By Alexandra Petri

Retrieved from: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/compost/wp/2016/01/28/barbie-is-past-saving/>

How do you fix a problem like Barbie?

She has been under fire for some time for being, in essence, a portable and inexpensive reminder of society's unrealistic beauty standards that we give little girls to carry around with them at all times. Which is nice, if that is what you are going for, but a bit disappointing if you are just trying to find a *toy*.

Now Mattel has hit on a solution: [Give Barbie a plethora of bodies](#). Barbie now transcends the physical plastic plane. She is no longer limited to a single form. She has become multitudes, splitting her soul into a myriad of horcruxes with equally impeccable hair and tiny portable accessories. Now there's a Curvy Barbie, a Petite Barbie and a Tall Barbie, all in a variety of skin tones and hair colors ~~so that we have four unreasonable standards to aspire to instead of just one~~ so that all kids will get a doll in whom they can see themselves, kind of.

My parents were not Barbie parents and let me buy toys regardless of which gender-coded aisle they came from, so my idea of the ideal body type is Darth Vader. (Is this not correct?)

Now I see the modifications they are making to Barbie to bring her closer to reality, giving her feet suitable for flats instead of NIGHTMARISHLY TINY FEET THAT SERVE NO PURPOSE, altering her shape and giving her a range of skin tones — but she is still hardly in hailing distance of reality. The body was the least of her problems.

The trouble with Barbie is that if you start taking away her unrealistic elements, she disappears altogether. Barbie is the kid in the Sideways Stories from Wayside School who turned out to be nothing but a dead rat beneath several layers of overcoat. Barbie is either the iconic, unattainable figure, blonde and waiflike, with huge eyes, or she is — what, exactly? Make her real, and she ceases to exist. She becomes a brand, a category heading, like American Girl, Monster High, Bratz.

Not that that would necessarily be awful.

Did Barbie ever look like us? (Taylor Swift, do not answer this one.) Barbie has never looked like me. We are both blonde if you look at us in the right lighting, but that is where the resemblance stops. Barbie, you see, is put-together. She has glossy hair and knows how to accessorize. I, on the other hand, still don't know what accessories are, other than things that a lot of people seem to use in committing murders.

Fixing her curves won't solve the fact that her hair, however tangled, is always impeccably glossy; that her outfits are color-coordinated and flawlessly accessorized; that even when she has spent the entire day fighting with a plastic dinosaur her makeup is still perfection. And she makes it look effortless!

The problem of seeing yourself in Barbie is not solved by resizing her. To fix that, she would need to arrive in a box that is just a big mess of laundry that she has not done, half of which has turned pink because she did not notice a lurking red sock in the white load until it was too late. Some of it should be dry-clean only, which means that she can wear it once to a nice event, spill red wine on it, and then it will sit in her closet reproaching her for months.

As far as shoes go, they should be neatly divided into two categories: Shoes she can walk in, and shoes that look good with the outfit she is wearing.

She should be equipped with Spanx.

Instead of a face of impeccable makeup, she should have a single tube of mascara, which she can use to poke herself in the eye with once before going out so that she resembles a temporarily blind raccoon.

But the most important thing for Barbie realism is that she should be constantly subjected to criticism of her appearance. She should go on TV to talk about being a marine biologist or an astronaut, and all the comments afterward should be about what her hair was doing and why on earth she picked *that* top.

Come to think of it, we have that part down.

The one thing Barbie has absolutely nailed about the female appearance is that *something must always be the matter with it*. She was tiny and impossible and made of plastic for decades, and we still found fault with her. This change won't stop that. She is, as Time magazine points out, a body without a story, no matter what accessories you give her. And when that's your starting point, you're stuck.

BEAUTY IDEAL OVER THE DECADES part 8 : THE 50's THE 50's



In the uncertain times following the end of World War II, tradition and conservative values made a big comeback. As men returned from battle reclaiming their jobs, women left their work-clothes behind and felt the need (fashion dictated) to be feminine again.

After a long and costly war, sales were strengthened through advertisements illustrating what one should buy to become a better, happier and more desirable wife. It was a Mid-Century Conservative, and women were told that their primary goal was to catch a man and have a family. The effect was the creation of popular 50's image of the glamorous woman at home, able to attend to all domestic chores without a hair out of place.

ETHICAL AND PERSONALIZED STYLE, FOR A "GOOD FOR YOU" WARDROBE.

Idealist style is a website and "slow blog" dedicated to ethical fashion and personalized style, including tips on how to find your very own "slow fashion" style by using color analysis, the body types system, and other slow fashion tips.»

Created by an idealistic fashion designer, stylist, writer, and illustrator with a passion for "good for you" fashion.

Very nerdy about it.

Born in Norway, educated in Milan, Italy.

I decided to name my page "Idealist Style", because I'm an idealist. On both a creative, environmental, and a humanitarian level. So, I feel the title suits my message well.

i·de·al·ism

-The act or practice of envisioning things in an ideal form.

-Artist who treats subjects imaginatively.

-Belief in or pursuit of one's ideals, of high or noble principles, purposes, or goals.

The work on this site is mine unless specified.

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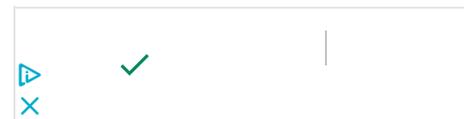
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"You mean a woman can open it...?"

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A mere wash of a cloth brings out its fresh, sparkling white beauty—and because of its essential resistance to acids, this kitchenware stays beautiful for years. The joys of the kitchen—the right look for quality—durability—persistence on steel Enamelware is still second to none.

A joy to have—a joy to use!

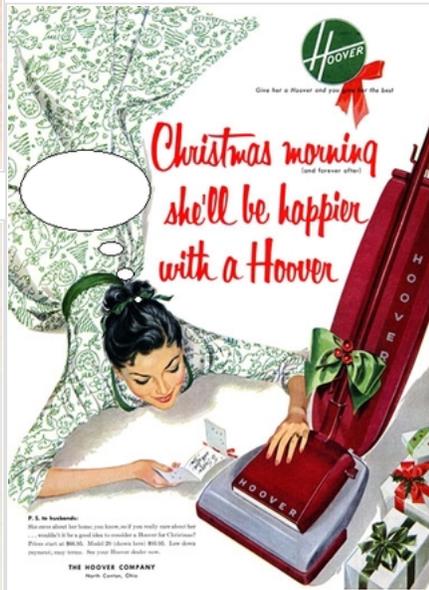
ENAMELED UTENSIL MANUFACTURERS COUNCIL

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Christmas morning she'll be happier (and forever after!) with a Hoover



THE HOOVER COMPANY
Newark, N.J., U.S.A.

"Don't worry darling, you didn't burn the beer!"



Schlitz

Rule number one was that women were never supposed to leave the house looking sloppy. As a result, an extreme amount of time was spent living up to this ideal of beauty. The hourglass body type was highly desired, typified by the curvaceous movie stars of the time such as Marilyn Monroe and Grace Kelly. Corsets and girdles became the obligatory underwear of all well-dressed women. They were used to press, lift, pull, and support the body in all the right places to give a smooth, but dramatic figure. In spite of their discomfort, advertisements of these garments promised a better life.

A typical 50's silhouette had the "wasp's waist", full skirt or pencil skirt, three-quarter-sleeve tops and coats, full belted

skirts, button-downs, and prim sweaters. Women were taught to dress to allure, but rarely showed a great deal of skin.

The makeup-trend of the time was the "doe eye," created with shadow on the lids, eyebrow pencil, mascara and heavy eyeliner, along with a Pawless pale, peaches and cream complexion and intensely colored lips.

Women's hair suffered immense abuse, as it was teased, styled, sculpted and sprayed into a helmet of perfectly formed curls, waves and bouffants. It was usually kept short at just below the shoulders, worn in soft, curly, or wavy styles. Since straight styles were considered undesirable, rollers became a girl's best friend.

MEN WOULDN'T LOOK AT ME WHEN I WAS SKINNY

but...
Since I Gained 10 Pounds This New, Easy Way I Have All the Dates I Want

NOW there's no need to be "skinny" and friendless, even if you never could gain an ounce before. Here's a new, easy treatment that is giving thousands attractive flesh—in just a few weeks!

Doctors for years have prescribed yeast to build up health. But now, with this new yeast discovery in little tablets, you can get far greater tonic results—regain health, and also put on pounds of firm flesh, ending curves—and in a far shorter time.

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This amazing new product, Ironized Yeast, is made from specially cultured brewers' ale yeast imported from Europe—the richest yeast known—which by a new process is concentrated 7 times—made 7 times more powerful.

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Day after day, as you take Ironized Yeast tablets, watch flat chest develop, skinny limbs round out attractively. Skin clears to beauty, new health comes—you're an entirely new person.

Results guaranteed

No matter how skinny and weak you may be, or how long you have been that way, this marvelous new Ironized Yeast should build you up in a few short weeks as it has thousands. If you are not delighted with the results of the very first package, your money will be instantly refunded.

Special FREE offer!

To start you building up your health right away, we make this absolutely FREE offer: Purchase a package of Ironized Yeast tablets at once, cut out the seal on the box and mail it to us with a clipping of this paragraph. We will send you a fascinating new book on health, "New Facts About Your Body," by a well-known authority. Remember, results are guaranteed with the very first package—or money refunded. At all drug stores, Ironized Yeast Co., Inc., Dept. 288, Atlanta, Ga.

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...keep it sunshine bright with **WHITE RAIN**

You know it's true—the most delightful beauty asset you can have is lovely hair. Hair that's bright to see, soft to touch, as fresh as a playful spring breeze—the kind of hair you have when you use the new lotion shampoo that gives you results like other rain come. For White Rain softens your hair with dancing sunlight. And with sunshine all around you—love and laughter follow also. Love and laughter... the essence of romance.

Use New *White Rain* Shampoo tonight and tomorrow your hair will be sunshine bright!

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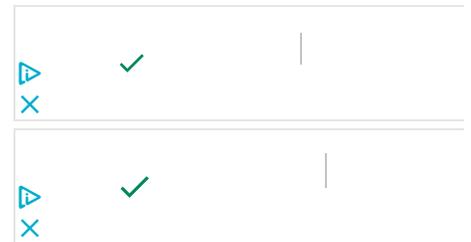
How to enjoy the sun... in style

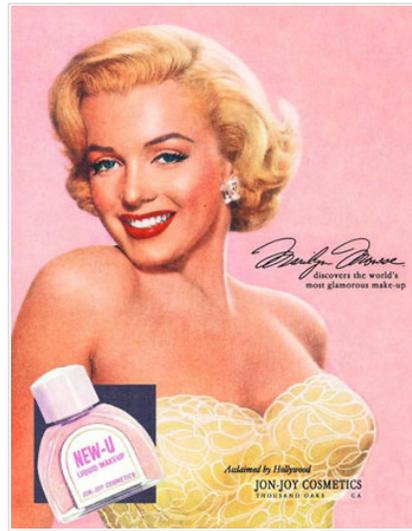
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The 50's was the decade of the Pin-up, the era that gave us the launch of Playboy magazine and the idolization of the soft, coquettish woman with overt sexuality. The 50's was about the extreme opposites of gender roles, with an emphasis on what the perfect woman or man should be. The cause and effect was an unattainable ideal created by the advertisement industry to entice people to buy more products.

Comically, this unnatural attention to perfection still keeps a large amount of people nostalgic (for a better time), decades later.

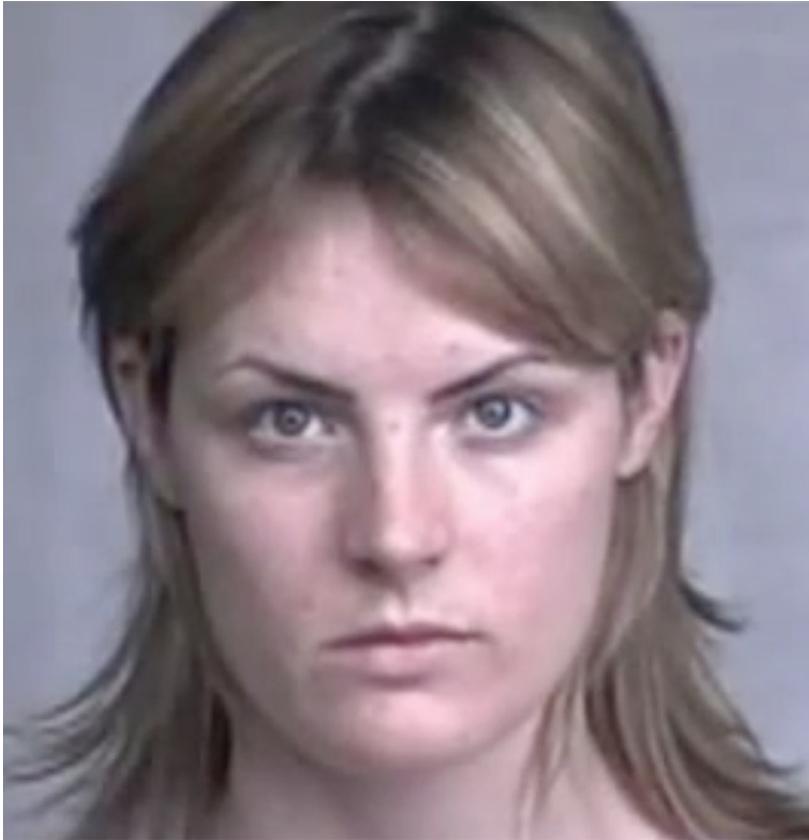
SOME FASHION ICONS OF THE 50s

Marilyn Monroe, Brigitte Bardot, Audrey Hepburn, Grace Kelly, Elisabeth Taylor, Betty Paige and Jayne Mansfield.



Source F (Dove) [Dove-evolution video](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KN2yunRynks>



Source G (Times) [Article from the *Economic Times*](#)

Source G (Times) [Article from the Economic Times](#)



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Science says this is the most beautiful woman in the world

Updated: 17 Oct 2019, 03:45 PM IST



1/9 The perfect face

Supermodel Bella Hadid has been declared the most beautiful woman in the world after she passed a science test that determines what constitutes the 'perfect face'.





The 23-year-old was found to be 94.35% 'accurate' to the Golden Ratio of Beauty Phi - a measure of physical perfection.



Her eyes, eyebrows, nose, lips, chin, jaw and facial shape came closest to the ancient Greeks' idea of perfection. The measurements were conducted by Dr Julian De Silva, an eminent facial cosmetic surgeon at London's famous Harley Street.



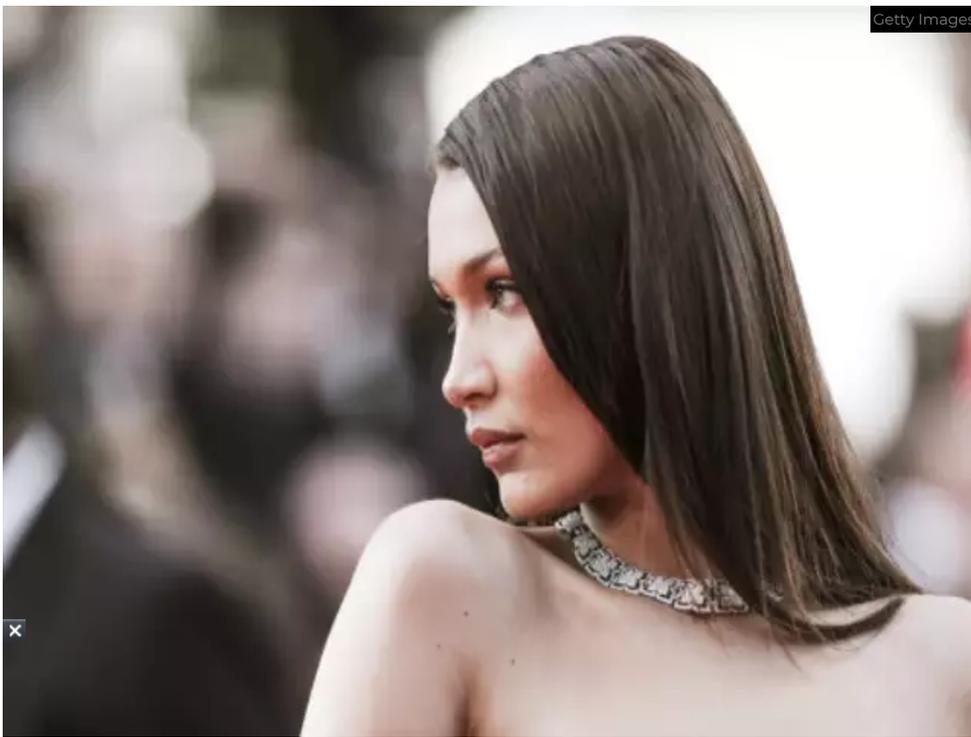
Singer Beyoncé, 38, was second with 92.44%, actress Amber Heard, 33, was third with 91.85% and pop star Ariana Grande, 26, was fourth with 91.81%.



The golden ratio

The Golden Ratio of Beauty Phi originates from the European Renaissance. Several artists used the equation as an aid to create their masterpieces.





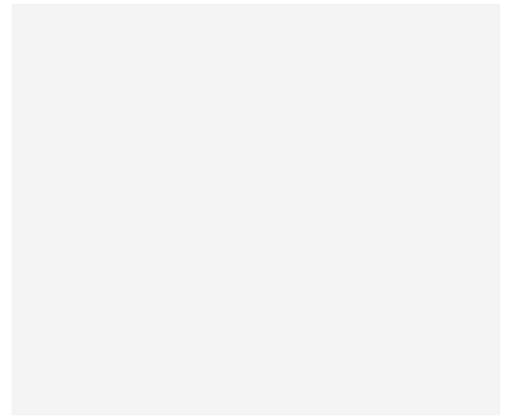
6/9 Hadid's score

Scientists have since adapted the mathematical formula to explain what makes a person beautiful. Hadid, according to Silva, had the highest overall reading for her chin which, with a score of 99.7%, only 0.3% away from being perfect.



The 1.6 factor

According to the Golden Ratio, the ideal result is roughly 1.6. Hadid, according to Silva, came second to Scarlett Johansson for her eye positioning. "She is one of the new generation of supermodels and could dominate the profession for the next decade with her stunning looks. Her biggest weakness is in the brow area," she told the Daily Mail.



How to measure beauty

The measurement starts from the forehead hairline to the spot between the eyes, then to bottom of the nose and from there to the bottom of the chin.



Computerised mapping

A person is considered to be more beautiful if the numbers are equal. Silva used the computerised mapping techniques for Hadid's measurements.



9/9 Computerised mapping

A person is considered to be more beautiful if the numbers are equal. Silva used the computerised mapping techniques for Hadid's measurements.



Aa special reception

Authorities deployed more than 1,000 police and paramilitary forces to ensure the royal entourage's protection, setting up checkpoints and roadblocks in parts of the capital, Islamabad.

In pic: Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge speaks to a guest as she attends a special reception with Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, hosted by the British High Commissioner Thomas Drew, at the Pakistan National Monument in Islamabad, Pakistan.



1/1 Answering the criticisms

The Menlo Park, California-based company tried to answer those criticisms by creating Libra as a legally separate entity through the Libra Association, and by not owning Libra itself. But Facebook is still involved, even at an arm's length. The association elected David Marcus, a Facebook executive and co-creator of Libra, as one of the association's five directors. Katie Haun with Andreessen Horowitz, one of the VC firms that invested in Facebook before it went public, was elected to the board as well.

(In pic: David Marcus)



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Source H (Givhan)

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

THE CRITIQUE

Dangerous beauty



Perspective by [Robin Givhan](#)
Senior critic-at-large | + **Follow**

October 18, 2022 at 7:18 p.m. EDT

Increasingly, we are being warned that our long-held definition of feminine beauty is not merely amoral, it's also unhealthy.

The latest piece of evidence comes from a National Institutes of Health study: Women who frequently use chemical hair straighteners, which was defined as more than four times a year, were twice as likely to develop uterine cancer as those who didn't use the products at all. The study didn't find that the occurrence of cancer differed by race, but it observed that Black women were more susceptible to the devastating health consequences because they're more likely to straighten their hair and tend to begin doing so at a relatively young age. That's a jarring warning.

Uterine cancer is relatively rare, but still, this revelation comes from the same group of researchers who linked straighteners, as well as permanent hair dye, to an increased breast and ovarian cancer risk.

In recent years, we've also been told of the terrible toll that fumes from lacquers and acetones in nail salons have on the human body and how damaging they can be to the men and women who steadily breathe in those toxins while working there. Exposure to those chemicals have been linked to asthma, skin disorders, miscarriages and cancer. Other beauty treatments — skin lighteners, skin tightenors, wrinkle reducers — have known side effects and complications, too.

And yet, people just can't stop trying to look younger, thinner ... better.

What does it mean to look our best? There's a narrow definition of beauty that's deeply ingrained in the culture and people are willing to take risks, endure discomfort and even pain, to conform to it. The good-looking — not the model, the starlet or the one-in-a-million stunner — but the person whose appearance is pleasant, familiar, likable. They're valued.

People strive for that. Perhaps they don't see themselves as conforming but simply aiming to be their best selves, to feel good, to silence their inner critic. It's become almost impossible to tease out whether a person subscribes to a particular sensibility due to social pressure, personal preference or some frustratingly complex combination of the two.

But this much is certain: The greater the distance between one's natural attributes and the beauty ideal, the greater the risk in reshaping, retraining and redesigning oneself into a more valued asset. The more marginalized you are; the more difficult it is to be seen as relevant. No one has felt this more than Black women. They're always struggling to claim their full worth.

For generations, the female archetype in the West was long hair, fair-skinned and with a slender physique. The culture has inched away from that. We cast admiring glances a thousand different ways. But our collective gaze still lingers longest on those who are variations on that embedded ideal.

Black women have embraced their natural hair; shared beauty secrets; reveled in skin that is slow to wrinkle. But they've also had to negotiate employers and public spaces that were neither accepting nor nurturing. They might have made strategic decisions about their appearance or they might have made intuitive ones. But there's always the understanding that they are not setting the standard. And so, they will never meet it. The choice is simply deciding how hard they'll try.

One could look at former first lady Michelle Obama as a kind of yardstick of effort. In the White House her hair was sleekly blown out by a hairstylist on call. In the immediate aftermath, she wore a more natural texture. Most recently, she has adopted braids.

Despite a heightened emphasis on body positivity, plus-size women — large *Black* women — in the public eye still have to reckon with the politicization of their body. Their clothing choices mean something beyond a personal aesthetic gesture. As a culture, we haven't gotten to the point where considering their beauty feels natural. At the moment, they're an intellectual proposition.

For some, sassiness becomes their armor, weapon and self-care. They use it to fend off insults from folks who have no business commenting on their body, but do so anyway as if it's a whiteboard for laying out an argument about health, fitness and a lack of discipline.

We've struggled to expand our vision of beauty. We make an effort to ensure that fashion shoots and advertising spreads reflect a more inclusive vision. We aim to accommodate.

In March, the House of Representatives passed the Crown Act which bans discrimination based on certain hairstyles including braids, cornrows and dreadlocks. The act, which is an acronym for Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair, reads in part: "Throughout United States history, society has used (in conjunction with skin color) hair texture and hairstyle to classify individuals on the basis of race. Like one's skin color, one's hair has served as a basis of race and national origin discrimination. Racial and national origin discrimination can and do occur because of long-standing racial and national origin biases and stereotypes associated with hair texture and style."

It took multiple tries to get this bill passed in the House and that didn't happen before Rep. Lauren Boebert (R-Colo.), voting in opposition to it, derisively referred to it as the "bad hair" bill. While President Biden has indicated that he will sign it, the bill has yet to be passed by the Senate.

But it's hard to imagine that even if a piece of legislation forbids the firing of a person because they have tight, coarse curls, no legislation will render that hair beautiful in the eyes of those who view the world as Boebert does. Kinky, textured hair is bad in her estimation. But what makes flat, straight hair any better?

The NIH study is a warning. Not just about the risks of relaxers and dye jobs, but the dangers and costs of preaching a doctrine that says a particular kind of person is more beautiful, more capable, more valued simply because they look a particular way. That standard is rooted in Whiteness, but the truth is that the standard has become so airbrushed and filtered that no one can actually reach it even though so many people can't stop chasing it.

It's no surprise that the things people do to themselves in the name of beauty are questionable. The cultural pressure to look a certain way is extreme but so are the rewards. It's a pressure that Black women know well. They have borne the brunt of that stress, but no one is exempt. Yet if society opened itself wide to fully welcome the natural beauty of Black women, it would also mean that so many others — in large bodies, with an abundance of crow's feet and perhaps no hair at all — could stop contorting themselves to squeeze through what is now the narrowest opening.

FAST FACTS

HISTORY

- Barbie's full name is Barbara Millicent Roberts.
- Barbie was named after Ruth Handler's daughter, Barbara, and Ken after her son, Kenneth.
- She is from (fictional) Willows, Wisconsin, where she attended high school.
- Barbie's official birthday is March 9, 1959, the day she was unveiled to the toy industry during New York Toy Fair.
- Barbie first appeared in her iconic black-and-white striped swimsuit.
- Barbie was joined by Ken in 1961.
- The first Barbie doll was sold for \$3.00.
- The first Barbie commercial aired during the [Mickey Mouse Club](#) in 1959.
- Barbie doll's signature color is Barbie Pink (PMS 219).
- Barbie stands 11.5 inches tall.
- The best-selling Barbie doll ever was 1992 Totally Hair™ Barbie, which featured floor-length hair.



CAREERS

- Barbie has had over 200 inspirational careers including astronaut, pilot, firefighter, journalist, and entrepreneur to name a few.
- Barbie traveled into space in 1965, four years before man walked on the moon.
- In 1992, Barbie ran for president for the first time and has run in every election year since. In 2016, she ran with the first all-female ticket.
- In 1973, Barbie saved lives as a surgeon, at a time when very few women were in the operating room.
- In 1985, she took to the boardroom as "Day to Night" CEO Barbie, just as women began to break the glass ceiling.
- To encourage more girls to explore the STEM field, Barbie has been a computer engineer, video game developer, Mars explorer, and robotics engineer.

ICON

- It takes a professional staff of top fashion designers, makeup artists, and the most elite couturiers—more than 100 people in all—to create a Barbie doll and her fashions.
- Barbie has been a muse to many artists over the past six decades, including Andy Warhol and Peter Max.
- Twiggy was the first celebrity to have a doll in her likeness.
- Oscar de la Renta was the first designer collaboration in 1985.
- The #1 honor from the Barbie brand is to be immortalized in plastic. The brand has honored role models from ages 6 to 99.
- In 1997, the hit song, "Barbie Girl," by Aqua topped the charts.
- In 2014, Jeremy Scott's Moschino show was inspired by Barbie, complete with her dream wardrobe.
- Barbie has fans of all ages. The National Barbie Doll Collectors Convention has been driven by doll clubs across the country for over 25 years.



POWER

- Barbie is the most popular fashion doll ever produced and the No. 1 fashion doll property in the U.S.
- A Barbie Dreamhouse is sold every two minutes and was first introduced in 1962.
- Barbie is the most diverse fashion doll on the market.
- More than 100 dolls are sold every minute, with a total of 58 million sold annually.
- Barbie is sold in 150 countries worldwide.
- Barbie has products in 45 categories, including food, fitness, and clothing.
- The Barbie brand has over 99% brand awareness globally.
- The Barbie YouTube channel has over five million subscribers, making Barbie the #1 girls' brand on YouTube.
- Barbie has a powerful social media presence with over 14 million fans on Facebook, 267,000 followers on Twitter, and 1.2 million followers on Instagram (@barbie).

CONTENT

- @barbiestyle launched in 2014 and quickly reached 2 million followers – it is one of the fastest growing fashion Instagram channels to date.
- Barbie has released over 30 entertainment titles.
- More than 151 million minutes of content has been watched on the Barbie YouTube channel.
- In 2015, Barbie launched her first video blog (vlog) on YouTube which propelled the channel to the #1 girls' brand on YouTube.

- There are over 18 billion minutes of Barbie user-generated content created each year.
- @barbiestyle launched in 2014 and quickly reached 2 million followers – it is one of the fastest growing fashion Instagram channels to date.

NEWS

Why It Matters What Barbie Looks Like

Posted: Jan 29, 2016 / 06:45 PM CST
Updated: Jan 29, 2016 / 06:45 PM CST



When did dolls become role models?

This question became the cynical undercurrent to news that Mattel unveiled new Barbie dolls in three new body shapes — petite, tall and curvy — and seven skin tones. The original Barbie is still for sale as well. While parents and fans of the iconic blonde bombshell cheered the toymaker for making dolls that look more like real people, others couldn't help rolling their eyes at what they saw as a last-ditch effort by Mattel to regain market share as Barbie loses ground to other dolls.

Actress Kirstie Alley emerged as a voice from this camp, asking on Twitter if the celebrations “seriously” implied that “Barbie needs to be taken seriously.” She stood her ground as people

challenged her, reiterating the point that she does not “consider toys to be role models.”

“I prefer humans,” she said. “Apparently it is now politically incorrect to make wisecracks about dolls now in America... hmmm and I thought they were just toys.”

She’s definitely not alone. Various news outlets fired off hot takes questioning Barbie’s influence with such headlines as “Barbie is Past Saving” and “Did You Really Feel the Need to Identify With Your Barbie?” Some argued that Mattel took too long to catch up to other doll makers that have already made inclusiveness a selling point, and Barbie’s moment is over.

“Mattel is, literally, messing with the mold that made Barbie iconic in the first place. But that mold is more out of touch than ever. Most American girls never looked like Barbie, it’s true, but it’s also true that most American girls have never looked less like Barbie than they do right now,” Jessica Goldstein wrote for Think Progress.

“The trouble with Barbie is that if you start taking away her unrealistic elements, she disappears altogether,” Alexandra Petri wrote in the Washington Post.

“Barbie is either the iconic, unattainable figure, blonde and waiflike, with huge eyes, or she is — what, exactly? Make her real, and she ceases to exist. She becomes a brand, a category heading, like American Girl, Monster High, Bratz.”

Among the critics, no one seems to be objecting to the idea of curvy Barbie, a petite Barbie or an Asian Barbie with distinct features from “original Barbie.” It’s more that, as VH1’s Taylor Ferber put it, “I can’t honestly say that the plastic toy I played with was something I ever wanted to look like in real life. Primarily because Barbies aren’t real life.”

All of that is well and good, except that decades of research show that children do absorb messages about body image and identity from toys and play, though studies also show that different kids identify in different ways and that countervailing influences can minimize the impact.

As recently as 2006, a British study found that “girls exposed to Barbie reported lower body esteem and greater desire for a thinner body shape” than those who had been given dolls reflecting larger body types or no dolls at all.

“What people forget is all toys are educational to children, and girls learn what it means to be a girl through the toys they have,” said University of Kentucky psychology professor Christia Spears Brown, author of “Parenting Beyond Pink and Blue: How to Raise Kids Free of Gender.”

“I don’t think what Barbie looks like is a trivial issue,” she said.

Mattel has made changes in recent years to address criticism of Barbie’s unrealistic proportions and ethnocentric image. Mattel introduced Entrepreneur Barbie in 2014 and expanded the number of available skin tones, eye colors and hair styles available in June 2015.

Brown called the new line the “first legitimate change” by Mattel to make Barbie a more positive role model for children.

It’s more than simply putting a lab coat on the same busty, cinch-waisted doll, or dipping her skinny body in a darker hue. Not only do they come in different shapes and colors, but they have distinct features — eyes, hair, noses — too.

“That’s the message kids need to see, that people come in a range of sizes.”

Now, if only the focus could shift away from her appearance, developmental psychologist Erica Weisgram said.

“One of the things that’s always concerning about the Barbie brand in general is the focus on appearance,” said Weisgram, who has examined the impact of gender labels and gender-typed toys on children’s toy preferences.



“There ’s nothing wrong with being attractive, feminine, or girly, she said. But girls should know those aren’t the only qualities to aspire to,” Weisgram said.

“We shouldn’t look to dolls as role models,” she said, “but we know that when kids are playing, they are enacting social roles. They are playing out what they might want to do in the future.”

