

Music Video Analysis Outline: “Pretty Hurts” by Beyoncé

I. Introduction

a. Opening statement:

Society puts a lot of pressure on women to look beautiful and meet certain beauty standards. Sometimes people focus so much on their appearance that they forget about their happiness and self-worth.

i. Thesis statement:

In her music video “Pretty Hurts,” Beyoncé uses beauty pageant scenes, images of physical appearance, and lyrics to show how society’s beauty standards can hurt women’s confidence and make them feel like they are never good enough.

II. Putting the Analysis into Context

Beyoncé released “Pretty Hurts” as part of her self-titled album in 2013, and the official music video was released in 2014. The video follows Beyoncé as a beauty pageant contestant who is trying to meet society’s expectations of beauty. It shows the pressure contestants face to look perfect, win competitions, and receive approval from others. The video also shows that people can struggle with their self-esteem even when they look beautiful to everyone else. A 2024 academic study by Shagita Maulady Anjany and Melani Setia Oktapiani discusses how the song criticizes beauty standards and their effects on women. The authors explain that beauty expectations can have a “negative impact” on women’s “mental and emotional health” (Anjany and Oktapiani). This supports the idea that beauty standards can affect more than just a person’s appearance.

III. First Major Point: The Pressure to Meet Beauty Standards

a. Major point:

The video shows how women feel pressured to change their appearance to fit society’s idea of beauty.

b. Evidence from the music video:

The video shows Beyoncé competing in a beauty pageant, getting ready backstage, and focusing on her appearance. The contestants are judged on how they look, and they compete for attention and approval. The song repeats the phrase “pretty hurts” (Beyoncé).

Analysis:

The pageant represents how women are often compared to one another based on their looks. The contestants seem to believe that winning and looking perfect will make them feel better about themselves. However, the video shows that trying to meet these expectations can cause stress and insecurity. The repeated phrase “pretty hurts” connects beauty with pain and shows that looking good does not always mean feeling good.

c. Connection to thesis:

These scenes support my thesis because they show how society's expectations can make women feel like they have to change themselves to be accepted.

i. Transition statement:

Along with showing the pressure to look perfect, the video also shows how this pressure can affect a person's happiness and self-esteem.

IV. Second Major Point: Beauty Does Not Always Equal Happiness

a. Major point:

The video shows that someone can look beautiful on the outside but still struggle with their feelings on the inside.

b. Evidence from the music video:

Beyoncé is shown preparing for the pageant, looking in mirrors, and trying to improve her appearance. The video also includes scenes of contestants using unhealthy methods to change their bodies and compete against one another.

Analysis:

These scenes show that the contestants are focused on meeting the pageant's expectations instead of taking care of themselves. Their actions suggest that they believe looking perfect will help them feel accepted. However, the stress and competition show that beauty does not automatically bring happiness. The video challenges the idea that a person's worth should be measured by their appearance.

c. Connection to thesis:

This supports my thesis because it shows how the pressure to look perfect can affect women's confidence and make them feel like their natural appearance is not enough.

i. Transition statement:

By showing the emotional effects of beauty standards, Beyoncé encourages viewers to think about what truly makes a person valuable.

V. Answering the "So, What?" / Explaining Why This Claim Matters

a. Why this argument matters:

This analysis matters because many women feel pressure from social media, magazines, and society to look a certain way. Beyoncé's video reminds viewers that trying to meet unrealistic expectations can affect their self-esteem and happiness. It also encourages people to look beyond physical appearance and understand that everyone has value regardless of whether they fit society's beauty standards. The message is important because people should be able to feel confident in themselves without constantly comparing their appearance to others.

Worked cited

Beyoncé. "Pretty Hurts." YouTube, uploaded by Beyoncé, 24 Apr. 2014,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXXQLa-5n5w>.