

Unit 2.3

Beauty

Word bank

digital retouching
airbrushing
truncated sentence
capitalisation
self-esteem
purpose-driven content
marketing
shockvertising
anti-advertising
spoof
awareness campaign
thinspiration
self-image
sex in advertising
taboo
role reversal
objectification
degradation
metonymy
allusion
rape myth
surrealism
hashtag
anaphora
anecdote
enumeration
parallelism
polysyndeton

Learning objectives

- explore a range of texts that deal with narrow definitions of 'sex' and 'beauty'
- develop skills in visual literacy, analysing advertisements and awareness campaigns
- become proficient with terms and concepts that are relevant to the topic and text types.

In this chapter, you have discussed the various social pressures on men and women to fit narrow definitions of gender. You have explored notions of motherhood, fatherhood, wifehood, husbandhood, femininity and masculinity.

This unit continues to ask how the mass media puts pressure on men and women by constructing narrow definitions of 'beauty'. It also explores social problems that are created by unrealistic depictions of beauty and sex, such as eating disorders and sexual harassment. You will explore this topic through a range of texts, from poems to advertisements.

Getting started

3.1 Text 2.19 is an advertisement for make-up featuring Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, an Indian actress, model and the winner of the 1994 Miss World pageant. The accompanying image is a photograph of the model without **digital retouching** or **airbrushing**. Digital retouching is a commonly used stylistic feature of visual texts these days.

Text 2.19

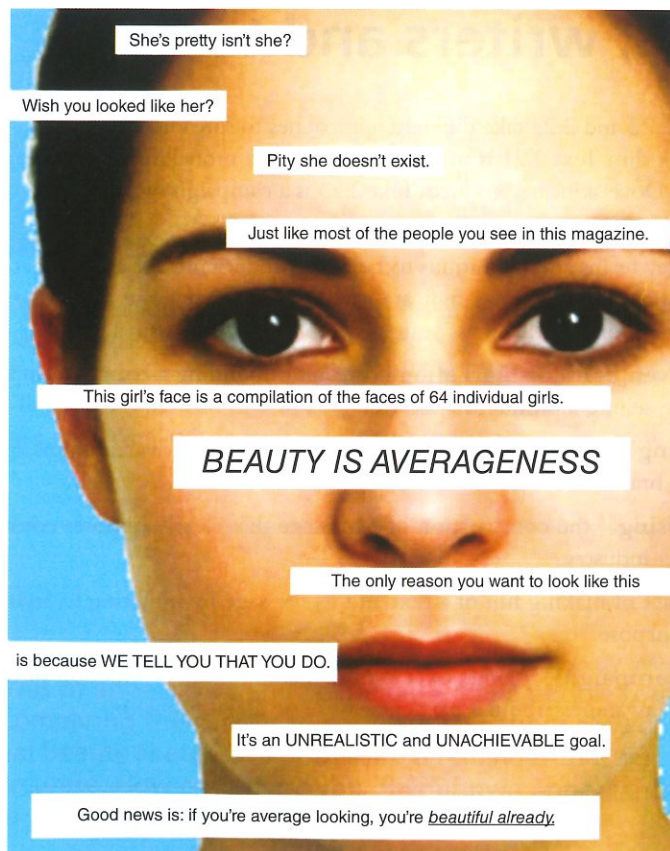


- a How has digital retouching been used in this advertisement (Text 2.19)?
- b Why do you think these changes have been made?
- c What are the effects of digital retouching on the viewer of this advertisement?

3.2 Now study Text 2.20, an awareness campaign by Adbusters, and discuss your answers to these questions:

- a The text begins with the line, 'She's pretty isn't she?' Do you think she is pretty? How do you think your definitions of beauty are formed? Are they biological? Or have your definitions of beauty been shaped by the media, as Text 2.20 suggests?
- b What does the author of this text mean by 'beauty is averageness'?
- c There are several words missing from some of the sentences in this text. The words in italics here would make these sentences complete. 'Do you wish you looked like her?' or 'It is a pity that she doesn't exist.' This stylistic device is known as the **truncated sentence**. Do you see more examples in Text 2.20? What is the effect of including truncated sentences instead of complete sentences?
- d Why does the author use white text boxes over the image? Comment on the use of font, italics and **capitalisation** as stylistic features.
- e Who is 'we' in this text? Who are 'you'? How does the use of pronouns help deliver the message of this text?
- f What type of text is Text 2.20? Where would it appear?

Text 2.20



TOK

As you explore the arts as an 'area of knowledge' in TOK, you will come across questions such as 'what is beauty?' or 'how can we define "beautiful"?' Are there universally accepted qualities that we look for in a 'beautiful' magazine model?

Text 2.20 seems to suggest that the ideal 'pretty' face does not even exist in the real world. But if 'pretty' models are the fabrications of the fashion industry, why do people aspire to be like them? How do you 'know' when someone is 'beautiful'? Discuss your answers to these questions as a class.

AOE question

What are the different ways in which people are affected by texts?

Activity 3.2 and Text 2.20 invite you to ask how young women may be affected by texts that narrowly define 'beauty' through the use of digital retouching.

3.3 By digital retouching, advertisements can construct unrealistic definitions of beauty. Many young people around the world consume hundreds of such advertisements every day. This helps to explain why so many people suffer from depression, low **self-esteem** and eating disorders. The line of logic goes: if consumers want to appear like the models they see in the advertisements, and they cannot be like those models, then they become frustrated with their own physical shortcomings. Even the model Cindy Crawford once said, 'I wish I could look like Cindy Crawford'. Discuss your answers to these questions:

- a Do you think that problems such as low self-esteem, depression and eating disorders are caused by unrealistic depictions of beauty in the media, as explained in this text? Are people really influenced so much by the media around them?
- b Do these problems affect women and men equally?
- c What kinds of initiatives and campaigns can address these problems?
- d Why would Cindy Crawford say 'I wish I could look like Cindy Crawford'? What does she mean by this?

Readers, writers and texts

3.4 Texts 2.21, 2.22 and 2.23 take different approaches to spreading awareness about the pressures on women to look slim. Text 2.21 is an advertisement for a modelling agency. Text 2.22 is an advertisement for Dove skincare products. Text 2.23 is a campaign by Adbusters, a progressive website and magazine.

Here are several key terms and definitions to help you understand the approaches taken by these three texts. After studying these texts, indicate which terms are relevant to each text. Terms may be relevant to more than one text. Discuss your answers with your classmates.

- **Purpose-driven content marketing** – the act of building a brand around a social purpose or cause while selling a product or service.
- **Shockvertising** – the depiction of shocking content in an advertisement, in order to draw attention to a brand or cause.
- **Anti-advertising** – the construction of a message that clearly opposes common messages in the advertising industry.
- **Spoof** – the act of making fun of a text and its message by imitating its style and structure to an opposite purpose.
- **Awareness campaign** – a range of activities, including the production of texts, in an effort to raise public awareness about a particular issue or social problem.

Text 2.21

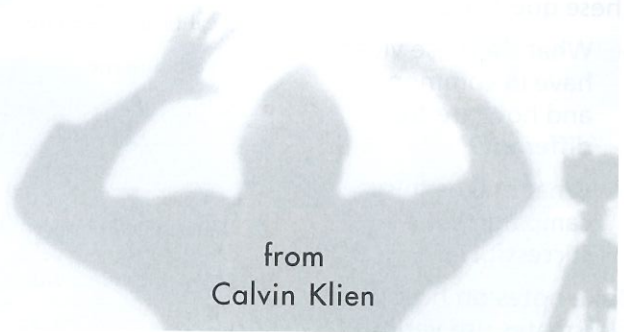


Revolution Brazil for Star Models

Text 2.23



Text 2.22



3.5 Anorexia nervosa and bulimia are eating disorders, where a person fasts, or uses vomiting or laxatives after binge eating, usually in an effort to become skinnier. Those who suffer from these health disorders often look to images of fashion models for **'thinspiration'** (inspiration to look thin). Look again at Texts 2.21–2.23 and discuss how you think someone with anorexia or bulimia might respond to these texts. Would these texts provide them with thinspiration? Why do you think this might be?

CONCEPT

Identity

Our *identity* is affected by our **self-image**. Self-image is the way we imagine ourselves in terms of appearance and personality. Some people form their self-image by comparing themselves to people they either know or see in the media. The 'Real Beauty Sketches' by Dove are a reminder that our self-image is not always accurate. How critical are you of your own appearance? And to what extent do you compare yourself to others?

ATL

Communication

Activity 3.6 asks you to present one of several video commercials produced by Dove. These commercials have been viewed millions of times and have won prizes from marketing organisations. As you watch the different commercials, ask yourself these questions:

- What do these videos have in common and how are they different?
- What makes this campaign so successful?

Take notes on how your classmates use various presentation skills to present their commercial. Consider:

- Do they analyse freeze-frames or stills from their videos?
- Do they answer the questions from the activity?
- Do they read from notes?

Developing your own *communication skills* is about observing and listening to others carefully.

3.6 Text 2.22, from Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty, has been remarkably successful in spreading awareness about social issues, increasing brand recognition and selling more products. In small groups, study one of Dove's commercials shown here or a similar one that you find online. You can find your commercial by doing an online video search for the commercial that your group has been assigned or you have chosen. Present your video to your classmates by answering questions a–e.

Some examples of commercials from Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty:

- Evolution
- Onslaught
- Women all over the world make a choice
- A girl's beauty confidence starts with you
- Real beauty sketches
- Free being me
- Selfie.



Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty has run several commercials over the years which you can research and analyse (Activity 3.6).

- What social concern does your video explore?
- How does your video address issues created by the media's narrow definition of 'beauty'?
- How does your video use camera angle, mise en scène, lighting, symbols and sound to create meaning and convey a message? See Unit 1.3 for more information on these terms.
- What is the effect of these film techniques on their viewers? How do you think your video has been received? Try to find a secondary source that reviews your video and comments on its reception by a larger audience.
- Can you find any criticisms of the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty? What kinds of criticisms have been voiced about this campaign, and are they relevant to your video?

3.7 In this unit you have explored the adverse effects of digital retouching and the effect of skinny models on young women's physical and mental health. What happens when women or men are portrayed as objects of sexual desire? What are the effects of these images on women and men, and how do they set expectations for real-life relationships?

Sex appeal or '**sex in advertising**' is a kind of persuasion technique which usually includes nudity or suggestion. It subscribes to the axiom 'sex sells', and suggests that the inclusion of sex in advertising will lead to more sales of products or services.

Think of a print or television advert that you have seen which uses sex to sell a product. Present your advertisement to your classmates, analysing the way it alludes to sex to sell a product. As a class, discuss the commonalities and trends you see among the advertisements you have each chosen. Record your findings in your learner portfolio.

International mindedness

Sex in advertising is a cultural issue. People all around the world feel differently about this topic. In some cultures, advertisements such as Text 2.24 may be considered artistic. In others, they are **taboo**.

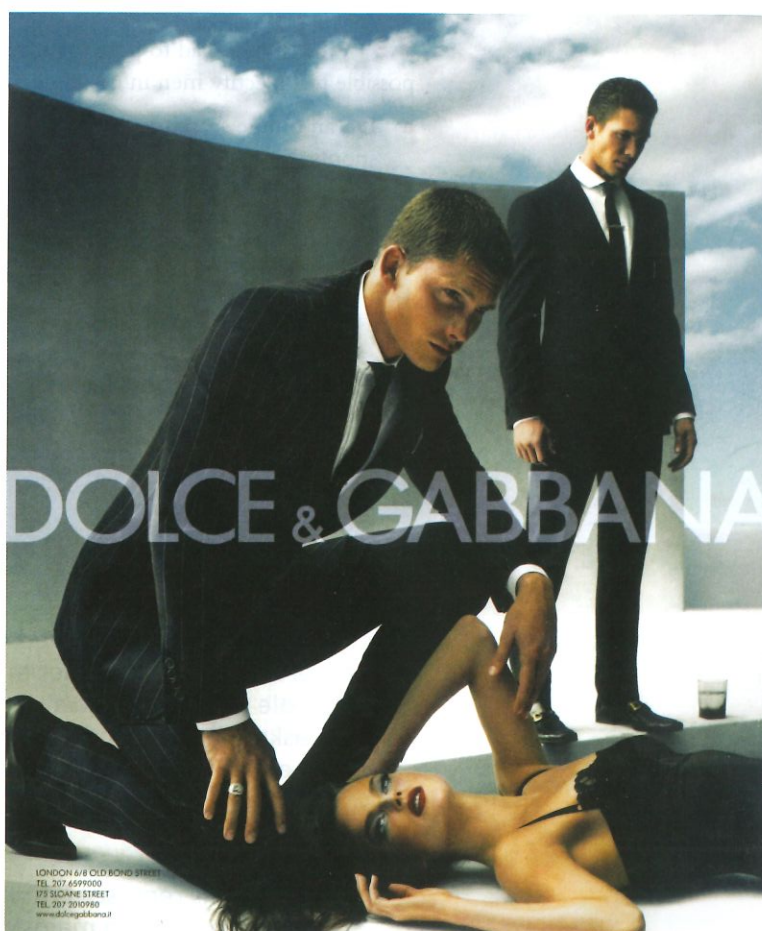
Activity 3.8 invites you to discuss how this text might be received in your own culture. Be sure not to generalise when speaking about entire countries or parts of the world. Consider people's religious affiliations. Consider where people live in relation to rural or urban areas. Internationally minded learners understand that not everyone will share their view of the world. Keep this in mind as you discuss the texts in this unit with your classmates and teacher.

Time and space

3.8 Text 2.24 appeared in fashion magazines around the world in 2007. Discuss your answers to these questions:

- How similar to or different from the one you researched in Activity 3.7 is Text 2.24? Do you see similar or different forms of sex in advertising, as introduced in Activity 3.7?
- Think of popular fashion magazines that you can buy. Would you see such advertisements as Text 2.24 in magazines in your country or region? Why might these advertisements be available or unavailable in the context in which you live?
- Text 2.24 is one of many advertisements for the fashion company Dolce & Gabbana that use sexually provocative or erotic imagery. Research how this or other Dolce & Gabbana advertisements have been received around the world. Have they ever had to pull an advertisement or apologise to anyone? Find out more about any conflict surrounding advertisements from this company in the past and share your findings with your classmates.
- Does sex sell? How effective is sex in advertising in selling products or services? Find out more about the research that has been done on this topic and share your findings with your classmates. Were you surprised by your findings?

Text 2.24



AOE question

How can language represent social differences and identities?

This question is particularly relevant to the Dolce & Gabbana advertisement (Text 2.24).

- Who are these people? How does their body language, way of dressing and gaze represent who they are?
- How are they similar to fictional characters in a novel?
- How can their target audience relate to them?
- Do they represent a certain social class, occupation, role or purpose?

Intertextuality: connecting texts

3.9 What if men had to pose for advertisements in the ways that women are asked to? Is it possible to objectify men in the same way as women?

- Do an online search for a spoof advertisement that makes use of **role reversal**. Many of these spoofs are placed alongside the original advertisement that they imitate.
- Bring your spoof advertisement to class and share it with your classmates.
- Explain, in a short presentation, how the use of role reversal makes the viewer more aware of the problems of gender representation and the **objectification** of women in advertising. Compare the spoof to the original advertisement.
- Are men objectified in advertisements, as well as women? Can you find examples of this in real advertisements (rather than in spoofs)? Is the objectification of men another form of gender equality or gender **degradation**? Discuss.

CONCEPT

Representation

In this unit you have explored the ways in which women are represented in advertisements and other mass media texts. Activity 3.9 encourages you to use role reversal as a way to see if these representations of women are fair. It asks you to consider if the objectification of men is another form of gender equality.

- How has the *representation* of men in advertising changed over the past 50 years?
- How has this representation changed with more inclusion and acceptance of homosexuality in mainstream Western media in that time? Find examples to prove your points.

3.10 Text 2.25 is an awareness campaign from the Salvation Army in South Africa. Discuss your answers to these questions as a class:

- How does Text 2.25 borrow stylistic and structural features from other advertisements that depict and objectify women? Explore features such as body language, gaze, camera angle, lighting and copy. See Units 1.1 and 1.2 for further support for analysing images and advertisements.
- The text makes a reference to 'black and blue', which is an example of **metonymy**. Metonymy is a stylistic device where an aspect, such as colour, stands for a greater phenomenon or thing, such as domestic violence. Why has the author used metonymy here?
- The white and gold dress is an **allusion** to an optical illusion that is widely debated. An allusion is a reference to another text for a particular effect. Do an online search for 'white and gold dress illusion' and discuss how this information adds to your understanding of Text 2.25.
- Do you believe there is a connection between domestic violence and mass media that objectifies and sexualises women? How is Text 2.25 connected to other texts, such as Text 2.24?
- How effective is this campaign in raising awareness of domestic violence? Describe how it makes you feel. Research how others have reacted to this campaign.

Text 2.25



3.11 Domestic violence is only one form of violence against women. Groping, sexual assault and rape are, unfortunately, also problems around the world. The visual language of commercials, advertisements and billboards may enable assailants to objectify women by subscribing to various rape myths. A **rape myth** is a kind of scenario or story that both perpetrators and victims believe explains why sexual assault happens. Some of the most common rape myths include:

- The victim's way of dressing was an invitation for rape.
- Intoxication justifies any unwanted sexual advances, or intoxication is an invitation for sex.
- Sexual intercourse is reciprocation for paying for dinner or a date.
- It is not technically rape unless the victim resists.
- More often than not, victims lie about being raped and therefore no one can fairly make such claims.
- Unwanted sex is not a violent crime.

Beliefs and values

Text 2.26 exploits one of these rape myths in an effort to raise awareness against sexual assault. Discuss your answers to these questions with your classmates:

- How does this text work? What type of text is it? What devices does it use to communicate its message? How effectively does it use these devices? Explain your answers.
- Compare Text 2.25 to Text 2.26, both of which aim to raise awareness about violence, but in different ways. Discuss their similarities and differences.
- Looking back at other texts from this unit, comment on and explain how one of them might promote a rape myth among its viewers.

Text 2.26

**I COULD
TELL
SHE WAS
ASKING
FOR IT ...**

to stop. So I stepped in and told my buddy that was no way to treat a lady. And he backed off.

Visit us at www.facebook.com/MakeYourMoveMissoula for tips and events to help keep your friends and community safe from sexual violence.

MAKE YOUR MOVE
END SEXUAL VIOLENCE

A message from Missoula's Intervention in Action Project.

AOE question

How can different texts offer different perspectives on a topic or theme?

Text 2.25 depicts a woman. Text 2.26 depicts a man. Their common issue is physical abuse. How do they compare in achieving their purpose by depicting different people and targeting different audiences?