**How do the film clip of *Mrs Potato Head* by Melanie Martinez and the TEDx talk *The Lady Stripped Bare* by Tracey Spicer explore the idea of female beauty standards?**

The standards which have been put on women to be beautiful have changed drastically over the years. It began with women applying chalk and coal to their faces to please men, to changing their appearances permanently with plastic surgery. Two very different texts explore the idea of female beauty standards. One text that explores this issue is the music video, titled *Mrs. Potato Head.* It is written by a 22 year old music artist named Melanie Martinez. She has written approximately 19 songs, which have all been quite successful. She is a controversial artist, tackling issues in her songs that go beyond love, and other pop concerns. She sings about issues such as the meaning of life and the idea that we are all 'dolls' in her song "Dollhouse". This film clip is aimed at Martinez' fans, predominantly young women, aged from teenagers through to their early twenties. The film clip was made in the USA and the audience is primarily American, but would be viewed in most Western countries, where film clips are popular. She sings about plastic surgery and the expectation of women in her song *Mrs. Potato Head.* A TEDx talk by Tracey Spicer called *The Lady Stripped Bare* is a text that considers similar issues. This talk was recorded in 2015 in Australia; and has primarily an Australian audience of adult men and women. Due to the Ted format, the text would have a worldwide audience. Tracey Spicer is a 50 year old Australian news reader and journalist. Tracey Spicer has previously written a book titled *The Good Girl Stripped Bare.* Both of these women tackle issues such as beauty and the standards that are expected of women. Both the pieces show that it is often the pressure from men put onto women about how women should look that creates unrealistic standards for women.

The music video *Mrs Potato Heads* idea is explored through the conventions of a music video. the music video form is aimed at teenagers. The main purpose of the text is entertainment, as obviously Martinez intends to sell her song, but she also has an educational purpose to make her viewers more aware of the issues that are happening in society. The music video uses a narrative to show the problems with plastic surgery. It begins with the main character "Cry Baby" sitting on the floor of a living room watching TV. This scene within the clip creates a story, allowing the viewers to see the impact of TV media on women. She is watching an advertisement for medication pills which will make you skinnier. It also shows a platinum blonde wig for women to wear to be the perfect woman. Cry Baby proceeds to go into the bathroom, while crying, and swallows one of the pills, puts on the wig and puts on lipstick, hoping to look like the perfect woman. The TedX talk does not use the technique of a fictional character in a narrative instead Spicer tells the audience about her life. She begins to talk about her morning routine, calling herself a "vain fool". She is speaking about all the various actions she will do, almost everyday, to keep up the standard of beauty that is expected of her. She begins with saying how she will often go for a run and do exercises to keep the "professionally acceptable size 1O" She states that she does stretches and exercises to keep the inner thigh gap. She then continues to speak about her hair routine and that she needs to add many products to her face to keep it looking young, smooth and healthy. She goes on to speak about the amount of make up she will need to apply to keep up the standard of beauty. She then asks the audience "Why do we do this to ourselves? why? why?" Spicer's TedX talk conventionally tells a personal story while a Martinez film clip uses visual images and a story to communicate it's message to the audience.

Both texts explore the idea that beauty standards can result in unappealing outcomes. Both authors use language techniques to describe these outcomes. Martinez uses song lyrics, including "Little Girls are learning how to cut and paste". This suggests childish craft but instead, is the horror of plastic surgery. Her lyrics get darker as she goes onto say that women will "Pucker up their lips until they suffocate". This harsh language easily suggests the horror or beauty standards and plastic surgery to her teenage audience. Tracey Spicer in her talk also uses harsh language to describe her beauty routine. She talks about visiting the "house of pain" and that "pain is beauty". These words allow the audience to allow the pain caused by unrealistic beauty standards. She then asks the audience "Why do we do this to ourselves? why? why?." Both texts use language effectively to explore the idea of female beauty standards with their audiences.

The Ted talk is aimed at an adult audience and uses facts and evidence to help portray its message. Spicer uses many statistics in her presentation, such as "women take an average of 27 minutes to get ready" and women spend "3,276 hours in grooming". These statistics help to support Spicer's argument. Martinez does not use statistics, which would be out of place in a music video. Instead she uses lyrics and rhyme, such as "it's only some plastic / no one will love you if you're unattractive". The rhyme conveys her message in a way that's accessible to her teenage audience.

Both authors use visual techniques to explore the idea of female beauty standards. Martinez' music video shows images of a surgeon cutting up a woman's face, making it slimmer. He then adds stuffing into her breasts, making them larger. These graphic pictures provide a clear example of the negative impact of beauty standards. The disturbing images are clear and easy to understand for the teenage audience. Spicer also uses visual techniques but, she is restricted by the 'live' nature and conventions of a TedX talk. Spicer provides a visual example of beauty standards by removing her beauty aids on stage. She begins to "Strip herself bare", in a way of course. She begins to take off the amount of make she is wearing, which amounts to over 2 make-up wipes, showing the audience just how much make up she is expected to wear to make herself look and seem younger to the outside world. She then changes out of her clearly very tight dress, and proceeds to put on a singlet and some shorts. She sprays her hair with water, allowing it to become more frizzy and curly, rather than the straight and styled looked she had started with.

Both authors use the technique of humour to engage their audience.Spicer uses adult humour to appeal to her sophisticated audience. She says that she is "feeling like the Gulf of Mexico after the BP oil spill" when talking about the amount of cream she has put on herself. This joke requires knowledge of current events and is required for Spicer's adult audience. Martinez doesn't include direct jokes but, sings humorously sing to "Mr Potato Head", asking "How did you afford her surgery?". Mr Potato Head is a children's toy where all the facial features can be rearranged painlessly. This simple joke involving a toy is appropriate Martinez' younger audience.

Bot these pieces are written by strong women, showing the world that you don't need to change your face to be beautiful. They both show you that women can be beautiful without using knives, creams, make up and other beauty products. Although they portray their messages in different ways, they still portray their messages successfully and through their different text conventions. Although the two authors are using different genres, the both explore the standards of female beauty which are implanted into girls' brains at a young age. They show it as a type of propaganda in the modern world. The women both demonstrate to their audiences how women can be beautiful without the beauty industry by the end of their pieces. Martinez shows Cry Baby turning off the TV and taking off her wig and lipstick, becoming herself again, while Spicer is shows the audience her real self, taking off her tight dress, taking off her make up and un styling her hair. Both women show their true selves unaffected by the effect of female beauty standards.

**Performance Standards for Stage 2 English**

**Score 17/30 Grade C+**

| - | **Knowledge and Understanding** | **Analysis** | **Application** |
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| **A** | Comprehensive knowledge and understanding of ideas and perspectives in a range of texts.  Thorough knowledge and understanding of the ways in which creators of texts use a range of language features, stylistic features, and conventions to make meaning.  Extensive knowledge and understanding of a wide range of ways in which texts are created for different purposes, audiences, and contexts. | Complex analysis of ideas, perspectives, and/or aspects of culture represented in texts.  Perceptive analysis of language features, stylistic features, and conventions used in texts, and thoughtful evaluation of how these influence audiences.  Critical analysis of similarities and differences when comparing texts. | Versatile and precise use of language and stylistic features to create a wide range of coherent texts that address the purpose, audience, and context.  Fluently integrated use of evidence from texts to develop and support a response.  Sophisticated use of accurate, clear, and fluent expression. |
| **B** | Knowledge and understanding of ideas and perspectives in a range of texts.  Knowledge and understanding of the ways in which creators of texts use a range of language features, stylistic features, and conventions to make meaning.  Knowledge and understanding of a range of ways in which texts are created for different purposes, contexts, and audiences. | Detailed analysis of ideas, perspectives, and/or aspects of culture represented in texts.  Detailed analysis of language features, stylistic features, and conventions, and evaluation of how these influence audiences.  Clear analysis of similarities and differences when comparing texts. | Accurate use of language and stylistic features to create a range of coherent texts that address the purpose, context, and audience.  Appropriate use of evidence from texts to develop and support a response.  Consistent use of accurate, clear, and fluent expression. |
| **C** | Knowledge and understanding of some ideas and perspectives in texts.  Knowledge and understanding of the ways in which creators of texts use some language features, stylistic features, and conventions to make meaning.  Knowledge and understanding ways in which everyday texts are created for different purposes, contexts, and audiences. | Analysis of some ideas and perspectives represented in texts.  Description and some analysis of different language features, stylistic features, and conventions, and/or some evaluation of how these influence audiences.  Analysis of some similarities and differences when comparing texts. | Generally accurate use of language and stylistic features to create texts that address the purpose, context, and audience.  Selection of some evidence from texts to develop and support a response.  Appropriate use of accurate, clear, and fluent expression. |
| **D** | Knowledge and understanding of some ideas in a narrow range texts.  Some knowledge and understanding of the ways in which creators of texts use language features and conventions to make meaning.  Knowledge and understanding of ways in which some everyday texts are created for different purposes and audiences. | Description of some ideas in texts.  Description of some language features, stylistic features, and/or conventions.  Description of some similarities and differences in texts. | Use of some language and stylistic features to create a narrow range of texts.  Partial use of basic evidence from texts to develop a response.  Inconsistent use of expression. |
| **E** | Identification of an idea in a text.  Identification of a limited range of ways in which creators of texts use language techniques.  Recognition of one or more ways in which a familiar text is created. | Reference to an idea in a text.  Recognition of language or stylistic features.  Recognition of a simple connection between texts. | Restricted use of language or stylistic features to create a text.  Limited use of evidence from a text in a response.  Limited use of clear expression. |