

**Cosmetics, Plastic Surgery, & Authentic Beauty**

**ARGUMENT-BASED**

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

The debatable issue for this project is:

**Cosmetics and plastic surgery can increase a person’s authentic beauty.**

These argument-based reflection questions align with the sources in the Media List. They can be used to prompt student responses either in writing or orally. What makes them argument-based is that they ask students to focus on the arguments being made by the sources, and on their responses to counter-arguments. The questions also help process information from the sources as they think about and begin to build their own arguments and counter-arguments on the issue.

Responses – whether spoken or in writing – should be completely in Spanish.

**Background Information/Both Sides**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTFuzk3vKlw>

1. Do the images of supermodels without their makeup suggest that makeup makes them more beautiful, or do they suggest that the models are naturally beautiful already, so the make-up doesn’t really add anything to their beauty? Cite two models that support your response.

2. Is there anything in this video from The Talko that suggests that the beauty added by cosmetics to the appearance of these supermodels is somehow inauthentic? What might make it inauthentic?

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

3. What was journalist Esther Honig’s original hypothesis before she sent the bare photo of her unmadeup face to photo editors around the world? Was that hypothesis confirmed or not?

4. Honig says that she doesn’t know the meaning of her project “Before and After.” What do you think the meaning of the project is? Why do you think this?

5. What do you think “Before and After,” and the subsequent projects it inspired, say about beauty? Do universal standards of beauty exist? Are beauty standards entirely culturally relative?

**Affirmative: Cosmetics and plastic surgery can increase authentic beauty**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmp53ZV6kLE>

6. A lot of the social media reaction to Alicia Keys’ “no makeup” movement seems to have been negative, according to LovelyTi. A lot of posts that she shows in her video state that Alicia Keys, a natural beauty, might be able to get away with no makeup, but that many women need makeup to enhance their natural appearance. Is there a way that this social media consensus can be used as evidence for the affirmative side of this debate? If so, what claim does it support?

7. Summarize LovelyTi’s point that makeup can enhance the beauty of women. Try to include the backing she provides, both explicitly and implicitly, for her point.

8. Try to list out the claims that LovelyTi makes against the “no make-up” movement. Try to list at least three separate argumentative claims made by LovelyTi.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQvYwXx7N9g>

9. What are the two types of plastic surgery that Dr. Smith identifies? How might this distinction help the affirmative side in this debate? What claim might they formulate to include the less-discussed of these two types?

10. Dr. Cash tells a story of the way that counseling can help teens and young adults approach plastic surgery appropriately. Summarize what Dr. Cash says about the value of counseling. How might you use this line of thinking in your argumentation?

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

11. List three statistics about South Korea that support the point that South Korea is a world capital of plastic surgery.

12. What is the attitude of the South Korean society toward plastic surgery? How do you know that this is their attitude? How might the South Korean view toward plastic surgery be used by your side in building argumentation? How might it provide evidence to support an argumentative claim you might make? Or be used to support a counter-argument?

13. How do the visual images in this CBS News This Morning video support your position?

14. What argument does the South Korean doctor make to support the widespread use of plastic surgery in South Korea? Quote him in your response.

<https://sites.psu.edu/siowfa15/2015/09/15/why-does-makeup-make-people-more-attractive/>

15. How do cosmetics enhance **contrast** in one’s appearance, and why does that lead people to perceive someone to be more beautiful, according to Professor Loesch?

16. Paraphrase what Professor Loesch says about research studies that have been done on whether cosmetics make women more beautiful in the eyes of others.

17. What did the “tip study” find, and how might its findings be used to support an argumentative claim? What claim might this evidence support?

<http://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/beauty-is-in-the-mind-of-the-beholder#.WI4xxH88Nf4>

18. According to Eric Wargo’s article on the Association for Psychological Science website, does being physically attractive make things easier for someone in life?

19. What does Wargo mean when he calls the human brain a “beauty detector,” and how does his point here relate to the debate about whether beauty is culturally relative or normed to universal standards?

20. List out the characteristics in both men and women that define the universal standard of a beautiful face, according to Wargo? How might this be used as evidence to support an argumentative claim in the debate?

21. What argumentative claim can the article’s final several paragraphs support that includes increasing fairness? Include the reasoning from the essay that supports and develops this argument.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/13/fashion/makeup-makes-women-appear-more-competent-study.html?_r=0>

22. What conclusions does this New York Times article report were found by the study done on the use of makeup by Harvard University psychology professor Nancy Etcoff? What specific attributes do people perceive women who wear makeup have more of?

23. There are a number of quotations in this article from experts and researchers in this field. Quote three of the best quotations for your side. What argumentative claims might each of them support?

24. If someone were to make the counter-argument that society should not be so fixated on physical appearance when making judgments about other people, what would Professor Etcoff and the other researchers who agree with her say in response?

<http://www.today.com/health/people-prefer-less-makeup-women-study-suggests-2D79609763>

25. What is the overall conclusion of the research study published in the Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology and reported on in the study?

26. Why does this study provide evidence for the affirmative side, what evidence does it provide, and what argumentative claim could that evidence support?

<http://money.usnews.com/money/careers/articles/2008/05/12/why-people-are-investing-in-better-looks>

27. What specific effects does the use of plastic surgery have on the average workers said to be getting this surgery for career reasons?

28. What is the reasoning that these people are using when getting plastic surgery in hope that it will have these effects? Do you agree with this reasoning? Why or why not?

**Negative: Cosmetics and plastic surgery cannot increase authentic beauty**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63XsokRPV_Y>

29. What is “beauty sickness,” according to Northwestern University psychology professor Renee Engeln? How did Professor Engeln come to identify it in her own early career?

30. Why does Professor Engeln focus on women exclusively in her presentation?

31. What is the source of “beauty sickness,” according to Professor Engeln?

32. How does “objectification theory” feed into and expand “beauty sickness”?

33. How does Professor Engeln respond to the counter-arguments that (a) beauty is a form of power for women, and (b) the desire for beauty and to be beautiful is hard-wired into our brains and brain chemistry?

34. How do Professor Engeln’s recommendations to cure “beauty sickness” support the negative side in this debate?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SeMHFJyd5L4>

35. How does Amber Starks want people to combat and counter our culture’s standard of

beauty? What is her alternative to the predominant and single standard of beauty?

36. When Starks says that the “standard of beauty” is a “cultural construct,” what does she mean? Explicate this concept. Then explain how this concept can be used to build an argument for your side of the debate.

37. How does Starks’s personal narrative demonstrate that our society’s standard of beauty is racist or racially biased?

38. Quote the passage that chokes Starks up at about the 13:00 mark of the video.

39. How can African-American women’s relationship to their hair – and the “natural hair” movement – be paralleled to the negative position in our debate?

40. What is Starks’s recommendations for overcoming racial bias inherent in our beauty standard?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzTW8zZO0ho>

41. What is the real reason that Alicia Keys stopped wearing makeup, according to Nicki Swift? What argument can you build using this evidence as support?

42. What symptoms of “beauty sickness” did Alicia Keys believe she was experiencing that led her to stop using cosmetics?

43. How does Keys believe that her leadership of the “no makeup” movement been positive? Do you agree with her? Why or why not?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmbFPPiK6D8>

44. Why does Alicia Keys say that giving up makeup has been liberating and empowering? Explain her reasoning.

45. In response to those who say that she is attacking women who wear makeup, Keys says that all women should just be themselves. How does this function as a counter-argument against those who see her movement as negative? How is this counter-argument consistent with her initial argument that makeup is or can be a disguise and a shackle on women?

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2586102/Bare-really-beautiful-Men-women-attractive-LESS-make-on.html>

46. How do Bangor University’s Alex Jones’s findings about men’s responses to women’s selfies with no makeup provide evidence for the negative? What argumentative claim would this evidence support: formulate the claim.

47. This is a quote from the Daily Mail article: “‘The take home message from this study is that our ideas about what the opposite sex find attractive are often inaccurate, whether it relates to body size, weight, or even something like make-up use,' continued Dr Jones.” What counter-argument can this passage support, and what argument does this counter-argument refute?

<http://everydayfeminism.com/2016/01/when-beauty-equals-white/>

48. In what specific ways is our society’s standard of beauty racist, according to Maisha Johnson?

49. How specifically does the use of cosmetics by minority women express an underlying racism built into the beauty standard?

50. How do claims that there is a universal appreciation of beauty – particularly facial beauty – actually mask racist views, according to Johnson?

51. How does the cosmetics industry itself contribute to the racism of the beauty standard, according to Johnson? Is there a way that this evidence can be brought in to support an argumentative claim for the negative? If so, what claim?

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/08/07/cons-of-plastic-surgery_n_5618623.html>

52. Summarize each of Yagena Shah’s four reasons that people should not get plastic surgery to try to improve their appearance. Which reason do you think is best?

53. How does the fourth reason – that people may not like the outcome – support a powerful argumentative claim for the negative? What claim would that be?

54. Formulate one additional argumentative claim for the negative supportable by this article.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/health/news/9833321/Dont-promise-women-they-will-be-more-beautiful-cosmetic-surgeons-warned.html>

55. Why did the British Royal College of Surgeons warn plastic surgeons to stop telling patients that plastic surgery would make them look more beautiful?

56. The recommendation included telling surgeons not to use any descriptive or judgment words, and stick to scientifically objective words like “smaller,” “wider.” Why did they do this, and how can this information be used to support the negative position?