**Plastic Surgery**

What’s the first thing that comes into your head when you think of plastic surgery? Perhaps it’s celebrities with puffed-up faces, rubbery lips set in a classic ‘trout pout’, and foreheads pumped with enough Botox to freeze even the slightest flicker of emotion before it sullies the pristine forehead. These people are vain, you’ll hear people say; they’re desperate for attention; they’re slaves to the way they look; they’re glamorising mental illness.

It’s easy to take this attitude towards people who modify themselves. But does that make this attitude okay? After all, judging people based on what they look like is pretty shallow. Added to this, there are many contextual reasons that people might choose to modify their appearance: in order to look the part for a certain job; in order to appeal to a particular target market; in order to express themselves; and, in some cases, just because they feel like it. Take Rodrigo Alves, more commonly known as the Human Doll. He’s had 60 operations to modify his face and body, the most recent of these being the removal of four ribs so that he can wear tight-fitting clothes more easily. ‘I love the way I look. I love to stand out,’ he has said. I’m fairly sure we can all relate to the idea of taking pride in some aspect of our appearance – and I’m relatively sure we’ve all enjoyed the idea of standing out before. After all, one of the best accolades you can get at school is to be called ‘outstanding’. Do we have any right to judge a person for something we’ve probably all felt at one point in our lives?

Besides, this is only one type of plastic surgery. Other types of plastic surgery are reconstructive as opposed to cosmetic. This means that the focus of the surgery is to restore a part of the body that might be broken or missing, or to improve its function. Think of victims of a road traffic accident, or a house fire. The purpose of the surgery here is to reconstruct the body and face to try and restore them as closely as possible to how they were before, or to make them more functional. Here’s a thought experiment to try: imagine Person A, who decides to have a nose job because they want a different shaped nose. Now imagine Person B, who has damaged their nose in a car accident, and, when the surgeon reconstructs it, Person B asks the surgeon to give them what they think is a ‘better’ shape than their original nose. Do you instinctively feel differently towards Person A than you do towards Person B? If so, why? If not, why not?

Furthermore, it’s not like plastic surgery is anything new. The first repair of a broken nose was recorded as long ago as 3000 BC, with civilisations in Ancient Egypt, Rome, Greece and India all showing evidence of practising and developing plastic surgery. Cosmetic surgery also has an established history, dating back as far as Ancient Rome. Additionally, there’s money to be made: the amount of plastic surgery carried out increased 115% between 2000 and 2015, showing an increase in its popularity. Plastic surgery, whether cosmetic or reconstructive, can give people a better quality of life.

So is there any problem with plastic surgery? Firstly, like all surgery, it carries risks. Particularly common risks with plastic surgery include infection, scarring, damage to nerves, and even organ failure. For some people, the end justifies the means and they’re prepared to take those risks in order to achieve the outcome they desire. But nonetheless, the risks remain. It’s hard to know the exact numbers of deaths from plastic surgery, because surgeons don’t publicise them and the deaths are likely to be registered as specific causes like pulmonary embolism or heart failure. One thing is clear, though – surgery is serious.

Secondly, the most popular cosmetic surgeries are: Botox, liposuction, breast implants and facelifts – and, while there are many reasons people might have these surgeries, it’s clear that insecurity and internalised messages about what society classes as beautiful could be a factor. Why change people’s bodies when we should be changing society’s mind, you might argue - and you’d have a good point. There’s a large correlation between people who undergo cosmetic surgery and people who have Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD). While there are requirements that you have to meet before having surgery, including mental health requirements, you could argue that the surgeons who perform cosmetic surgery on people are exacerbating the problem rather than curing it. However, those who have undergone the procedures would often disagree with this. Rodrigo Alves, the Human Doll, claims that his surgery has changed his life for the better: it’s transformed his life, as he says, ‘from water to wine’. Alves’ metaphor is a fitting one: wine might be something that some people enjoy, but that doesn’t mean it’s harmless.



**Questions**

**Challenging**

1. Name FOUR reasons why people have plastic surgery, given in paragraph 2.

2. Write out TWO sentences from the text which show that plastic surgery is not a modern invention.

3. Highlight all the phrases used in the article which mean ‘as well as this’ (minimum three phrases).

**More Challenging**

1. Name FOUR criticisms of people who have plastic surgery, according to the article.

2. Write your own definitions for the words ‘accolade’, ‘exacerbate’, ‘sully’ and ‘pristine’.

3. Explain the meaning of the phrase ‘the end justifies the means’.

4. Highlight places in the text where the writer uses a) inclusive pronouns and b) direct address using second person pronouns. What are the effects of this?

**Mega Challenging**

1. Name THREE instances in the text where the writer seems to be supporting the idea of plastic surgery, and THREE instances in the text where the writer seems to be opposing the idea of plastic surgery.

2. How has the writer used structure to influence you as a reader? Give THREE separate examples, explaining each one using PEEL.

3. Write out your own opinion on the different types of plastic surgery. You must use a range of punctuation, including at least one semi-colon.