
The Issue Of Degrading And Judging Women In The Devil Wears Prada

Hidden beneath makeup, fashion and jewellery, lies a unique, beautiful woman. Who would have thought that we could all be so different? Yet, society has moulded women to conform to today's standards. Following celebrity fashion trends, latest beauty hacks, like how to get bigger, lips bum or boobs, or how to achieve the 'perfect summer body', we have incorporated this routine of constantly wanting to be someone else into our daily lives. Consequently, we have lost the true essence of what it is to be unique. The pressure society places on women has created eating and mental disorders in girls who do not think they are beautiful, because they do not fit society's stereotypical mould.

During my twelve years of school and especially high school, the feeling of emptiness and lack of beauty consumes my day to day life. I have also watched my close friend struggle with her health because of her false sense of 'beauty'. Scared to eat at school because she is self-conscious because her friends are skinnier than her, unable to wear bikinis, because she isn't the model displayed in the media. I watched her self-confidence deteriorate day by day. Beauty should not be defined with what you see in magazines or on television. Every girl has her own unique look that makes her special and beautiful. Four in five women have low self-esteem, and who could blame them? The standards that social media has set for young girls is unrealistic and cruel.

Living in a materialistic world, women are taught from a young age that there are societal expectations that need to be followed in order to be successful in life. Women from all different classes of society, are pushed into dressing a certain way to fit in with these social norms and if they don't they are judged and pushed back into the mould that society has set. The Devil Wears Prada by Lauren Weisberger and the 1990 film Pretty Woman cover the social issues of degrading and judging a woman by what she looks like and the way she dresses.

The novel The Devil Wears Prada, is set deep within the high fashion world, and how women have to look and act a certain way to be in it. Those who don't are ridiculed and forced to change to even be taken seriously. At the beginning, Andrea is at her interview applying for a position to become Miranda's (a high-end fashion editor) assistant, she is instantly judged as unacceptable and awful because she is totally oblivious to the fashion world, as Miranda, Emily, Nigel, and others put it. They directly criticize her for not being thin enough and not stylish enough. Andrea is dressed perfectly fine according to any reasonable everyday notion of appropriate business attire. Given the media's general message that women need to be so

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skinny they develop eating disorders, it deserves mentioning that Andy is far from overweight. Her colleagues and boss are not happy until she transforms her hair, makeup, shoes, and clothing. Only after this transformation, do they respect Andy.

As well as having to conform herself for this job, Andrea struggles with the lack of support she has received from her boyfriend. She is trying to start her career and her primary networks of support are not supporting her. Instead, they tell her that she has chosen her career over her friends and family. Unfortunately, this is not atypical for young women starting their careers or for any career woman no matter what the age. This divide is not just about Andrea wearing the latest fashion apparel. This divide has more to do with a female putting herself first; in this case, starting her career and trying to get her foot in the door. Women are supposed to do what their parents want them to do, be available and supportive to their boyfriend's wishes, and not be any different from their female friends.

Throughout the novel, Andrea's character slowly moulds into societal expectations. She wore designer apparel and was more concerned about being pretty than the real, important things in life. The character of Andrea changes under the impress of social pressure. She conforms to the role of the "good" woman. Even though *The Devil Wears Prada* provides these very important public roles to women, it is no different than all of the other movies, magazines, and fashion shows, for example, they pressure women into thinking they need to "look" a certain way. Whereas in *The Devil Wears Prada* these pressures are glamorous and stressful, in real life these pressures cause many real women to develop real and serious eating disorders, drug problems, and/or depression. This unrealistic expectation paves the way for girls to think that being themselves isn't good enough to get a job or be successful. Girls should be encouraged to bring out their individuality, not hide it and cover themselves with materialistic items, to make them feel beautiful.

The 1990 film *Pretty Woman* follows a story of a young prostitute, Vivian (played by Julia Roberts) who is picked up by Edward Lewis (played by Richard Gere) who 'buys' her for a week. Over this week she is showered in gifts and for the first time steps out into the light of the materialistic world. However, this film sheds into the light of self-confidence, as Vivian learns to confront those who judged her, and how ironic it is that money depicts the way people act towards each other. In a film where sex is a dollar sign and relationships are only a cheque away, *Pretty Woman* is inescapably about the materialistic things in life. Although this does not necessarily mean that it is uncritically materialist.

Camera angles in the opening scene show a wealth exclusive penthouse party, costumes display taste and money and the setting portrays an upper-class start to the film where Edward is introduced, compared to when Vivian is first portrayed, cut outs of different body parts are only shown and yet it is clear to the audience that she is not upper class or wealthy like those in

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Edward's world. This is signified through her clothes and accessories (studded bracelets), the camera also shows her using permanent marker to renew her shoes. The music at this point has also picked up pace and is very rock and roll and consist of the words "I'm a real wild one", suggesting that this character is very wild and lives on the edge. From just these two short scenes the audience can tell that they both live completely different lifestyles.

Making a point, the movie emphasises how impersonal wealth is: On the way to the store Edward exclaims to Vivian Stores are never nice to people, they're nice to credit cards. Vivian's famed, victorious confrontation with the shop assistants – You work on commission, right? Big mistake! – might be seen as exalting her newly found advantages as a wealthy, high-class woman, but it goes well as it allows Vivian to confirm that the shop assistants were judging her by her looks (as she was wearing something she would wear on a night out on the street) and credit card all along. The scene shows Vivian that her personal worth is irrelevant to society's hostile treatment of her, building her self-esteem. Since Vivian empowers herself in other scenes by declining any offers of cash payment, to ensure that Edward knows that she may be there because he has paid her, but she still has personal worth. *Pretty Woman* repeatedly highlights ironic contradictions between the performance of wealth and the personal self.

Yet, it also highlights that Vivian needs his money to transform from a nobody to a somebody, and the type of woman irresistible to anyone — no matter how independent, intelligent, and strong-willed — is one that comes with a designer label. Says the store manager in an oddly profound moment, 'We have many things as beautiful as she would want them to be.' But, what exactly makes them beautiful? The price tag. It only costs Edward \$3,000 to buy Vivian's body for a week. Her heart and soul will cost him more, but not too much to fit in a few shopping bags.

Despite how far we have come in our movements for equality between men and women, social expectations have hindered the right for girls to act and dress the way they want. Social media creates false expectations of what women have to look like in order to fit in and materialistic items have become the essence of which people judge others on, not what truly matters. Women around the world are constantly judging themselves and changing their appearance to squish themselves in the moulds of social media and have lost what makes them different.

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