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Essay competition 2013: 11-13 Years (500-800 Words)

Which is more important for your future: how you look or your character – how you behave and why?

Before beginning this essay I thought it would be a good idea to research the meaning of beauty, as beauty is in fact the concept of this essay. However the meaning of beauty the dictionary provided baffled me. If beauty is 'A quality or feature that is most effective, gratifying, or telling,' that means anyone can be beautiful. Beauty is not just your outer appearance but your most notable quality. This made me think, what led celebrities and icons such as Beyonce and Mary Seacole to become as idolised as they are today. Is it Beyonce's unquestionable good looks that has made her an international icon or is it her amazing voice, modest personality or her undeniable dedication to her art since she is continuously recognised as one of the hardest working singers ever. Mary Seacole may not be what people would call beautiful (appearance wise) but her most notable quality is her kindness and her dedication to help others. If people refused to help her, perhaps because of racial prejudice, she still did what she believed was right. She risked her life to help others. This led me to come to the conclusion that the definition of beauty has been altered over years. From being nothing but a characteristic, beauty has become about appearance, weight, wealth and even race.

The internet and media such as magazines like 'vanity fair' has added to the theory that if you are not traditionally beautiful you are not accepted. The most upsetting thing that magazines like these express is that women of colour can never be considered traditionally beautiful. Vanity Fair continuously produces magazines where the cover only ever shows women of the white race. This leads to women of colour increasingly trying to change themselves to achieve an impossible goal to become what society considers traditionally beautiful. The likes of Michael Jackson are one of many celebrities who have fallen under the trap in attempt to fit in with the status quo. Michael Jackson, after experiencing grief and verbal abuse like being called 'big nose,' had his nose narrowed at age 26. Having a slightly larger nose is one of the features many people of African descent have to live with, even though it does not fit in with the idea of traditional beauty does not mean it is something that is wrong and needs changing. However, what is wrong is the fact magazines often digitally manipulate the skin colour of women of colour to make them appear lighter. In some cases their skin colour has been turned multiple shades lighter and their naturally busty and curvy appearances have been softened. If celebrities like Jenifer Lopez and Beyonce's pictures need to be digitally manipulated what hope is there for the ordinary women of African descent?

Being considered beautiful can only get you so far. Even modelling agencies are steering away from the traditional beautiful looks and opting for something more high fashion and unique. Twins Ashley and Asia showed their extraordinary talents to the world. After graduating from the Xavier University at the age of 18 with straight A's, they went to enrol in the prestigious University of Massachusetts Medical School in a selective eight-year program where you concurrently earn a PHD and MD. Being considered beautiful is not what got them through university and got them into the University of Massachusetts Medical School. It was years of hard work and dedication. Hundreds apply and the school annually interviews only 40, from that group, between seven and ten are chosen. Only the best get in. This shows you don't have to be good looking, slim or have a light skin tone to be the best you can be. The interviewers saw their dedication and how they would thrive in an environment such as that one. Barack Obama was raised by a struggling single mother, to becoming the man he is today. His appearance didn't get him this far, it was his perseverance and character. He reflects every quality good leader needs; dedication, respect, fairness and a passion for helping the citizens of America. If you choose to behave like you can never fit in with society's idea of beauty and shy away from

