

Issue 1 Plastic Surgery

Background Information

With the rise of social media, cosmetic surgeries have also become increasingly common. In Australia, cosmetic surgery is a \$1 billion industry with more than 500,000 procedures performed each year. Jacqui Carter, a freelance writer from Sydney shares her experience working as an assistance for a plastic surgeon and comments on the rising popularity of plastic surgery in general in an opinion piece published on *The Guardian* on the 21 August 2018.

Vocabulary

1. **Scalpel** n. A knife with a small, sharp blade, used by a surgeon
2. **Denizen** n. A person that lives in a particular place, an inhabitant or resident
3. **Ubiquity** n. appearing everywhere or being very common
4. **Languish** v. grow weak, fail to make progress or be successful
5. **Liposuction** n. A technique in cosmetic surgery for removing excess fat

Text 1- Opinion Piece by Jacqui Carter, freelance writer, sourced and adapted from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/aug/21/i-worked-for-a-plastic-surgeon-but-the-feeling-of-guilt-became-too-much>

I worked for a plastic surgeon, but the feeling of guilt became too much

It was only seven months of my life, but a year on I still find myself unsettled by the experience of working for a plastic surgeon.

We were a strange alliance from the outset – a midlife career change had left me with few employment options, and I'm certain my naturally lined face was not in keeping with his clinic's aesthetic. But I had a background in digital marketing, and this plastic surgeon wanted in on the action online.



Arguments from visual analysis:

- The Barbie doll is used as a **symbol** of the ideal female form and a representation of society's notion of perfection.
- The girl in the photograph covers her face with the picture of the Barbie, which suggests the erosion of her identity as a result of the pursuit for perfection. This imparts the critique that society as a whole places more emphasis on appearance and outward beauty than on personality, thoughts, feelings and depth.
- By extension, the girl in the photograph is essentially hiding behind a mask of societal and/or self-imposed expectations in relation to body image and female beauty. Receding into the need to wear a mask relates to the cornerstone crisis of self-worth in which many girls and young women find themselves.
- Further to this, the mask covers the girl's senses (eyes, mouth, nose, ears), perhaps suggesting that individuals are dehumanised and disempowered by a dehumanising industry. The idea of mask-wearing also relates strongly to all things inauthentic - an idea closely linked to the plastic surgery industry.
- The slogan in the photo "It's the soul that needs the surgery" resonates with Carter's concern that many women who seek plastic surgery in fact suffer from anxiety and depression and that it is counselling, therapy and education that they require, not surgical alteration of their bodies.
- Alternatively, the slogan can also be interpreted as a scathing critique of society's obsession with beauty - women seek out plastic surgery only because they feel the weight of societal expectation and society is diseased for placing such expectations on women. Therefore, it is our collective mentality or 'soul' that needs to be altered.
- The font is in pink, a colour associated with femininity, signifying that the message is directed mostly towards women, who are, in general, more burdened by beauty