

Donna Britt, "A Unique Take on Beauty"

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Donna Britt, *A Unique Take on Beauty*

Before I get to U.S. Open champion Serena Williams's disconcerting cover photo 1
on the new *Sports Illustrated*, I must point something out: 2
There are people on earth who sincerely find Sarah Jessica Parker beautiful. 3
Maybe that doesn't surprise you. After all, the vivacious actress, a recent best- 4
actress Emmy nominee for HBO's "Sex in the City," is blond, slim and possesses ample 5
upper-body upholstery. The fact that her face is unremarkable seems hardly to matter. 6
Parker is, I've heard repeatedly, beautiful. 7
Ditto for the versatile actress who defeated Parker for the [1999] Emmy. Physi- 8
cally, Helen Hunt is much like Parker: blond, thin, busty for her small frame. So she, 9
too, is beautiful. So is the wraithlike Gwyneth Paltrow — I mean Paltrow, whom some 10
have dared to compare to Grace Kelly. So are dozens of women on TV and onscreen 11
whom I, and others, find merely pretty or profoundly average. 12
But to begrudge folks their opinion of these women is useless. Beauty is entirely 13
subjective, a matter truly in the eye of the beholder. 14
So let us behold Serena Williams. A guy I know who did recently said this: 15
"I don't watch tennis, but was channel-flipping and got the championship," said 16
the man, who asked not to be identified. "I saw Serena and, said, 'Damn. . . . She was 17
fine in a way that I almost never see on the airwaves.'" 18
I, too, watched Williams wrest the tournament from Martina Hingis in an excru- 19
ciating battle. As impressed as I was with Williams's speed, thunderous speed, serve 20
and body-hugging outfits, they weren't the reasons I couldn't stop staring. 21
Williams's physical presence is what struck me — and the fact that it's of a type I 22
rarely see beamed from my TV set. 23
Serena is no light-and-lovely Halle Berry–Vanessa Williams type, nor a fine- 24
featured brown vision in the vein of Angela Bassett or Whitney Houston — recognized 25
beauties who've all had some difficulty getting parts equal to their looks. 26
Serena's beauty is a motherland thing. She is, with her satin skin, cornrows and 27
powerhouse voluptuousness, the female embodiment of Africa, unmistakable and 28
undiluted. She is also, as my son used to say, "the bomb-diggity." 29
Now some may grouse at my bringing a subject as unworthy as appearance into 30
the pristine arena of sports. They'd suggest that considering Williams's many gifts, 31
attractiveness hardly matters. To which I respectfully respond: 32
Bull. Who really believes Michael Jordan's unprecedented popularity has nothing 33
to do with his handsomeness? Or that soccer star Mia Hamm's wholesome prettiness 34
doesn't help endear her to fans, or that hardbodied Gabrielle Reece, a men's mag fave, 35
is the nation's best-known female volleyball player because of her serve? 36
For athletes, there's as much money to be made in looks as talent. But something 37
more important than a paycheck is at stake with Serena. 38
In the video for TLC's hit single, "Unpretty," several young women struggle with 39
being judged by standards of beauty that reject full-figured and flat-chested women 40
and those with unfashionable features. I love the video's self-love message. 41
And that it shows how much looks still matter to most women and girls. 42
It's a credit to Williams's upbringing that she doesn't feel "unpretty" in a culture 43
that long ignored and rejected beauty like hers. Some find Serena and sister Venus — 44
who's also striking — confident to the point of intimidation. My son, 14, says Serena 45
is "cute for a girl who looks like she could kick my butt." 46
Maybe Serena's muscularity explains why much of the media has yet to note her 47
beauty. But buffness hasn't marred Lucy Lawless's sex-symbol status as TV's Xena. 48
Her rippling bod still graces men's magazine covers. Could Williams's youth be the 49
issue? Not if you consider how often the prettiness of Hingis, 18, is noted, as is 50
18-year-old Anna Kournikova's Kewpie-doll appeal. 51

The new <i>Sports Illustrated</i> clinched it. From hundreds of possible photos, <i>SI</i>	52
chose one of Serena during play, her face contorted in a grimace. The shot highlights	53
her athleticism, which I love, but diminishes her attractiveness. Oddly, the mag that	54
invented swimsuit issues modestly obscures Serena’s breasts with a strip of type.	55
Some, I suspect, don’t know what to think of the Williams sisters’ special	
glamour.	56
Serena may be just the girl to help them. As smart, bubbly and open as she is	57
attractive, she has everything that our most beloved sports heroes possess.	58
My hope is that America is smart and open enough to embrace Serena’s	
“unique”	59
beauty, which in fact can be found on vivid display all over the world. That would	60
mean enfolding her as it does its Parkers and Hamms and more recently its Jennifer	61
Lopez, though that once-bountiful Latina seems blonder and thinner every day.	62
America should wrap its arms around Serena’s beauty as well as her talent —	
not	63
just for her sake, but for all the beautiful dark girls who never got their due.	64

- The second through fourth paragraphs (lines 3-12) function in the context of the surrounding paragraphs as
 - a reversion
 - an interjection
 - a digression
 - an intervention
 - a backstory
- Britt’s attitude in the second through fourth paragraphs (lines 3-12) can be described as
 - querulous
 - incredulous
 - deferring
 - concessionary
 - wondrous
- By “wraithlike” (line 10), Britt is suggesting that Gwyneth Paltrow
 - is delicate to the point of seeming to be breakable
 - is as seemingly lost as a homeless child
 - is full of anger, making her a source of contention
 - is anorexically thin in appearance
 - has a complexion as lacking in color as a figure near death
- By “grouse at” (line 30), Britt means
 - take a shot at
 - berate
 - growl at
 - raise eyebrows at
 - discredit the fact of
- In relation to the previous paragraph, the paragraph starting with “Bull” (line 33–36) serves the rhetorical function of
 - an exposition
 - an interrogation
 - a devaluation
 - a dismissal
 - a validation
- Which of the following can Britt’s process of interrogation in lines 47–51 best be classified as?

- a. an induction
- b. a deduction
- c. a process of elimination
- d. a generalization
- e. a narrowing down

7. What is Britt suggesting when she says that *Sports Illustrated* “clinched it” (line 52)?
- a. By placing a strip over Williams’s breasts, *Sports Illustrated* highlighted her athleticism in order to downplay the qualities that the public feels ambivalent about.
 - b. The magazine acknowledged that female stars are not considered beautiful if they are flat chested.
 - c. Since athleticism is not considered beautiful for female celebrities, *Sports Illustrated* believed it would sell more copies if it highlighted her athleticism and downplayed her beauty.
 - d. The magazine was suggesting that because we live in a culture that considers the lighter the better in terms of beauty, Serena’s ethnicity has been yet to be recognized by the media.
 - e. She is not suggesting that *Sports Illustrated* provided any resolution for why Serena’s beauty has not yet been acknowledged.
8. The tone of the second to last paragraph of the essay (lines 59–62) is MOST ACCURATELY classified as
- a. propositional
 - b. wishful
 - c. subjunctive
 - d. anticipatory
 - e. ethnocentric