

Katy Perry, Roar (2013)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CevxZvSJLk8>

Subject content focus area

Media language

Representation

Contexts

Background context

- Successful Singer/Songwriter Katy Perry released 'Roar' as the lead single from her fourth studio album 'Prism' on August 10th 2013.
- On July 7, 2015, the video for 'Roar' became the fourth video to reach 1 billion views on Vevo, making Perry the first artist in history to have two music videos with 1 billion views.
- As of February 2017, the video for 'Roar' is the eleventh most viewed YouTube video of all time, receiving over 1.79 billion.
- "Roar" made Katy Perry the first artist in history to have two music videos with over 1 billion views.

Part 1: Starting points - Media language

- The video opens with an Establishing shot of a plane crash in the jungle leaving only two survivors. The female looks visibly shaken and scared whilst the male is seen, through a point of view shot, to be taking selfies indicating how he isn't recognising the seriousness of the situation or showing any care towards his partner.
- That night, when walking through the jungle, the male meets his demise after being attacked by a lion, leaving the female alone. The surrounding darkness indicates the danger and the close up of the female's face shows her feelings of shock and absolute fear.
- We cut to a mid-shot again showing the female's abject terror whilst two tarantulas crawl over her. Her clothing indicates how she is unprepared for such an environment and she is seen as a victim who we sympathise with.
- As the video progresses, the female becomes more accustomed to the dark and begins to see the beauty in the nature around her rather than the dangers, for instance when what looks like ominous yellow eyes actually turns out to be fireflies.
- The female soon turns cat-like and a mid-shot shows her crawling on all fours and roaring at the water's edge. In the water we see what is supposed to be her reflection shown as a tiger's face.

This primal behaviour connotes a sense of oneness with nature and indicates how the female is gaining emotional strength and feeling empowered.

- This new representation of the female character is established through a wide shot of her in the jungle, now dressed a little more practically, standing confidently and holding a home-made weapon showing her new found skills.
- Later shots see her completely absorbed into the jungle lifestyle wearing a skirt made of leaves and a garland of flowers.
- Low angle shots connote her dominance in the environment and her body language is open and even defiant at times, showing she is now fully in control. The narrative is that she is no longer needing to act passively because of a man in her life and she has the courage to carry on alone, making the best of her situation.
- This culminates with a wide shot of her sitting centrally on some kind of throne made from plants and flowers. Either side she is flanked by wild animals perhaps protecting her and her flowers form a crown, suggesting she is now the Queen of the Jungle.
- The final scene is another wide shot showing how her world and that of the jungle have collided and both now live side by side in harmony. She has converted the broken plane into a home and made the best of her situation. The subtext here is that the female can cope with whatever life throws at her.

Media contexts - Cultural

- The song is focused on empowerment and standing up for oneself and is thought to be a positive statement about moving forward in her life after her tumultuous relationship with comedian Russell Brand.
- The song references Muhammed Ali ("I'm floating like a butterfly, Stinging like a bee"), Helen Reddy ("hear me roar") and the Rocky movie franchise ("I got the eye of the tiger"), and these references could be seen as Perry targeting an older audience.

Part 2: Starting points - Representation

- At the beginning of the video, the male taking selfies is a subversion of a typical stereotype of females. The media would have us believe that selfies are exclusively the domain of the females in our society but this unusual representation forces the audience to consider how men can also be victims of vanity and self-obsession. If we consider that this song was Katy Perry's first release after her split from Russell Brand, this representation makes sense as he is known for his love of the limelight and there is also evidence to suggest he believes he is very attractive too.
- The focus for the song is about female empowerment, sending a message to her fans that women are strong and a force to be reckoned with. To achieve this she represents the female

character as submissive and inferior to the male to begin with but once he is out of the picture she is able to grow and become stronger, finding an inner strength she hadn't realised she possessed. It could even be suggested that the leopard print fabric she is seen to be wearing at the start as a scarf is a motif to represent this inner strength. The fabric remains with her throughout the video, beginning life as a rather prim neckerchief, then as a belt, then an integral part of her spear and finally her revealing bra top.

- *This video is interesting to consider in relation to feminist theoretical perspectives – there is a clearly empowering message about women, however Katy Perry's character becomes more scantily clad as the video progresses and is, therefore, also sexually objectified.*