Written Task 2 Outline

*Prescribed Question*: How could the text be read and interpreted differently by two different readers?

*Title of the text for analysis*: Impossible Choices: Would You Rather?

*Part of the course to which the task refers*: Part 2- Language and gender, advertising, and logic

*My critical response will*:

* Introduce the “Would You Rather?” advertisement and explain the controversy about victims of domestic violence it has caused,
* Explain how one reader could interpret the ad as clickbait and not cause any harm to the physically abused,
* Elaborate on how a different reader could see the ad as insensitive to victims of domestic violence and how it publicly shamed them,
* Interpret how Rihanna is portrayed as the “villain” in the ad when compared to her abuser Chris Brown,
* Conclude on why this advertisement serves as a lesson to other controversial ads in the future.

Word Count: 141

Shut Up and Drive [Everyone Crazy about an Ad]

An ad for an app called “Would You Rather?” was put out on Snapchat earlier this year and raised much controversy in the few hours that it was uploaded. It featured a question asking users if they would rather “Slap Rihanna” or “Punch Chris Brown,” referencing the domestic abuse Rihanna endured in 2009 during her relationship with rapper Chris Brown. Almost immediately, viewers of the ad demanded for it to be taken down and filed nasty complaints to Snapchat. Once Rihanna caught word of the ad, she responded that it was not only offensive to herself and the years of domestic abuse she suffered through, but to the victims who have and are still suffering through it. After her response, the ad was taken down and Snapchat revealed that it “did not meet their community guidelines,” despite it being approved to go on the app in the first place. The advertisement was looked at two different ways by the viewers, one being that it is simply shock clickbait to reel in people to download their app. Others saw it as an insensitive joke about domestic violence victims, especially Rihanna’s, and brought shame to the abused who share their stories.

One reader could view this ad as shock clickbait. The company that created the ad intentionally chose this controversial topic in an attempt for their app to get recognition and cause more people to download it. They simply do not mean any harm to Rihanna and other victims of domestic violence. It has been nearly 10 years since the assault was reported and because it was such a long time ago, it is socially acceptable to make light of the incident because people’s feelings aren’t as sensitive. They used the pop culture references to relate to the audience and bolster the popularity of their own app, not to hurt anyone or disregard their personal story. The reader could feel that people nowadays are too sensitive about social issues like this and will go to extreme lengths to call another out if it makes them look intellectual, or “woke.” Celebrities are favored so much and put upon a pedestal, and when they are humanized, the ones doing the humanizing are criticized severely for it. It is only a joke, it is not like the ad actually said it was going to hit Rihanna or punch Chris Brown. The whole thing was blown out of proportion and would not have happened if people weren’t this sensitive today. It is possible that the creators did not have knowledge of Rihanna’s abuse by Chris Brown in 2009, or at least how severe it was, meaning it is, yet again, socially acceptable to joke about it.

Other readers can see this advertisement as insulting to victims of domestic abuse and reducing the seriousness of their assault to a simple joke. The creators of this advertisement do not realize the severe mental and physical trauma these victims can face and making fun of it only causes it to be worse. Some people have to live with the pain trauma from the assault for the rest of their lives, where their assaulter gets to go free, which happened in this particular case. Rihanna is a beacon of hope for domestic assault victims, being living proof that you can get away from the toxic abuser and live a successful life. This advertisement disregards how successfully she picked herself back up from the abuse and continued on with her career, but the people who are in the same position that look up to her. In addition to the actual abuse, she now has to deal with judgement from society making fun of her story. Instead of supporting her, it brings shame to her and her personal feelings about the assault. It makes it more difficult for unknown victims of domestic abuse to get help or share their story when they see how victims are shamed when they become public about it. The ad also chose to include a picture of Rihanna where she has a mean “resting bitch face” look and in a typical “mean girl” position, but a friendly and smiling one of Chris Brown. It looks like Rihanna is being portrayed as the villain and Brown as the hero. The ad is trying to have people chose the option “Slap Rihanna,” virtually continuing her physical abuse. It follows the same pattern in society of blaming the victim, saying that they were either “asking for it” or could have prevented it in some way. The ad also shows Rihanna in tight, revealing clothing, sexualizing her body while making fun of her physical abuse.

The “Would You Rather?” ad serves as a lesson to advertisement developers everywhere. If you are desperate to get attention on your product/app, then cause a controversy easy enough for people to form quick opinions. Because domestic violence is such a personal topic, many of the viewers of this ad were quick to defend and spread their opinions on it. They generally were split in two groups, deeming the ad as offensive or not. Whether or not this particular ad was planned to spark this huge controversy, it got the actual mission done of an advertisement and bolstered their popularity, even if it was at the cost of Rihanna’s personal feelings.

Word Count: 904

Works Cited

Romana, Nick. “Rihanna Slams Snapchat .” *Entertainment Weekly*, EW, 15 Mar. 2018, 1:15

EDT, ew.com/music/2018/03/15/rihanna-snapchat-ad-chris-brown/.