Key

Bold writing indicates an importance to the information, *italics* represents information that will likely gain you further marks but isn't necessarily important information.
Superscript indicates a recap of a theory.

Product Context

Formation, *lead single for the album Lemonade,* was released the *day before Beyonce performed at the Super Bowl final in February 2016*. The Formation music video, *directed by Melina Matsoukas, was released with the song.*
This music video has **won numerous awards** including a *Clio Award for Innovation and Creative Excellence in a Music Video at the 2016 awards, and has been nominated in the music video category at the 59th Grammy Awards.*
The video is **set against the backdrop of the flooding in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina and the associated racial tension in America, and also draws historical parallels with references to racism and slavery.**

Music Video

Video: http://youtu.be/WDZJPJV__bQ

Lyrics

What happened at the New Orleans?
Bitch I'm back, by popular demand
Y'all haters corny with that Illuminati mess
Paparazzi, catch my fly, and my cocky fresh
I'm so reckless when I rock my Givenchy dress (stylin')
I'm so possessive so I rock his Roc necklaces
My daddy Alabama, Momma Louisiana
You mix that negro with that Creole make a Texas bama
I like my baby heir with baby hair and afros
I like my negro nose with Jackson Five nostrils
Earned all this money but they never take the country out me
I got a hot sauce in my bag, swag
I see it, I want it, I stunt, yellow-bone it
I dream it, I work hard, I grind 'til I own it
I twirl on them haters, albino alligators
El Camino with the seat low, sippin' Cuervo with no chaser
Sometimes I go off (I go off), I go hard (I go hard)

Lyrics (cont)

Get what's mine (take what's mine), I'm a star (I'm a star)
Cause I slay (slay), I slay (hey), I slay (okay), I slay (okay)
All day (okay), I slay (okay), I slay (okay), I slay (okay)
We gon' slay (slay), gon' slay (okay), we slay (okay), I slay (okay)
I slay (okay), okay (okay), I slay (okay), okay, okay, okay, okay
Okay, okay, ladies, now let's get in formation, cause I slay
Okay, ladies, now let's get in formation, cause I slay
Prove to me you got some coordination, cause I slay
Slay trick, or you get eliminated
When he f-k me good I take his ass to Red Lobster, cause I slay
When he f-k me good I take his ass to Red Lobster, cause I slay
If he hit it right, I might take him on a flight on my chopper, cause I slay
Drop him off at the mall, let him buy some J's, let him shop up, cause I slay

Lyrics (cont)

I might get your song played on the radio station, cause I slay
I might get your song played on the radio station, cause I slay
You just might be a black Bill Gates in the making, cause I slay
I just might be a black Bill Gates in the making
I see it, I want it, I stunt, yellow-bone it
I dream it, I work hard, I grind 'til I own it
I twirl on my haters, albino alligators
El Camino with the seat low, sippin' Cuervo with no chaser
Sometimes I go off (I go off), I go hard (I go hard)
Take what's mine (take what's mine), I'm a star (I'm a star)
Cause I slay (slay), I slay (hey), I slay (okay), I slay (okay)
All day (okay), I slay (okay), I slay (okay), I slay (okay)
We gon' slay (slay), gon' slay (okay), we slay (okay), I slay (okay)
I slay (okay), okay (okay), I slay (okay), okay, okay, okay, okay
Okay, okay, ladies, now let's get in formation, cause I slay

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Lyrics (cont)

Okay, ladies, now let's get in formation, cause I slay
Prove to me you got some coordination, cause I slay
Slay trick, or you get eliminated
Okay, ladies, now let's get in formation, I slay
Okay, ladies, now let's get in formation
You know you that bitch when you cause all this conversation
Always stay gracious, best revenge is your paper

Copy and pasted from Google (I AINT READING ALLAT)

Media Language

-- HOW DIFFERENT ELEMENTS OF MEDIA LANGUAGE AND THE COMBINATION OF ELEMENTS INFLUENCE MEANING AND COMMUNICATE MULTIPLE MEANINGS --
The music video offers a wealth of (sometimes conflicting/contradictory) messages and possible meanings. Many of the **references in the video require an awareness of issues and events (such as the flooding in New Orleans and racial tension in America).**

Media Language (cont)

The video also **requires a high level of media literacy** to recognise and understand **intertextual references such as footage taken from a documentary about 'bounce' called 'That B.E.A.T/' and references to news footage of police brutality, such as the lone dancing boy. Factors in the music video contrast and conflict and this creates a confused meaning in audiences or offers a coherent message.** For example:
The use of costume is interesting - **Antebellum dresses which seem to reference slavery contrast heavily with stereotypical "pop" signifiers such as tight fitting/revealing costume in some of the dance sections.**
Similarly, **Beyonce's performance shifts from moments of aggression such as obscene gestures with her fingers to more culturally recognisable dance routines that seem less loaded with political or social messages.**

Media Language (cont)

This contrasting use of signs leads to possible readings/meanings of the video - *is it exploring issues of the black experience in America? Is it a personal exploration of Beyonce's life? Is it attempting to discuss issues of gender and equality?* Is it possible for the video to be all of these things at once? (good questions to raise in your answer).
-- APPLYING THEORY --
Barthes - Semiotics
Theory recap:(1) the idea that texts communicate their meanings through a process of signification. (2) the idea that signs can function at the level of denotation, which involves the 'literal' or common-sense meaning of the sign, and at the level of connotation, which involves the meanings associated with or suggested by the sign. (3) the idea that constructed meanings can come to seem self-evident, achieving the status of myth through a process of naturalisation.

Media Language (cont)

The concept of the signifier/signified, using specific signification in the music video and considering how this might be interpreted according to social convention:
- For example, **the use of antebellum era dresses. Beyonce and a group of other black women pose in white dresses that appear to reference the antebellum era of American history.** *Consider the significance of slavery in relation to this sequence and what is being signified.*

EXTRA NOTES - For all areas.

The Kanye West Controversy:
The concert gamered media attention during Kanye west's comments regarding the portrayal of black people in the media.
Music video reference:
Sinking police car – The video opens with a New Orleans Police Car submerged in deep NOLA flood waters, the voice over says " What happened after New Orleans", **the voice is a murdered black man from New Orleans. A video of the confession was all over the internet.**

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EXTRA NOTES - For all areas. (cont)

Flooded Waters – The music **unites us (Across all genders and no matter how raunchy it's percieved by those who don't get it) and the Hurricane Katrina was real.**

Black self-love – Opens social hate and bullying towards girls like her daughter who stand proudly in her beautiful afro. Be proud of your identity and love who you are.

Women in White. Men in black – Represents a time before and after slaves were free'd around the 1900's. These were slaves were technically "free" but still oppressed.

MLK – A man holding up a newspaper is brifefly seen. on the cover is Martin Luther King Jr, with the words: "The Truth – More than a Dreamer". representing the civil rights movement.

Formation – There are several **choreographed sequences of "Ladies in formation" but takes place at the bottom of an empty pool**. Formation is first introduced at the beginning of the song **in the form of family references, then women – we need each other through tough times.**

EXTRA NOTES - For all areas. (cont)

B-Boy – Powerful scene of a little boy in a black hoodie break dancing in front of a line of police in riot gear, **he stops dancing and puts his hands in the air – the policemen put their arms in the air in response – peace at last,** finishing with a **clip of graffiti on a wall comes across the scene that says, "Stop shooting us".**

Performance:

Beyonce's performance shifts from moments of agression such as obscene gestures with her fingers to more culturally recognisable dance routines that seem less loaded with political or social messages.

This contrasting use of signs leads to possible reading/meaning of the video:

– Is it exploring issues of the Black Experience in America?

– Is it a personal exploration of beyonce's life?

– Is it attempting to discuss issues of gender and equality?

– Is it possible for the video to be all of these things?

EXTRA NOTES - For all areas. (cont)

Beyonce engages with intertextuality within her music videos, for instance Reservoir dogs and pulp fiction in the Music video – "Video phone" of hers in the opening.

Reference to "Kill bill" in the music video "Telephone" the car being the "Pussy Wagon" from Kill bill.

An intertextual reference to (The Holy Mountain) – Alejando Jodonowsky 1973 – This is in Beyonces music video formation.

Copy and pasted from the following article: https://jakepalmermediastudies.wordpress.com/2017/11/2-2/beyonce-formation/

Representation

-- INDUSTRY CONTEXT --

In discussion about the various issues of representation in this video we should not lose sight of **the purpose of the music video in relation to finance and profit.** The video was **released the day before a Superbowl performance.** The combination of this release date and a **performance to over 100 million people impacted the global circulation of the video and the financial gain for Beyonce and her collaborators.**

Representation (cont)

Candidates might discuss the extent to which the video was designed to promote a political/cultural agenda or to simply generate publicity and make money.

-- HOW SOCIAL AND CULTURAL GROUPS, INCLUDING GENDER, ETHNICITY AND AGE ARE REPRESENTED --

As explored in the Media Language section above the video offers a range of different representations relating to race and ethnicity, however consider also the specific presentation of Beyonce herself.

Beyonce, as a performer, is a construct- her persona is cultivated on screen using images/sequences. She demonstrates herself as a powerful figure.

Beyonce frequently makes **direct address to the audience by gazing directly at us. She stands in strong, powerful stances at the front of groups (of both men and women), and perhaps most iconic is the image of her on top of the police car.**

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Representation (cont)

The construction of her persona could be to sell records and gain fans rather than offer any meaningful insight into her personality/beliefs- this is one view.

-- HOW AND WHY STEREOTYPES CAN BE USED POSITIVELY + NEGATIVELY --

Formation **uses stereotypes such as sexualised images of black females that could be interpreted as positive (strong, empowered) or negative (objectified).

Beyonce is represented in different ways (sitting on the police car, dressed in historical costume), showing that her identity is more complex than a simple stereotype.**

-- HOW REPRESENTATIONS EMBODY VALUES, ATTITUDES, BELIEFS AND MESSAGES --

Whilst Beyonce is **offering subversive (or at least politically motivated) comments about race,** candidates might be asked to consider ways in which she is **reinforcing some attitudes and values in relation to gender.**

Representation (cont)

Good questions to raise in your answer is does the representation of Beyonce in the video reinforce and possible condone the objectification of women? For example, the dance sections where she wears short/tight or revealing outfits as well as some of the sexualised lyrics. This might be balanced by looking again at her construction as a strong, powerful figure.

-- APPLYING THEORY --

Stuart Hall - Representation

^Theory recap: (1) the idea that representation is the production of meaning through language, with language defined in its broadest sense as a system of signs. (2) the idea that the relationship between the concepts and signs is governed by codes. (3) the idea that stereotyping, as a form of representation, reduces people down to a few simple characteristics or traits.

Representation (cont)

(4) the idea that stereotyping tends to occur where there are inequalities of power, as subordinate or excluded groups are constructed as different or 'other' (e.g; through ethnocentrism).^. The **representation of gender challenges the stereotype of women- they are in powerful positions/in control. The male representation follows stereotype that they must be muscular- little representation but when they are there, they're all the same body type. Representation of age seen as the little dancing boy challenges ideas that children are oblivious to the problems around them. Finally, the representation of ethnicity challenges the stereotypes of black people, as they are in a position of power and control over white people for most of the video, reclaiming their history (as suggested in shots of them in control over the former slave-owners house). White people representation follows stereotypes, and police are shown in a position of power and authority.**

Beyonce's finger gestures

Audience

-- HOW MEDIA PRODUCERS TARGET, ATTRACT, REACH, ADDRESS AND POTENTIALLY CONSTRUCT AUDIENCES --

The **video is a sales and promotion tool, released the day before Beyonce's Superbowl performance.

This was planned to reach an extremely large, mass audience. **

It is interesting to consider the video as **both a means to address a wide audience with valid social comment and as a means to promote Beyonce's career and sell records.**

Beyonce as a performer has worked within a number of different genres (pop, R&B, Dance, Hip Hop, etc) These genres are fluid and subject to change and arguable *all combine in the genre that is being explored in this music video: 'bounce'.*

This allows the producers of to target a range of audiences who may be familiar with one or more of these genres.

-- HOW AUDIENCES MAY INTERPRET THE MEDIA --

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Audience (cont)

Audiences may interpret this video in different ways especially as **it presents many, seemingly conflicting, messages.**
Audience's age, gender, ethnicity, attitudes and beliefs may affect their interpretation of the video.
The **multiplicity of representations makes it challenging to define a single preferred reading (Stuart Hall's Reception theory).** However, there are some **clear messages about empowerment (relating to gender and ethnicity) and criticism of the establishment, including the police, following Hurricane Katrina that audiences may respond to in different ways.**
-- HOW AUDIENCES ARE POSITIONED BY ADVERTISEMENTS AND MUSIC VIDEOS --

Audience (cont)

The flooding in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina places the video into context, as well as the racial tensions that followed the floods (easily accessible through Kanye West's comments about President George Bush at the time) offer the chance to reconsider the way in which Beyonce is inviting audiences to interpret these circumstances.

Beyonce on the police car

Beyonce + dancers in the empty swimming pool

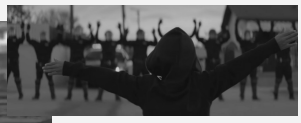
Beyonce in the flashy car

I forgot the significance of this but it's probably good to mention if you could think of how to apply it

Antebellum 1

Antebellum 2

Boy puts his hands up against police



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