



# Beauty pageants for women is actually empowering and not sexist

## Discussion questions

1. What are some well known beauty pageants and what are their judging criteria?
2. Do you believe that pageant's judging criteria have changed over time?
3. Do you believe a pageant queen is reflective of the average female? Should she be?
4. Is raising a child in pageantry dangerous? How so?
5. What is the definition of beauty? How is someone beautiful? What does beauty mean in the context of a pageant?

## Statistics—True or false? (answers on the next page)

1. Around 26% of child pageant contestants developed an eating disorder later in life.
2. The average US beauty pageant evening dress can cost anywhere from \$1,000 to \$5,000—the cost of a small mortgage.
3. Miss America title holders may be married or have children during their reign.
4. There are over three thousand global beauty pageants.
5. France is the child beauty pageant capital of the world.
6. Women at any age are welcome to run for Miss America.
7. Some people in Venezuela are so obsessed with Beauty Pageants that they send their daughters to special academies also known as "Miss Factories," to groom them to be Beauty Queens.

## Useful vocabulary

1. Beauty pageant– (noun) a competition that has traditionally focused on judging and ranking the physical appearance of the contestants, although most contests have evolved to also incorporate personality traits, intelligence, talent, and a contestant's ability to answer judges' questions on various subjects as judged criteria.
2. Sexualization-(verb) To make something sexual in character or quality, or to become aware of sexuality, especially in relation to men and women.
3. Objectification– (verb) The act of treating a person, as an object or a thing. It is part of dehumanization, the act of disavowing the humanity of others.
4. Eating disorder– (noun) An illness that is characterized by irregular eating habits and severe distress or concern about body weight or shape.
5. Patriarchy - (noun) a system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it.
6. Coach– (noun) Someone who prepares contestants for a beauty pageant.
7. Condemn - (verb) to denounce or disapprove of something.
8. Society – (noun) the aggregate of people living together in a more or less ordered community.

## Reading – Are Beauty Pageants sexist?

The first American **Beauty Pageant** was held in Atlanta, Georgia to bring tourist in during the wilting summer months. This spawned a culture of global beauty pageants and a booming industry. But are beauty pageants part of the **patriarchy** that shackles women?

Some signs point to yes. Many former beauty queens have come forward to **condemn** their former industry. They claim to feel **objectification**, and lose of agency when they went on stage. Former queens have said that **society** in general has reflected onto the industry. Child pageants have also gotten a bad reputation in recent years, due to perceived **sexualization** of minors. Former child pageant winners have an increased risk of poor self esteem and **eating disorders**.

Others say the pageant industry is a niche industry that deserves to flourish just like any other. They point to the salary of **coaches**, the boost in local economies through tailors, gowns, and hairstylists. They say that this a hobby that they can leave at any point, and won't have any lasting consequences if they choose to leave.

Both sides discuss the pros and cons of pageant life. It's clear that beauty pageants are a decisive topic on both a social and economic front.

### **Answers**

1. True
2. True
3. False, a title holder is discouraged from getting married or having children. Competitors must've never been married or pregnant.
4. True.
5. False, France has banned child pageants due to the fear of sexualizing young girls.
6. False, only women under the age of 26 can run.
7. True