

MUSIC VIDEO EXEMPLAR #2

In the music video Heaven, by Emeli Sande, there are several references to social injustice, a topic the artist has openly referenced in this text, including homelessness, drug addiction and the effects of poverty in urban environments or 'street life'.ⁱ

The video opens with a montage of different people and faces in a series of close ups and long shots, some staring directly at the camera. The use of eye contact creates a sense of connection between the audience, whereas Emeli Sande does not always directly sing to the camera (us), connoting that we should be looking at the real issues around us and not her and her pursuit of stardom. There is a juxtaposition between Sande in most of the long shots of her as an artist where the colour is rich and almost nostalgic and glowing, whereas the rest of the video has a very gritty feel and has a series of quick cuts to show the range of social injustice in the video. This contrasts the main idea and lyrics of the song, in particular, waiting for heaven with good intentions; people are clearly broken and have given up hope. Through mise-en-scene, the shots of Sande in a utopian looking field (setting) could suggest that her idealised view of the world does not match the reality of life for many.ⁱⁱ

There are several instances in the video where we see Sande at a crossroad, this could symbolise stages in her life where she was faced with difficult situations (the use of children could represent a younger self growing up in these environments), but this could also represent ideas about her experiences of witnessing social injustice in the cities (as a star she has travelled to London, she grew up in Aberdeen and has roots in Tyneside).ⁱⁱⁱ Some of the imagery may be a stark warning to others about the need to resist temptation, for instance there is a medium shot of someone exchanging a lighter which could signify a descent into drugs by making the wrong decision; this matches close up shots of people smoking and looking stoned or 'lost' when they should be seeking greater things, growing 'wings' and looking up. At the end of the video there is a repeated scene of a man waiting for Sande in a tunnel, a long shot, suggesting that this may be a gateway to a different life. The fact that Sande walks away from the man, who is shrouded in darkness, could symbolise her life where she turned down a record deal at an early stage in life to pursue her dreams.^{iv}

Poverty is a recurring theme in the video, especially shown in the city (London). Sande sings the chorus on a street corner, almost like she is preaching for people to be mindful of the choices they make. There reference to a person taking up their cross and walking away from her in the street could have religious connotations about going against the grain of the world, but also that God is with those who suffer. Similarly, the shots of her making a stand on a street corner and getting noticed by people in the background can contrast against those of the forgotten, men who sleep rough or women who work the streets in clear view.^v

Overall, it is clear that social contexts feature heavily in this video which represents the artist as someone who is prepared to be a voice for the marginalised and eager to make a difference, given this was one of her first solo videos.^{vi}

ⁱ Here I have made it clear I understand what social contexts are and provide a thesis using my research about Emeli Sande.

ⁱⁱ Notice how I have used a range of media language and terminology, including connotation and juxtaposition – really good terms to apply when analysing.

ⁱⁱⁱ Here I am referencing my knowledge as her as an artist and an individual – the video has been chosen because of street life and Sande wants to tell people about social injustice.

^{iv} I use the word 'could' a lot in my analysis to keep the idea that this is an interpretation and not an absolute truth; you need to avoid making strong statements unless you can fully back them up.

^v This paragraph could be improved by using more technical terms from the mise-en-scene repertoire

^{vi} The last paragraph simply references how I have answered the question – all essays should refer to the original thesis.