



Figure 1. Balenciaga, Met Gala 2021



Figure 2. Balenciaga, Met Gala 2021

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The photo I chose to represent the color black consists of Kim Kardashian and Kanye West at the 2021 Met Gala, *In America: A Lexicon of Fashion*. Wearing a black Balenciaga haute couture gown and matching mask gave the reality star, a woman known for her selfies and being in the spotlight, anonymity. The Met Gala is considered a fundraiser for the Metropolitan

Museum of Art's costume institute, but "the MET Gala sends a particular message: that the only fashion of the future worth discussing is a fashion that embraces socially progressive issues without addressing political-economic concerns, civil rights and equal rights issues, or global ecological crises" (Nemli). This critique on the Met Gala displays the performative nature of the celebrities attending, due to the amount of money put into the event and the extravagance and the expense of the outfits worn. Kim Kardashian contradicts this external extravagance by wearing the color black and by covering up her entire body with a mask and cape. However, she still exudes power due to the black color and the luxury of the look, as well as the power seen through the amount of help she receives venturing up the stairs while being photographed by a plethora of photographers.

As a symbol of power and strength, but also a symbol of conformity and anonymity, the little black dress designed by Coco Chanel in 1926 transformed how society perceived the black color. However, "silhouette is visually the single most significant feature of a garment providing pertinent information for the fabrication, drape and fit" (Provo, 17). The power of Kim Kardashian's body combined with the silhouette of the dress and cape contradicts the anonymity the black color and face mask provides. Instead of anonymity, Kim is still incredibly recognizable in her all black bodysuit due to being known for her curves and stature. However, she still does play into the idea of anonymity; Kim participated in a photoshoot against a black backdrop in her face-obscuring ensemble, creating a mysterious and ominous presence, which is another result of wearing all black.

Kim's designer, Demna Gvasalia, as well as Kim herself, believed there was nothing more "American" than wearing a t-shirt head to toe. She also exhibited that in an era of revealing fashion, a side of herself that she often portrays on social media, that she could play into a theme

of being incognito. The incognito and mysterious aspect is brought forth by being covered up in all black, but the black color also represents elegance, something that is sought after at one of the most prestigious gala's in the world. In addition to elegance, Kim's look also exudes a sense of rebellion that was prevalent in the beatnik subculture, displaying why the look got a lot of attention (both good and bad) from the public after her red carpet appearance.

Kim Kardashian's look was unlike anything seen at the Met gala before. The black color also was thought to be representative of Kanye West's album, "Donda", because the album cover is all black and he matched Kim at the Met. Because she spent the month before the Met posting in all-black outfits on Instagram, including wearing black ski masks, this Met look was foreshadowed by the power of the black color. Kanye is a very controversial figure that is viewed as aggressive on social media and hateful to various minority groups, and it was discovered that "men wearing black were seen as more aggressive when compared to men wearing lighter colors" (Linhartova et al, 11) and that "in social situations, in which black clothing is seen as typical, and it is not connected to fighting or competition, a man wearing black will be seen as more aggressive" (Linhartova et al, 12). The all black look displays a feeling of danger, which was also seen through the leather jackets worn during the beatnik subculture. When Kim Kardashian originally fought back about wearing the black mask, her team said that "this is a costume gala. This is not a Vanity Fair party where everyone looks beautiful. There's a theme and you have to wear the mask. That is the look" and that "people wouldn't need to see [Kim's] face to know it's her" (Ritschel). The black mask completed the look to make the look a coherent costume, displaying how important the color black was to this look.

The color black "is the symbol of will, charisma, and temperance, and is the basic color that occupies the largest proportion in the fashion collection" (Koh). The color black relates to

the theme of the Met Gala, In America: A Lexicon of Fashion, because of how black relates to the values shared above. The American dream is built on hard work, determination, and individuality, which can be represented through Kim Kardashian's look, especially in accordance with the black cape attached to the body suit. Given the rich history of American fashion and America itself, Kim Kardashian went for a deeper meaning by strategically using the color black to convey the theme. As Kim drifted across the red carpet, the black color and her fully covered body gave her a haunting aura that made her stand out from those in colorful looks. The black color could also be interpreted as a statement of "cancel culture" and the anonymity of social media, while still using the black color to convey sophistication and femininity.

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