

**1. First, provide a vivid descriptive overview of this video. Use precise and illustrative language to describe what you see/hear in this video. Aim for a concise but detailed description—you shouldn't include every detail of the video, but you should include enough detail to enable someone who hasn't watched this commercial to understand its content and style based on your overview.**

The first shot is a rickety dark village in a desert. We then move closer to the home and we find a mother and daughter asleep in one of the homes. Their dwelling is small but cosy and they sleep in separate beds. The daughter wakes up first and jumps into the mother's bed. She goes 'are you ready' prompting us to believe they will be embarking on some kind of journey. The mother looks through pictures and other sentimental pieces in her possession and then packs up her things to presumably leave the house. As they are leaving the home they pass by an old man sitting in a chair outside of the gates to the village. He greets them and hugs them telling them to take care. It is a very emotional goodbye. In the next scene they are in a city behind a truck full of people. They are asking a man to give them a ride in the truck and they give him money to do so. They hop in the truck and then arrive at a walking trail. At this heavy handed crossroads the mother and daughter begin walking through different towns and receive help from different people for food and shelter. Then they begin to walk in the desert and nature where there is no one else around. They are camping day in and day out and survive without the modernity they are used to. Next, the Americans are introduced. In their first scene they drive in with enormous trucks through the desert, presumably the same one the mother and daughter are in. They disembark and we recognize that they are construction workers. They are completing an unknown project, but we can see that it requires lumber. We then cut to a scene where the mother and daughter are walking with a group of people through the desert and they ask for some water from one of the men there. He gives the little girl the water and as she is drinking it we cut to a construction worker who is also drinking water. Everyone is drinking water. We follow the mother and daughter walking through the desert for a bit until they spot something in the distance. The camera pans and we see a grey newly built wall made of concrete and metal. The mother looks distraught and looks at her daughter. The daughter pulls out of her small backpack a miniature american flag sewn together from pieces of trash collected on their journey. They hug and start walking to the left when they see in the distance a tall wooden set of doors built into the wall. Finally we have an answer to the question of what project the construction workers were completing. It was a door set inside what we presume is the border wall and the mother and daughter are now able to walk through it.

**Then, respond to each of the following questions. Use elements from your overview to provide evidence (direct quotes and/or vivid descriptions) from the commercial to support your interpretations and explanations/reasoning in your own words to unpack the meaning and significance of the relationship between your evidence and interpretations.**

## **2. What is the sociopolitical context for this artifact (e.g. what was happening during and leading up to February 2017 that likely informed the creation of this commercial)?**

The sociopolitical context for this artifact is influenced by the 2016 presidential election of the United States. This was a monumental election year as someone who was not previously a politician won office with an extremely polarizing and inflammatory platform. In the first months of the Trump presidency, there was a large focus on immigration reform which pushed the approval rating down according to Pew research. President Trump issued Executive Order 13769 which essentially limited entry to the US by refugees and people from seven Muslim-majority countries. This action received massive back lash and legal proceedings questioning the legality and morality of the order. With this addition, Trump approval ratings reached lower than every president before him in their first months with 39% approving of his job performance and 56% disapproving. Taking into consideration the result of the election and the 2016 presidential campaigns, this artifact was created in a polarized political climate where there was minimal cross party support spawning major political division as it was received by the public during the Super Bowl, the most watched sporting event in the US.

## **3. Who is represented in this commercial and how are they characterized? How is the journey depicted in this commercial characterized? What attitudes, beliefs, values, and/or assumptions are informing these characterizations?**

In this commercial there are a few people represented and characterized by their journey and actions taken in the span of the commercial. Firstly there is the mother and daughter duo. While never explicitly shown, it is assumed they are citizens of Mexico travelling to live in the United States. They are characterized as the media representation of immigrants. While immigrants are people who are travelling to live in another country permanently, typically in the media, such as CNN, Fox News and movies/television, they characterize immigrants as poor, desperate, struggling and underprivileged people of color who are in dire need of a better life. It is a grey area whether they plan to stay in the United States permanently or temporarily but their heartfelt goodbye to the man sitting outside of their home assumes they are staying permanently. However, the choice of clothing and messy styling of the mother, daughter and other people who join them on their journey to the border indicates their decision to stay true to the media depiction of immigrants. The other people with distinct characterization are the construction workers building the wooden wall. First, they break into the scene speeding across the desert with oversized, clean trucks, the epitome of the American dream and a luxury in comparison to the rickety, older model trucks used by those travelling to the wall from presumably Mexico in minute 0:50. They wear higher quality clothes that all match and have nicely laundered collars however they do have a matching linear pattern to the mother and daughter, but the cleanliness of their presentation is not matching. There is also clear American Exceptionalism visible in the

characterizations of each country and which one is framed as the ‘hero’ at the end of the mother and daughter’s journey when they find the wooden door.

**4. In addition to what you've discussed in response to previous questions, what other presented elements (content & style) of this artifact seem particularly significant? How would you interpret the suggested ideological meanings of these presented elements (what meanings/values/beliefs/assumptions seem to be promoted/resisted by these elements?)**

There are pieces of this artifact’s content and style that suggest very strong Christian beliefs. For example, in the end of the commercial when the mother and daughter reach the wall and discover the wooden door, this is an allusion to the biblical gates of heaven. They reach a wall keeping them out from the promised land but there is a gate which they are permitted to enter. And even more, they are depicted as lost souls literally in the desert searching for salvation. This alludes to the biblical verse that begins with “Open for me the gates of the righteous...” and shows the director/writer’s feeling of superiority of the United States. Not only is it important that in this narrative, the United States is heaven, but also that they *want* to open their doors for those who choose to be saved. In a time where immigration policy was being passed to do exactly the opposite this piece uses biblical roots to push a different agenda. Now with good intentions aside, there are always two sides to a blade. While the commercial pushes for American righteousness, it also poses the idea of American Exceptionalism which I have mentioned previously. By heavily equating the land of the United States to the Christian idea of Heaven, the commercial pushes a value that the United States is the superior country to all countries, especially those who are located below the southern border and speak Spanish. And while the commercial clearly emphasizes that it is the people of the US that welcome immigrants and not the government, it can still be viewed as a highly US-first piece of advertisement no matter what the intention was.

**5. As a whole, what narrative is being constructed in this commercial (e.g. what type of story is this commercial telling about immigration)? What attitudes, beliefs, values, and/or assumptions are being promoted and/or resisted by this narrative? How might this narrative influence audience's perspectives on immigration?**

As a whole the narrative of this commercial is complex. On the surface it seems to be just a pro immigration commentary on current immigration policy debates, and perhaps it was intended to only be this way, however it is impossible to ignore the blaring American superiority beliefs promoted throughout the commercial. Throughout the mother and daughter’s journey they are struggling to survive and they are depicted as strong but desperately poor people. In contrast the construction workers, who are clearly American, are clean, calm and serve a purpose in life greater than just surviving. They are the builders of the gates to heaven for those who are not good enough for heaven until they reach the United States. In addition to the religious aspect of

this narrative the racial aspect of this commercial cannot be ignored. While everyone who is poor and not reaping the benefits of the United States are not white, those who are providing the benefits are both white and not white. Whether this is intentional or not this sends a clear message as to who is considered desperate and in need of Christianity and America in America's eyes. This paired with the fact that the country of origin is never specifically stated in the commercial emphasizes the underlying message present in the racial lines of the commercial. This empowering pro-immigration journey depicted by an American company while trying to uplift immigrants from Spanish speaking countries also serves a backhanded compliment, assuming all immigrants are desperately poor, primitive, powerless women of color who need salvation by men and specifically the white men of America.