

GATTACA

Viewing Guide and Analysis Questions

EXPLAIN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NAMES

1. Title of the movie—GATTACA
2. Vincent Anton Freeman: Vincent = “to conquer”
3. Jerome Eugene Morrow: Jerome literally means “sacred and powerful”; it could also mean genome (genetic material). Eugene literally means “well born” and comes from the same root word as **eugenics**, which is the science of improving the hereditary qualities of a race or breed. Morrow comes from ‘tomorrow’ meaning the future.
4. “**Degenerate**” means having lost the physical, mental, or moral qualities considered normal and desirable. “**In-valid**” means useless.
5. “**Hoovers**” or “**J. Edgars**” = Hoover is an actual brand of vacuum cleaner and J. Edgar Hoover was the first director of the FBI.

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MOVIE

1. List FIVE ways that the society portrayed in the movie routinely ‘reads’ a person’s genetic profile.
2. List THREE things Vincent did to *look* like Jerome Morrow.
3. Describe Vincent’s interview at GATTACA.
4. Discuss at least THREE preparations Vincent had to do *everyday* to pass as Jerome Morrow at GATTACA.
5. When Jerome (Vincent) and Irene go to a concert, what is unusual about the piano player?
6. Who does the detective leading the murder investigation turn out to be?
7. Why is Lamar’s son a “big fan” of Vincent? (Hint: Lamar is the doctor who administers the urine tests at GATTACA)?
8. Even though Jerome is supposedly genetically perfect, list THREE of his imperfections.
9. By reading their DNA, Vincent is predicted to live 30.2 years and Jerome “will practically live forever”. Why is this ironic? What is the moral of this irony?

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PICK ONE QUOTE AND EXPLAIN ITS RELEVANCE TO THE FILM IN ONE PARAGRAPH

1. "They used to say that a child conceived in love has a greater chance of happiness."
-- Vincent
2. "This child is still you, simply the best of you. You could conceive naturally a thousand times and never get such a result." -- Genetic Counselor
3. "Jerome Morrow was never meant to be one step down on the podium." -- Jerome
4. "Jerome was engineered with everything needed to get into Gattaca... except the desire to do so."
-- Vincent

PICK ONE TYPE OF RECURRING SYMBOLISM AND DISCUSS IT IN A PARAGRAPH

1. Glass/Water as invisible obstacles Vincent must overcome. For example: the custodian telling Vincent not to clean the glass too well OR the games of chicken in the ocean.
2. Ladder as a DNA helix. For example: Vincent is a "borrowed ladder" or the spiraling staircase at Jerome's house that no one lives above.
3. Genes as a person's race. For example: the new discrimination is genoism instead of racism and the oppression of the invalids is shown like the Nazi's regime during the Holocaust.

PICK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING THEMES AND DISCUSS IT IN A PARAGRAPH

1. Perfection versus happiness – Wouldn't every parent want to ensure that their child was perfect and had the attributes of physical attractiveness, intelligence, and athleticism to be able to do whatever he or she wanted in life? Why is the society portrayed in this film so devoid of happiness, vitality, and fun?
2. The human spirit – Anyone can overcome great adversity and there is no gene for the human spirit. Consider Vincent's imperfections and strong will to live and chase after his goals and Jerome's perfection, lack of desire, addiction, and depression.
3. Genetic engineering – What are the moral and ethical issues surrounding the manipulation of genes? What are the consequences of humans tampering with DNA?

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4. Human frailty versus inhuman perfection – How does Vincent compare to his brother? How does Vincent compare to Jerome? Why is Irene's heart problem significant to her character and the story? How does society view them? How do they view themselves?
5. Symbiotic relationship between Jerome and Vincent – Both men's lives depend on each other. What do they need from each other? What do they each get out of the relationship? In ecological terms, what is this an example of and how does this relationship maybe even transcend biology?

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR ETHICS?

1. What happens to the unused / unsaved embryos in in-vitro fertilization? Is that right? What is the difference between that and abortion?
2. In the film, a person could have a potential romantic partner sequenced. Discuss the positive and negative aspects of having this technology available to prospective mates. Do you think you would ever like to know the genetic qualities of a person before you chose to get involved with them?
3. In GATTACA, Vincent's parents visited a doctor to select for the best traits for his future brother. Some of the traits mentioned in GATTACA included intelligence, height and any possibility of inheritable diseases. If you decide to have a child in the future and are given the opportunity to select for special traits, would you do so? Explain why or why not.
4. You are an employer and know from genetic testing that the most qualified applicant for the job has a 70% chance of developing Multiple Sclerosis in one year's time. Would you hire this person? Why or why not?
5. Cloning is a process in which you make a genetically identical organism. People say that this could be cool, others say it is messing with Mother Nature. If you had the opportunity to clone yourself, would you do it and why?
6. If a couple had a baby who died and could not have any more babies, but had the opportunity to clone their baby, should they be allowed to clone it?
7. Over 70% of the processed food at the supermarket has a genetically modified ingredient. What are the benefits of genetically modifying organisms to increase food yield? What are the negative aspects? Should we continue to use genetically modified organisms for food? What might be some consequences if we do stop? What might be some consequences if we continue?

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8. Scientists have suggested genetically modifying trees to use more carbon dioxide. This could make trees grow faster and sequester (hold) more carbon. This has been proposed as a possible solution for global warming. What do you think?