

Name: _____

Period: _____

GATTACA ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

Plot Questions:

- 1) What does the character “German” do for a living?
- 2) List 3 ways that the society portrayed in the movie routinely “reads” a person’s genetic profile.
- 3) What major surgery and minor procedure did Vincent have to enhance his genetic “imperfections”?
- 4) List three things Vincent did on a daily basis to maintain his “Jerome” identity.
- 5) Who is murdered in this film? Why?
- 6) What evidence pointed towards Vincent as the murderer?
- 7) Describe the different attitudes Vincent and Irene have toward their imperfections.
- 8) What is the significance of the word “GATTACA”?
- 9) Explain the terms “borrowed ladder” and “de-gene-erate”. Which character was called these things and what did they imply?
- 10) Explain the terms “faith births”, “defectives” “God children” and “invalid”. Which character was called these things and what did they imply?
- 11) What is the significance of Vincent beating his brother in the swimming competition at the beginning of the movie? At the end of the movie?
- 12) What was Vincent’s career goal? Why did he think he could never obtain the goal?

Name: _____

Period: _____

- 13) Did the fact that Vincent was an “invalid” keep him from obtaining his goal? How does that reflect upon the selection criteria used by GATTACA?

- 14) What was the real Jerome’s handicap? Was he genetically “perfect”? Then why was he not successful?

- 15) Think about the staircase in the movie, especially in the scene when the real Jerome must climb the staircase to meet the police. How is the staircase a SYMBOL of genetics?

- 16) Who was the young police officer and how did Vincent (Jerome) know him?

- 17) Who actually killed the ex-director of GATTACA? How did they finally figure it out?

- 18) According to the genetic profile of the acting director of GATTACA, “you won’t find a violent bone in my body”. How true was that statement? Did the director live up to his genetic profile?

- 19) What happened to “Eugene” (the real Jerome) in the end?

- 20) What was the story about the son of the doctor that tested Vincent (Jerome) all the time? What was the significance of that story for Vincent?

- 21) If parents were allowed to decide the genetic makeup of their offspring before birth, would everyone eventually start to look and act the same? Why or why not?

Name: _____

Period: _____

Discussion and Analysis Questions:

On a separate piece of paper, answer the following question. Your answer should be in complete sentences and paragraphs. Please type your answers, double space, and use 12 pt font.

- 1) The technology to manipulate DNA in the way portrayed in the movie *GATTACA* is not yet available, but might be one day. Write an essay describing whether or not you think that the technology portrayed in the movie should be used the way it was in the movie. Do you think scientists should manipulate the DNA so parents could choose their children's traits? Should they be able to choose all the traits or only those that may shorten the life of the child? Who should decide? Should there be laws to enforce when and how genetic engineering should be used?

On the same piece of paper that you answered the previous question, answer two of the following six discussion questions. Make sure you indicate which questions you are answering. Your answer should be in complete sentences and paragraphs. Please type your answers, double space, and use 12 pt font.

- 1) During a scene in *GATTACA*, Vincent's parents visited a doctor who specialized in child conception to select the best traits for his future brother. They hoped that his brother would have the best possible chances for a successful life. Some of the traits selected seem like a good decision, while others seem to cross 'the line'. List some of the traits that were manipulated for Anton, Vincent's brother and identify if you think each one is a trait that should be pre-selected before birth or is a trait that should be left to chance. What criteria did you use to decide which traits were acceptable to change and which ones were not? Whose decision should this be? Should there be laws about which traits could be manipulated and which should be left alone? Where should those laws draw the line?
- 2) One of the first questions asked by the geneticist to Vincent's parents was to choose the sex of their baby. Molecular biologists have developed a technique that enables parents to select the sex of their future child. This technique simply separates the X carrying sperm from the Y carrying sperm and inseminating females with the preferred sex chromosomes. This procedure is currently banned except for medical reasons (potential parents with sex-linked diseases may choose to have a girl, avoiding the possibility of having a boy with hemophilia, for example). Should sex selection for medical and non-medical reasons be available? What do you think are some of the implications of this technique?
- 3) During the gala party scene in *GATTACA*, a woman submits a saliva sample from a recent kiss to screen her potential boyfriend/husband's DNA. Is she violating his rights by doing this without his knowledge? Is this in any way similar to performing a background check? How much would a DNA screen reveal about someone's personality and intelligence.
- 4) How does the discrimination (called genoism) Vincent faces in the film *GATTACA* similar to contemporary racism or classism? Were their laws against genoism in the film? Did they keep discrimination on the basis of genetics from happening? How does that compare to current laws against racism?
- 5) In the film *GATTACA*, Vincent fails to meet the genetic requirements for being a successful pilot at *GATTACA*. When Vincent is born, his genetic profile is lifted from his foot. He will die at 30, has poor eyesight and a weak heart. As an "Invalid," Vincent is eligible only for manual labor. Why waste education on an early death? So Vincent cleans the floors at the Gattaca Corporation with no hope of realizing his dream of riding corporate rockets to distant planets. Yet, later in the movie, the program director describes "Jerome" as "one of our best". Likewise, the real Jerome has an excellent genetic profile yet fails to lead a successful life. Does this support the idea that genetically determining an individual's traits means that you can insure success? Why or why not?

Name: _____

Period: _____

- 6) In the film *GATTACA* Vincent's parents are told that he will not be allowed to go to school with other children because the school cannot afford the insurance rates to cover an invalid child. Knowledge of one's genetic profile could profoundly affect the price of insurance. Insurance companies work on a risk assessment basis, where individuals with a greater potential for developing health complications are charged more than individuals who are deemed 'healthy' (for example, if you smoke you are charged more). Actuarialists look at statistics to determine how much their clients should be charged. With current advancements in genetic testing, there is much potential to discriminate those with "bad genes". It is quite possible that individuals classified as high risk individuals may be denied the opportunity to purchase insurance. However, insurance companies must operate as a business, looking out for themselves and their client's best interests.
- A) You are representing an individual who has obtained a genetic screen and would like to purchase some insurance. Results show that you're at an extremely high risk for developing cancer and hypertension. However, you are currently a healthy individual who doesn't smoke and exercises on a regular basis. Explain why you should be given the opportunity to purchase insurance at a reasonable price.
- B) You are representing an insurance company. A potential client approached your company about the possibility of purchasing insurance. After reviewing her file, including a gene scan, you realize that she falls into a high-risk category. Explain to her why you need to charge her considerably more for insurance.
- C) Do you think insurance companies should have the right to genetically screen their clients and use that information to decide upon their insurance rates? Why or why not?