

# Gattaca analysis of the movie for biology

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What is the significance of the word "GATTACA" (hint: think about why the letters A, T, C, and G were highlighted in all the names during the opening credits) They are the bases in the human genome. The movie is trying to emphasize the significance these four letters, each representing a base pair in the human genome, will have in the theme throughout the movie. Gattaca is the name of the space agency in the film. The name is based on the initial letters of the four DNA nitrogenous bases: guanine, adenine, thymine, and cytosine. .

Why might the directors have chosen to have a winding staircase in Eugene and Vincent's apartment rather than a simple straight one (hint: think of the symbolism here)? A winding staircase is the same shape used to represent DNA, a double helix joined together- the staircase also represents the focus on genetics that the movie employs. 3. Why do you think Vincent was called a "borrowed ladder"? To what ladder were they referring? Vincent wants to be an astronaut. However, since he was considered inferior because he was conceived of natural means, he could not be an astronaut. So he became a "borrowed ladder", a person who impersonates a "valid" with a better genetic profile, in this case Jerome Eugene, a swimmer who's been paralyzed, using his blood, skin, and hair to pass screening.

The ladder they are referring to is the genetic ladder, because with the joining of the nitrogenous bases, the pairs, with their covalently bonded sugars and phosphate groups look like rungs of a ladder. 4. When Jerome's parents went to a genetics center for a second child, the geneticist stated "I have taken the liberty of eradicating any potentially prejudicial conditions - premature baldness, myopia, alcoholism and addictive susceptibility,

propensity for violence and obesity. " The father then asks " We were wondering if we should leave some things to chance. " To this the geneticist responds, " You want to give your child the best possible start.

Believe me; we have enough imperfection built-in already. Your child doesn't need any additional burdens. would it be irresponsible for the father to want to leave something to chance? If given the chance to eradicate a lot of potential harm that would be caused to the child in the future, it certainly is irresponsible to leave anything to chance, because, there is a host of other things, like the geneticist suggests, that he can't prevent, he absolutely should prevent all that he can. 5. Vincent states in the movie that " it's illegal to discriminate - ' genoism' it's called - but no one takes the laws seriously. This is in fact one of the standard criticisms of genetic profiling: if we have genetic data on people, then employers or insurance companies will use that data to minimize financial risk.

Assuming that this will be true, in your opinion would the benefits of genetic profiling still outweigh the disbenefits? Discrimination based on genes along with all the other things it is already being based up would cause a lot of problems for a lot of people. However, with genetic research being the key to treating so many life changing diseases before they manifest themselves and cause pain is so vital. I think the fact that genetic research could advance the fields of human medicine and help people live better lives would be great, if genetic research wasn't abused or taken to extremes like in the movie. 6. The moral message of the movie is that we can rise above our genetic predispositions, with specific emphasis on our pre-determined physical abilities. The movie's message also applies to our ability to

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overcome pre-determined behavioral traits - an issue more typically involved in the philosophical debate about determinism.

The prime example of this in the movie was the revelation that the Director Josef committed the murder, even though his genetic profile indicated that he was completely non-violent. What other events in the movie refute the idea of determinism? \* Jerome was depressed and attempted suicide, even though he was of a superior genetic combination. 7. The original screenplay concludes with the following message: " in a few short years, scientists will have completed the Human Genome Project, the mapping of all the genes that make up a human being. After 4 billion years of evolution by the slow and clumsy method of natural selection, we have now evolved to the point where we can direct our own evolution.

If only we had acquired this knowledge sooner, the following people would never have been born:" It continues listing famous people and their illnesses, such as Hawking who has Lou Gehrig's disease. How would this argument differ from the following: couples should have as many children as physically possible since limiting births would mean that we wouldn't bring into existence valuable people? Well, I'm sure even if Stephen Hawking was never born, someone else would have come up with his brilliant ideas, because that's what we humans do- we think and think and try to better our existence and explain everything around us all the time. If we could have that without all the genetic defects, wouldn't that make a lot of people's lives so much easier to live? I mean, isn't the whole point of genetic research to make people's lives better- control evolution in ways that will create healthy people and less disease?

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