

RACE LITERACY QUIZ

What Differences Make a Difference?

Many recommend asking participants (alone or in pairs) to take this quiz *prior* to screening the series, for example, when they enter the room. Then choose four or five questions to review as a group activity. Pass out the answers after the screening.

See Answer Key which follows for answers and explanations

1. Humans have approximately 20,000 genes. On average, how many genes separate all members of any one race from all members of another race?

- A. None
- B. 1
- C. 23
- D. 142
- E. 1008
- F. We don't know

2. Which characteristic did the ancient Greeks believe most distinguished them from "barbarians"?

- A. Religion
- B. Skin color
- C. Language
- D. Dress
- E. Hairiness

3. In Medieval Europe (circa 1300-1400), Ethiopians were looked upon as:

- A. Savages
- B. Savors
- C. Barbarians
- D. Infidels
- E. Negroes

4. Members of a race can be identified by their:

- A. Blood group
- B. Skin color
- C. Ancestry
- D. Genes
- E. None of the above
- F. All of the above

5. Skin color correlates most closely with:

- A. Hair form
- B. IQ
- C. Risk for sickle cell, Tay Sachs and other genetic diseases
- D. Geographic latitude
- E. Continent of ancestral origin
- F. Jumping and sprinting ability

6. When Jamestown colonist John Rolfe and his new wife Pocahontas traveled to the Court of London in 1619, it caused a scandal because:

- A. An Englishman had married an Indian
- B. John Rolfe had cuckolded General John Smith, the leader of the colony
- C. Pocahontas, a princess, married beneath her station by wedding a commoner
- D. Londoners had never seen an Indian before
- E. A Christian had married a heathen

7. The rise of the idea of white supremacy was tied most directly to:

- A. Indian removal
- B. Slavery
- C. The Declaration of Independence
- D. The U.S. Constitution
- E. Ancient Greece

8. Which group has the most genetic variation?

- A. Humans
- B. Chimpanzees
- C. Penguins
- D. Fruit flies
- E. Elephants

9. Which two populations are most likely, on average, to be genetically similar?

- A. Italians and Ethiopians
- B. Senegalese and Kenyans
- C. Italians and Swedes
- D. Chinese and Lakota (Sioux)
- E. Saudi Arabians and Ethiopians

10. Most human genetic variation can be found:

- A. Within any local population, for example, among Zulus, or among Hmong
- B. Between two populations on the same continent, for example between Irish and Poles
- C. Between two populations on different continents, for example between Koreans and Danes
- E. Between tall people and short people
- F. Between the darkest and lightest skinned people

11. Which continent has the greatest human genetic diversity?

- A. Europe
- B. Asia
- C. Africa
- D. North America
- E. South America

12. Who was the first American public figure to suggest, albeit "as a suspicion only," that black people might be inherently inferior to whites?

- A. Thomas Jefferson
- B. Sir Walter Raleigh
- C. George Washington
- D. Robert E. Lee
- E. Capt. John Smith, founder of the Jamestown colony

13. Which of the following was NOT an important reason why African slavery first took root in North America:

- A. As non-Christians, they had no legal protections
- B. They were skilled semi-tropical farmers
- C. The supply of indentured servants from Europe was becoming unreliable
- D. They were deemed innately inferior
- E. Unlike Native Americans, they were resistant to European diseases
- F. They couldn't easily run away

14. Which was NOT introduced to Indians by whites?

- A. An Indian identity
- B. Democracy
- C. Identity by "blood quantum"
- D. Horses
- E. Measles

15. Of the \$120 billion in home loans underwritten by the federal government between 1933 and 1962, what percentage went to white homeowners?

- A. 45 percent
- B. 64 percent
- C. 75 percent
- D. 88 percent
- E. 98 percent

16. Which of the following is not a result of federal government policies?

- A. Redlining
- B. Urban renewal
- C. Deterioration of inner cities
- D. Affirmative action quotas
- E. The wealth gap between black and white families

17. Today the median net worth of white families is how much greater than median black family net worth?

- A. Three times as much
- B. Thirteen times as much
- C. Half as much
- D. Eight times as much
- E. The same

18. When white and black families of similar incomes are compared, what is the difference in their net worth?

- A. No difference
- B. Black net worth is slightly greater
- C. White net worth is more than eight times greater
- D. White net worth is more than two times greater
- E. Black net worth is twice as great

19. According to a 1993 study, 86% of suburban whites lived in a community where the black population was:

- A. Less than 5%
- B. Less than 10%
- C. Less than 1%
- D. More than 10%
- E. More than 15%

20. Which is NOT an example of a government racial preference program?

- A. 1964 Civil Rights Act
- B. 1862 Homestead Act
- C. 1790 Naturalization Act
- D. 1934 Federal Housing Administration
- E. 1935 Social Security Act

See Answer Key for Answers and Explanations

RACE LITERACY QUIZ ANSWER KEY

1. Humans have approximately 20,000 genes. On average, how many genes separate all members of one race from all members of another race?

- A. None
- B. 1
- C. 23
- D. 142
- E. 1008
- F. We don't know

Answer A. None. There are no characteristics, no traits, not even one gene that distinguish all members of one so-called race from all members of another race no matter how they are divided.

2. Which characteristic did the ancient Greeks believe most distinguished them from “barbarians?”

- A. Religion
- B. Skin color
- C. Language
- D. Dress
- E. Hairiness

Answer C. Language. The word barbarian comes from the Greek word “bar-bar,” meaning stutterer, or unintelligible, or one who does not speak Greek. The Greeks, like most ancient peoples, did not attribute much meaning to physical appearance nor sort people into races. In ancient Greece, language and culture were the differences that mattered (along with property and gender) because they indicated who was not Greek. Some historians believe the first to be labeled barbarians were the Scythians of circa 500 B.C. who lived northeast of the Black Sea and were fair skinned. Ideas of ‘race’ did not exist during antiquity.

3. In Medieval Europe (circa 1300-1400), Ethiopians were looked upon as:

- A. Savages
- B. Saviors
- C. Barbarians
- D. Infidels
- E. Negroes

Answer B. Saviors. In medieval Europe, religion was the difference that made a difference, not physical appearance. At the time, Christian Europe was at war with the Moslem Empire. Europe looked towards a mythical Christian Ethiopian kingdom led by the fabled African priest-king Prester John to rescue them from the infidels. Theories of race didn't emerge until the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

4. Members of a race can be identified by their:

- A. Blood group
- B. Skin color
- C. Ancestry
- D. Genes
- E. None of the above
- F. All of the above

Answer E. None of the above. There are no traits, no characteristics, not even one gene that is present in all members of one so-called race and absent in another. The A, B, and O blood groups can be found in all the world's

peoples (the percentage of Estonians and Papua New Guineans with A, B, and O blood are almost exactly identical). Skin color tends to correlate with geographic latitude not race; sub-Saharan Africans, the Dravidians and Tamils of southern Asia, and Melanesians from the Pacific all have very dark skin. Ancestry is difficult to trace; we all have two parents, four grandparents, etc. If you could trace your family tree back 30 generations, slightly more than 1,000 years, you'd find one billion ancestors.

5. Skin color correlates most closely with:

- A. Hair form
- B. Risk for sickle cell, Tay-Sachs and other genetic diseases
- C. Geographic latitude
- D. Continent of ancestral origin
- E. Jumping and sprinting ability

Answer D. Geographic latitude. Skin color tends to correspond with ultra-violet radiation from the sun and hence latitude. People with ancestors from the tropics typically have darker skin while those from the higher latitudes have lighter skin. Sub-Saharan Africans, Asian Indians, Aboriginal Australians and Melanesians all have dark skin. But skin color really is only skin deep. Most traits are inherited independently from one another. The genes influencing skin color have nothing to do with those influencing hair form, eye shape, and blood type, let alone complex traits such as intelligence, musical ability or athletic ability. Genetic diseases are inherited through families, not race. Sickle cell, for example, confers resistance to malaria. It occurs in people whose ancestors came from where malaria was once common: the Mediterranean, Arabia, Turkey, southern Asia and western and central Africa - but not southern Africa. The presence of sickle cell is not an indicator of race but of having an ancestor from a malarial region.

6. When Jamestown colonist John Rolfe and his new wife Pocahontas traveled to the Court of London in 1619, it caused a scandal because:

- A. An Englishman had married an Indian
- B. John Rolfe had cuckolded General John Smith, the leader of the colony
- C. Pocahontas, a princess, married beneath her station by wedding a commoner
- D. Londoners had never seen an Indian before
- E. A Christian had married a heathen

Answer C. Pocahontas, a princess, married beneath her station by wedding a commoner. 17th century England was a very hierarchical feudal society where a person's class status was fixed at birth. Status was so important that laws even regulated the clothing people could wear so they couldn't "pass" as another class. When John Rolfe took his new bride Pocahontas (who had converted to Christianity) back with him to London in 1617, the English had not yet developed the racial ideology that later justified their taking of Indian lands. But it was unthinkable that royalty would marry a commoner.

7. The rise of the idea of white supremacy was tied most directly to:

- A. Indian removal
- B. Slavery
- C. The Declaration of Independence
- D. The U.S. Constitution
- E. Ancient Greece

Answer C. The Declaration of Independence. Ironically, it was freedom not slavery that gave rise to modern theories of race. Until the Age of Revolution slavery was an unquestioned "fact of life." It was only when Americans proclaimed the radical new idea that "all men are created equal" that slavery was first challenged as immoral. And thus had to be defended. As historian Barbara Fields notes, the new idea of race helped explain why some people could be denied the rights and freedoms that others took for granted.

8. Which group has the most genetic variation?

- A. Humans
- B. Chimpanzees
- C. Penguins
- D. Fruit flies
- E. Elephants

Answer: D. Fruit flies. Fruit flies have been around for a very long time plus they also have a short life span, so lots of genetic mutations have accumulated over many generations. In contrast, modern humans are one of the most genetically similar of all species. On average, only one of every 1,000 nucleotides (the “letters” that make up our DNA) differ one individual from another. This is because we are a relatively young species (approximately 150,000 years or so old). We simply haven’t been around long enough to accumulate much genetic variation. Also, humans have always moved, mixed and mated, further homogenizing our gene pool. Beneath the skin, we’re all quite similar.

9. Which two populations are most likely, on average, to be genetically similar?

- A. Italians and Ethiopians
- B. Senegalese and Kenyans
- C. Italians and Swedes
- D. Chinese and Lakota (Sioux)
- E. Saudi Arabians and Ethiopians

Answer: E. Probably Saudi Arabians and Ethiopians. Populations that live near each other geographically tend to be genetically more alike than populations that live far apart. That’s because they are more likely to have intermixed in the recent past and therefore share more genes. So even though Senegalese and Kenyans or Italians and Swedes are traditionally placed within the same “races,” they live farther apart from each other and have had less historical contact and intermixing than Saudis and Ethiopians.

10. Most human genetic variation can be found:

- A. Within any local population - for example, among Zulus or among the Hmong
- B. Between two populations on the same continent - for example, between Irish and Poles
- C. Between two populations on different continents - for example, between Koreans and Danes
- D. Between tall people and short people
- E. Between the darkest and the lightest-skinned people

Answer: A. Within a local population. About 85 percent, or almost all human variation, can be found within any single local population, whether they be Malay, Irish, Zulu or Korean. There is FAR more variation within groups than between groups. This means that there may be as many - or more - genetic differences between two random Koreans as between a random Korean and a Zulu. On average, approximately 94 percent of all human genetic variation can be found within any continental area.

11. Which continent has the greatest human genetic diversity?

- A. Europe
- B. Asia
- C. Africa
- D. North America
- E. South America

Answer: C. Africa. We are all Africans. Modern humans (*Homo sapien sapiens*) originated in Africa, and we spent most of our evolution as a species together there. Some modern humans first left Africa 50,000 – 70,000 years ago and spread out around the world. All the other populations of the world can be seen as a subset of Africans. Every human genetic trait found elsewhere can also be found in Africa, with the exception of relatively few recent variations favored by different environments, genetic drift, or sexual selection - such as light skin.

12. Who was the first American public figure to suggest, albeit “as a suspicion only,” that black people might be inherently inferior to whites?

- A. Thomas Jefferson
- B. Sir Walter Raleigh
- C. George Washington
- D. Robert E. Lee
- E. Capt. John Smith, founder of the Jamestown colony

Answer: A. Thomas Jefferson. Thomas Jefferson was the first prominent American to speculate that black people might be innately inferior to Europeans. Until then, most Enlightenment figures believed that differences between groups were not inborn but due to environmental factors. It wasn't until Jefferson introduced the radical new ideas of liberty and equality that slavery had to be justified and prejudices against the enslaved began to crystallize into a doctrine of white supremacy. American freedom and the idea of innate racial difference were born together. Historian Barbara Fields calls them “Siamese twins.”

13. Which of the following was NOT an important reason why African slavery first took root in North America:

- A. As non-Christians, they had no legal protections
- B. They were skilled semi-tropical farmers
- C. The supply of indentured servants from Europe was becoming unreliable
- D. They were deemed innately inferior
- E. Unlike Native Americans, they were resistant to European diseases
- F. They couldn't easily run away

Answer: D. They were deemed innately inferior. Throughout much of history societies have enslaved people, often as a result of conquest, war or even debt; people were not enslaved because they were first deemed inferior. African slaves were well-suited to labor in North America. Unlike the Indians, they were resistant to European diseases; they couldn't easily run away; they were not Christians or Moslem (and hence unprotected by the church, Islamic or English law); and they were skilled semi-tropical farmers. Finally, in the late 17th century, African slaves became available in large numbers just as the original labor force on Virginia's tobacco plantations - English indentured servants - began to rebel and immigration from England slowed. Over time, the degradation of slavery became identified with blackness, giving white Americans the idea that Africans were a fundamentally different kind of people.

14. Which was NOT introduced to Indians by whites?

- A. An Indian identity
- B. Democracy
- C. Identity by “blood quantum”
- D. Horses
- E. Measles

Answer: B. Democracy. United States' representative democracy drew upon the traditions of the Iroquois Confederacy. Indians didn't think of themselves as Indians when European settlers first arrived, but rather as members of separate tribes or nations, divided by language, custom and religion (just as the Europeans were). The idea of “blood quantum,” i.e., the determination of Indian identity by ancestry, was imposed by the U.S. federal government. In contrast, tribal membership traditionally was open to anyone, even Europeans, as long as they accepted tribal customs and authority. There were no horses in the New World until they were brought over by Europeans. Measles, small-pox and many other communicable diseases were also unknown in the Americas prior to European exploration. Some historians estimate that 70 - 90% of all Eastern seaboard Indians died from diseases contracted from early European traders and explorers by the time of the first Plymouth settlement.

15. Of the \$120 billion in home loans underwritten by the federal government between 1933 and 1962, what percentage went to white homeowners?

- A. 45 percent
- B. 64 percent
- C. 75 percent
- D. 88 percent
- E. 98 percent

Answer: E. 98 percent. Beginning in the 1930s and 1940s, the federal government created programs that subsidized low-cost home loans, opening up home ownership to millions of Americans for the first time. At the same time, government underwriters introduced a national appraisal system tying property values and loan eligibility to race, inventing "redlining," and effectively locking nonwhites out of home-buying just as middle class white Americans were beginning to purchase homes.

16. Which of the following is NOT a result of federal government policies?

- A. Redlining
- B. Urban renewal
- C. Deterioration of inner cities
- D. Affirmative action quotas
- E. The wealth gap between black and white families

Answer D. Affirmative action quotas. Federal affirmative action guidelines specifically prohibit quotas. Beginning in the 1930s, the Federal Housing Administration and related programs made it possible for millions of average white Americans to own a home for the first time and set off the post-WWII suburban building boom. The government established a national neighborhood appraisal system, explicitly tying mortgage eligibility to race, a policy known today as "redlining." The FHA and other government policies made possible the post-World War II all-white suburbs, while people of color and in central cities were denied loans. Government policies and practices helped create two legacies that are still with us today: segregated communities and a substantial wealth gap between whites and nonwhites, much of which can be traced to the differential value of their homes and inheritance from past generations.

17. Today, the median net worth of white families is how much compared to the median net worth of black families?

- A. Three times as much
- B. Thirteen times as much
- C. Half as much
- D. Eight times as much
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Answer: B. Thirteen times as much (2013 data). The family wealth gap has been growing, especially since the foreclosure crisis (when we produced the series, using 2000 Census figures, the gap was 8x). Probably no one statistic better captures the cumulative disadvantage of past discrimination than wealth. Even at the same income levels, whites still have, on average, more than twice as much wealth as nonwhites. Much of this difference is due to the different rates of home ownership and the different values of homes in white and Black neighborhoods. But wealth is not only the end point, it's the starting line for the next generation – helping finance your children's education, helping them through hard times, or helping with the down payment of their own home. Economists estimate 50-80% of one's lifetime wealth accumulation can be traced to this head start. As wealth gets passed down from generation to generation, the legacy of past discrimination accumulates, giving whites and nonwhites vastly different life chances (the ratio of white to Latino family net worth is more than 10 : 1).

18. When white and black families of similar incomes are compared, what is the difference in their net worth?

- A. No difference

- B. Black net worth is slightly greater
- C. White net worth is more than eight times greater
- D. White net worth is more than two times greater
- E. Black net worth is twice as great

Answer: D. White net worth is more than two times greater. See above (Question #17) for explanation.

19. According to a 1993 study, 86% of suburban whites lived in a community where the black population was:

- A. Less than 5%
- B. Less than 10%
- C. Less than 1%
- D. More than 10%
- E. More than 15%

Answer: C. Less than 1%. According to the 2000 Census, suburban middle class whites are more likely to be segregated than any other group. This is largely a result of past housing discrimination, but it is perpetuated today by unfair practices such as predatory lending, racial steering and a substantial wealth gap between black and white families. In 2016, 72% of whites owned their own home, compared to 41.5% of African Americans and 45% of Latinos. Black and Latino mortgage applicants are 60% more likely than whites to be turned down for loans, even after controlling for employment, financial, and neighborhood characteristics. On average, nonwhites who are approved for mortgages still pay higher rates.

20. Which is NOT an example of a government racial preference program?

- A. 1964 Civil Rights Act
- B. 1862 Homestead Act
- C. 1790 Naturalization Act
- D. 1934 Federal Housing Administration
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Answer: A. 1964 Civil Rights Act. The Civil Rights Act made racial discrimination in public places illegal. The other programs are all examples of racial preferences - for white people. Over a 40-year period, the Homestead Act gave away, for free, 270 million acres of what had been Indian Territory, almost all of it to white people. The Naturalization Act allowed only “free white persons” to adopt citizenship, thus opening our doors to European immigrants but barring Asians and other groups. Racial barriers to naturalized citizenship were not removed until 1952. The Federal Housing Administration made it possible for millions of average white Americans – but not others – to own a home for the first time. (see #16 above). And the Social Security Act specifically exempted two occupations from coverage: farm-workers and domestics, both largely non-white.

The Race Literacy Quiz was developed by California Newsreel, in association with the Association of American Colleges and Universities. The myths and misconceptions it raises are explored in the documentary series *RACE - The Power of an Illusion*, available on video from California Newsreel at <https://newsreel.org> or 1-415-284-7800.

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