

## GATTACA DIR. ANDREW NICCOLS – CENTRAL IDEAS & TECHNIQUES

KEY IDEAS	COMMENTARY: What does the film have to say about these ideas?	EXAMPLE: Choose a specific scene in the film in which this idea is explored. Identify two techniques that are used.	EXPLAIN: In your own words, explain how this technique is used to comment on the key idea in the text.
<p><b>A) GENETICS &amp; NATURE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is natural?</li> <li>• The pros/cons of genetic engineering.</li> <li>• What does it mean to be human?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The film explores both the positive and negative effects of genetic engineering. However, despite success being easier to obtain for the genetically superior, it is by no means guaranteed; and can be subverted by someone as determined as Vincent/Jerome.</li> <li>• Furthermore, to be fully human in this world, the film also argues that weakness and failure are part of the experience of being human, and are used to strengthen an individual.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SCENE: Opening Montage – Vincent/Jerome’s preparations for work.</b></p> <p>a) <b>TECHNIQUE:</b> Close-ups of Vincent/Jerome shaving, exfoliating, attaching a urine bag, putting on fake fingertips with fake blood in a shadowy, poorly lit room.</p> <p><b>SCENE: Eugene/Jerome climbing the stairs to meet Anton and Irene.</b></p> <p>b) <b>TECHNIQUE:</b> High-angle camera shot of Eugene/Jerome at the bottom of the stairs accompanied by suspenseful music, which draws attention to the enormous challenge facing him.</p>	<p>a) In the film’s opening montage, Niccol’s uses repeated close-ups of Vincent/Jerome’s preparations to highlight the level of detail that he needs to go to in order to disguise his identity and be part of the space mission to Titan. When Director Josef says to Vincent/Jerome that “It is right that someone like you is taking us to Titan”, it is ironic as Jerome Morrow is a disguise that Vincent/Jerome has used to obtain his dream of becoming an astronaut and beat other Gattaca candidates.</p> <p>b) Eugene/Jerome, despite being genetically engineered to win, failed in his dream to become a swimming champion. However, by climbing the stairs in time, despite being a paraplegic, and meeting Irene and Anton, he metaphorically wins a race. This shows the viewer how Eugene/Jerome has changed due to his relationship with Vincent/Jerome and become a stronger, happier individual.</p>
<p><b>b) DISCRIMINATION:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types of discrimination</li> <li>• Resisting and overcoming the system</li> <li>• Using peoples’ bodies against them</li> </ul>	<p>In <i>Gattaca</i>, people’s outcomes in life are meant to be scientifically determined by their DNA as this shows whether they are VALID or INVALID. To maintain this repressive system constant surveillance of a person’s DNA is required, as evidenced in the way that access to Gattaca involves a drop of blood and constant urine substance tests. Nevertheless, in the figure of Vincent/Jerome the film has an individual who uses a “borrowed ladder” to subvert the system, and obtain his dream as an astronaut despite being genetically INVALID.</p>	<p><b>SCENE: Relationship between Vincent/Jerome and Eugene/Jerome</b></p> <p>c) <b>TECHNIQUE:</b> Symbolism – staircase in Eugene/Jerome’s apartment that is shaped like DNA helix.</p> <p><b>SCENE: Closing scene – Vincent/Jerome’s final unexpected substance test with Lamar.</b></p> <p>d) <b>TECHNIQUE:</b> Vincent/Jerome and Lamar, the medical technician, are always positioned at the same height, highlighting their connection. This connection is made clear when Lamar</p>	<p>c) By Vincent/Jerome overcoming discrimination and leading a mission to Titan, it shows the viewer how this genetically based repressive system can be overcome. However, Vincent/Jerome’s success is dependent on the help of other such as Eugene/Jerome and Lamar, Gattaca’s medical technician. Vincent/Jerome uses Eugene/Jerome’s DNA to become part of the Gattaca space program, and the staircase in their shared apartments alludes to their genetically intertwined relationship as it is shaped like a DNA helix.</p> <p>d) Lamar, the medical technician, at Gattaca, is also shown being sympathetic and friendly to Vincent/Jerome. Lamar is always positioned at the same height as Vincent/Jerome in various camera shots, indicating the connection and equality between the two of them. At</p>

		explains to Vincent/Jerome that his son is also an INVALID.	the end of the film, it is Lamar who deletes Vincent/Jerome's positive identification as an INVALID and replaces it with the ID of the valid Jerome Morrow. This is because he has a son, who is an INVALID, and sees in Vincent/Jerome's success a possible future for him.
<b>C) SCIENCE &amp; DREAMS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restrictions vs Freedom</li> <li>Oppression vs Encouragement</li> </ul>	In <i>Gattaca</i> , the director, Andrew Niccols explores both the positive implications of a world where science enables the dream of frequent space travel, but also enforces a repressive social system where people are discriminated against based on their DNA. Through the central protagonist, Vincent/Jerome, he shows how an individual can achieve their dream through personal belief, despite their genetic status.	<b>SCENE:</b> Gym scene e) <b>TECHNIQUE:</b> Editing & Montage – several shots of Anton and Detective Hugo questioning Director Josef about the type of person employed at Gattaca, intercut with midshots of Vincent/Jerome running on a treadmill f) <b>TECHNIQUE:</b> See example (d) for Discrimination.	e) Director Josef tells Anton and Detective Hugo in the gym that “No-one exceeds his potential - if he did it would mean we did not accurately gauge his potential in the first place.”, before the camera cuts to a mid-shot of Vincent/Jerome on the treadmill, highlighting the irony in this statement. The viewer has already been shown Vincent/Jerome replacing his assigned heart monitor with another that hides a recording of Eugene/Jerome's stronger heart. Despite Vincent/Jerome physical condition noticeably deteriorating during the run, he is still able to maintain his disguise as Jerome Morrow, fool science and obtain his dream of space travel. f) See example (d) for discrimination.
<b>D) PERSONAL IDENTITY</b>	In <i>Gattaca</i> , a person's status is determined by their body's DNA. Vincent/Jerome refuses to let his status as an INVALID determine his personal identity and future, and instead subverts the repressive system to achieve his dream.	<b>SCENE: Opening Credits</b> g) <b>TECHNIQUE:</b> Extreme close-up of hairs, dead skin and finger nails falling on the floor in the shower as Vincent/Jerome prepares for work at Gattaca. h) <b>TECHNIQUE:</b> Overlaid across the screen during this scene are the opening credits, where the letters “G”, “A”, “T” and “C” are constantly emphasized in cast member's names.	g) The opening credits of <i>Gattaca</i> quickly draw the viewer's attention to how a person's identity is determined by their genetic make-up. Niccols, the director, emphasizes how even a hair or fingernail can be used to determine someone's status as a VALID or INVALID, through his use of extreme close ups, as Vincent/Jerome attempts to remove all DNA traces that could give his identity away at Gattaca. Symbolically Vincent/Jerome burns these traces as though destroying the old Vincent, and freeing himself to be Vincent/Jerome. h) Furthermore the emphasis on the letters of “G”, “A”, “T” and “C” in each cast members name in the opening credits, highlights again how important DNA is as these letters represent the four basic nucleotides in DNA.