GATTACA Movie Questions & Essays

Plot Summary of Movie
Vincent is one of the last "natural" babies born into a sterile, genetically-enhanced world, where life expectancy and disease likelihood are ascertained at birth. Myopic and due to die at age 30 because of heart disorder; he has no chance of a career in a society that now discriminates against your genes, instead of your gender, race or religion. Going underground, he assumes the identity of Jerome, crippled in an accident, and achieves prominence in the GATTACA Corporation, where he is selected for his lifelong desire: a manned mission to Saturn. Constantly passing gene tests by diligently using samples of Jerome's hair, skin, blood and urine, his now-perfect world is thrown into increasing desperation, his dream within reach, when the mission director is killed - and he carelessly loses an eyelash at the scene! Certain that they know the murderer's ID, but unable to track down the former Vincent, the police start to close in, with extra searches, and new gene tests. With the once-in-a-lifetime launch only days away, Vincent must avoid arousing suspicion, while passing the tests, evading the police, and not knowing whom he can trust.

Assignment Directions
Questions are somewhat in order. If don’t pay attention in class, you may have to watch the movie twice in order to answer the questions or rewind. No late work will be accepted!!!

The format will be as follows:
- Each question must be written / typed out with the written / typed answer below it.
  Example:
  o What is the name of the movie we watched in class?
  o The name of the movie we watched in class was GATTACA.
- They must be in complete sentences.

Questions – Pick 5 questions below to Answer

1. What does Vincent’s DNA say about him?
2. Vincent sees himself as a “second class citizen”. Why?
3. The following terms were used in the movie. How do they relate to the words we use: degenerate and invalid?
   De-gene-erate
   In-valid
   Borrowed Ladder
   a. Imagine yourself in this type of society.
   i. How did these names come about?
   ii. Are they accurate?
4. Why do you think Vincent left his family, tearing his picture out of the family photo, after winning the swimming race against his brother?
5. Vincent says, “My real resume is in my cells”. What does this mean? How does a paper resume compare to a DNA resume? May have to get parents input on this.
6. What is Vincent’s job? What is his dream? Why does it seem impossible to obtain?
7. In order to achieve his dream Vincent goes to extremes. What does he do? This is quite a list be sure to include everything! Is it worth it? Why or why not?
8. What name does the real Jerome choose for himself? Is there any significance to his name?
9. When Jerome Morrow said to Vincent/Jerome, “They’re not looking for you. When they look at you, they only see me,” what did he mean? Can you find any parallels to this type of situation in real life?
10. The murderer throws police off initially by saying “look at my DNA profile, I don’t have a violent bone in my body”. Assuming this is true, how could he of killed?
11. At the end of the film, you are told that the Doctor knew about Vincent all along. Why did the Doctor go along with the fraud? What would you have done if you were the Doctor?
12. Ladders & Stairways are heavily featured in this film. Describe what this symbolism represents in the movie GATTACA.
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Essay Questions – You have two options for this part of the assignment.

Option #1 – Pick two of the following essays. Each essay will be worth a total of 10pts

1. During a scene in GATTACA, Vincent’s parents visited a doctor who specialized in child conception to select for 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 mentioned in GATTACA included intelligence, height, and any possibility of inheritable diseases.

   If you decide to have a child one day and are given the opportunity to select for special traits, would you do so? Why or why not?

2. During a gala party scene in GATTACA, a women submits a saliva sample from a recent kiss to screen her potential boyfriend/husband’s DNA.
   a. Is she violating his rights by doing this without his knowledge?
   b. Is this in anyway similar to performing a background check?
   c. How much would a DNA screen reveal about someone’s personality and intelligence?

3. Why did Eugene with near-perfect DNA makeup only get a silver medal in his Olympic competition? What does this imply about human achievement when he is compared with Vincent?

Option #2 – chooses essay question #4 for 20 points.

4. Knowledge of one’s genetic screen could profoundly affect the price of insurance. Insurance companies operate on a risk assessment basis, where individuals with a greater potential of developing health complications are charged more than individuals who are deemed healthy. They look at statistics to determine how much their clients should be charged. With current advancements in genetic testing, there is the 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.

   Take 1 of either side of this issue and write an essay on the following:

   Side 1 – You are representing an individual who has obtained a genetic screen and would like to purchase some insurance. Results show that you’re at extremely high risk for developing cancer and hypertension. However, you are currently a healthy individual who doesn’t smoke and exercise on a regular basis. Explain why you should be given the opportunity to purchase insurance at a reasonable price.

   Side 2 – 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.