



To Be or To Learn

Now look at your answers to the quiz. How many times was there a check in both columns?

For most people, there will be quite a few. More than four, and it looks like you're just like your older family members...but is that nature (you take after them) or nurture (you learned from them)? If you've ever wondered whether you were born like them or if you learned to copy them, don't worry, you're not alone—it's a debate that's been going on for decades.

Nature versus nurture: The great debate

We live in an age of genetics. We blame genetics for our bad habits, our height, and our poor grade on last week's math exam. But can we blame them for our personality (the nature theory)? Or did we learn to be who we are (the nurture counterargument)? This is the subject of a very serious debate.

The nature argument is simple; we inherit most of our individual characteristics from our genes—in other words, from our parents and ancestors. If we'd had different parents, we would have developed different personalities. But if the nature argument is true, it presents a troubling philosophical problem. If we are preprogrammed by our genes, do we actually have free will, the thing that many

believe makes us human? Furthermore, if we aren't free, can we be blamed for our actions? On the other hand, there are many who believe the nurture argument; they claim that in spite of the fact that we obviously inherit genes, we are more than just a copy of older family members. We become ourselves through living. It is our early experiences, the cultural attitudes we experience, and what we are taught that make us what we are. In other words, if we had grown up in a different place with different influences, we wouldn't have become who we are now.

To test this, psychologists study identical twins, who have the same genetic makeup. The idea is that if twins were brought up in different places, by different parents, and in different cultures, they would reveal the extent to which nature overcomes nurture. But even though there has been lots of research, the results are inconclusive. The best guess is that we are partly nature and partly nurture.

So, take a look back at the questions you answered before you read this. Can you say for sure whether you learned to be "you" or you inherited "you"?

—adapted from *A Dictionary of Education*, 2nd ed., edited by Susan Wallace

6 IDENTIFY Read the article that accompanies the quiz in Exercise 3. How many of your ideas from Exercise 5 are included in the article?

7 INTEGRATE Read the article again. Decide if the statements are true (T), false (F), or not given (NG) according to the writer.

- Only a few people have several similarities with family members. ☐
- Genetics is frequently identified as the cause of habits, success, and physical appearance. ☐
- Most people believe that culture and experience are not as important as family. ☐
- Male twins are the most useful for revealing whether nature overcomes nurture. ☐
- Research indicates that nurture is a stronger influence than nature. ☐



READING SKILL Recognizing and understanding addition and contrast linking words

Writers use conjunctions or "linking" words and phrases to:

- add information: *what's more, moreover, furthermore.*
- contrast ideas: *even though, on the other hand, in spite of.*

When reading, notice the function of linkers. What connections is the writer trying to make?

8 IDENTIFY Look at the example in the first column of a linking phrase from the quiz. Then read the article again. Identify four more examples of linking phrases in the article. Identify the original information and the information being added or contrasted.

Linking word	Original information	Information added or contrasted
what's more	you enjoy a joke	you make people laugh