



Reading Science

Name: _____ Date: _____

Inherited Traits

- 1 You may have heard the phrase, “You look like your mom,” or “You look like your dad.” Or, maybe you’ve looked at yourself in the mirror and haven’t completely seen yourself. Instead, you see a reflection of one of your parents staring back at you. This is thanks to inherited traits. Inherited traits are characteristics a living thing possesses. Inherited traits are passed down to you from your parents.
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- 2 The way you look comes from the information in your genes passed on to you from your parents. Genes encode information about living things. The color of your eyes and your hair depends on the colors of your parents’ eyes and hair. Another trait that may be passed down is the shape of your nose. Your body shape, such as your height or the length of your legs, is also associated in part to your parents’ bloodlines.
 - 3 Sometimes environmental factors can influence our traits. For example, a human’s body may change shape from their inherited body due to diet. It may change shape based on how they choose to live. While inherited traits are passed down, they can be adapted and changed based on the environment that one is living in.
 - 4 Traits are not just passed down in humans, but in all living things. In plants, the shape of the leaves or color of the flower are passed down from the parent plant. In animals, the number of legs or shape of the beak is passed down. The color of fur or feathers are all examples of inherited traits.
 - 5 Some of our most **defining** traits are not those that are inherited. Some that define us most are those traits that are learned. For example, if you are really great at playing video games, it is probably not because your parent was really great at playing video games. You became good at video games because you practiced. You learned the skills to become a good video gamer.



Reading Science

- 6 Reading and writing are also learned traits. They are controlled with how much you practice them to become efficient at doing them. Talking, playing sports, and even the way you choose to wear your hair are also learned behaviors. When people say they are good at sports because their dad played sports, that may not be entirely true. They are probably good at sports because their dad played sports with them when they were little. He passed his love of sports on to them. If he did not play with them, they probably would not be as good at sports.
- 7 Animals learning to do tricks such as a seal balancing a ball on his nose or a dog learning to shake a hand with its leg are examples of learned behaviors. For humans or animals to learn something, much time and **devotion** needs to be put into learning the skill. Monkeys do not just use sticks as tools without learning how to do this from other monkeys.
- 8 If you choose to pierce your ears or dye your hair, these traits will not be passed down to your offspring. However, if children grow up in an environment where this is done, then it may be that they end up doing the same thing. A person's environment can affect the way they look or behave. It does not affect inherited traits that are passed down genetically to the next **generation**.



Reading Science

1. The author wrote this selection most likely to explain –
 - A. how traits are passed down.
 - B. how traits can be learned.
 - C. the scientific studies of learned and inherited traits.
 - D. the differences between learned and inherited traits.

2. The word **defining** means –
 - A. *the meaning of a word*
 - B. *what makes us who we are*
 - C. *learned*
 - D. *valued*

3. What can the reader conclude about inherited traits from the passage?
 - A. Inherited traits allow a person to choose what they want to look like.
 - B. Inherited traits cannot be changed.
 - C. Inherited traits are passed down through the parents' bloodlines.
 - D. Inherited traits are easy to change.



Reading Science

4. Video game skills can be learned and are not inherited. Which evidence in the text supports this conclusion?
- A. People who are good at video games get this skill from their parents.
 - B. People who are good at video games have to practice and memorize moves.
 - C. People who are good at video games only live in certain countries.
 - D. People who are good at video games also do well in school.
5. Which evidence helps the reader understand the meaning of **generation** in the last paragraph?
- A. *Does not affect*
 - B. *Passed down*
 - C. *Next*
 - D. *Can affect the way they look*
6. A plant has a waxy leaf. This is an example of –
- A. inherited trait.
 - B. learned behavior.
 - C. environmental adaptation.
 - D. both A and B.