

Intelligence

1 Read the article. Is intelligence thought about differently now compared to the past?

WHAT IS INTELLIGENCE?



Consider the game of chess. It is a strategic game that requires tactics. Many world leaders have been competent chess players. Chess needs creative thinking as well as considerable mental skills, or some might say intelligence.

Different countries and their different cultures define intelligence in different ways. For example, in Western culture there is a focus on mentally processing things quickly; but Eastern cultures might question the quality of work if it has been completed too quickly.

In the modern world it is unusual to find an illiterate person in an important position, but historically there are many success stories of people who have overcome limited or no education to achieve success. Albert Einstein initially failed the entrance exams for college and Mark Twain had little schooling, but educated himself by reading everything he could in a public library. Many leaders in the ancient world, such as Genghis Khan, were illiterate. Nearly all the kings and queens of Europe in the Middle Ages could not read and write – they had other people to do it for them. We must imagine that they had other skills such as a deep understanding of human nature, incredible memory or the ability to be articulate.

When looking at intelligence, we can see that there are big differences between Western cultures and Eastern cultures. A number of different philosophies across Eastern cultures consider intelligence to involve things like waking up and noticing. Feelings, thoughts and opinions are also included. Where Eastern cultures see things like mental effort and a person's level of determination as aspects of intelligence, through Western eyes too much effort is seen as a weakness. There are studies that highlight, for example, how the Chinese concept of intelligence measures the ability to reason and have a good memory. In contrast, the American concept of intelligence is mostly about things such as practical problem-solving, verbal ability and social skills.



2 Read the article again. Are the sentences True (T) or False (F)? Correct the false sentences.

1 Being able to think creatively will help you play chess. T/F

2 The ability to reason is an American concept of intelligence. T/F

3 Verbal ability is a concept of intelligence in Western cultures. T/F

4 Feelings, thoughts and opinions are all considered part of intelligence according to Eastern cultures. T/F

5 Most royalty in the Middle Ages were talented readers and writers. T/F

3 Read the article and answer the questions.

1 How does the aspect of mental effort and intelligence differ in Eastern and Western cultures?

2 How do you think many world leaders have played chess well?

3 Which culture considers good memory a concept of intelligence?

4 Work in pairs and discuss the questions.

1 What do you think it means to be intelligent?

2 What is considered to be intelligence in your country and how does it compare to other Eastern or Western cultures?