

**TSSM**<sup>TM</sup>  
Creating VCE Success

SAMPLE

ENGLISH TEXT SUMMARY NOTES  
**“Gattaca”**

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## AREA 1:

# READING & THE STUDY OF TEXTS: GATTACA

The movie “Gattaca” concerns itself in the main with the modern day issue of genetic makeup and the impact that this has on all of our lives. It poses the question “what if...?” implying that absolutes are not always as they seem, and that every problem has a solution if one is willing to search hard and long enough to find it. The characters are engaging in as much as we can identify with them – ranging from Vincent who wants to go into space more than anything else before he dies, to his parents who try to make the best of what they deem to be a bad situation, to Vincent’s brother Anton the much wanted and much loved son, and finally the Director of the space mission who only wants to see his life work a come to successful fruition.

The underlying question of what perfection is and whether or not a perfect DNA print is all that one needs to lead a successful and therefore happy life pervades the film as Vincent discovers that most people have agendas, be they for the common good or for selfish personal satisfaction. This is quite a frightening thought given that since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century there are many cases where people are openly planning to have designer babies or are having children to make up for deficient “spare parts” in other children they already have. Stem cell research is currently being hotly debated in political circles with some governments allowing limited research in this area in order to “correct” defects and illnesses that we already have.

The film brings up the issue of taking all of this one step further by posing the situation where there are several classes of human being – those who have the least number of genetic defects being the favoured ones, whilst others are denied their basic human rights and opportunities. This is indeed an alarming situation.

At the end of the film, however, we see that the two brothers do understand that human feelings are more important than a perfect body – we also see that love between two people, both romantic and filial, overrides scientific considerations and even the flight to outer space can go ahead with at least one imperfect specimen aboard.

# *Chapter 1*

## **GENRE AND CONTEXT**

“Gattaca” contains elements of film noir, a film genre popular in the 1940’s which usually involved criminal sciences, a person becoming involved in a murder organised by a dangerous and threatening individual, with a sexual undertone portrayed by a glamorous woman. These films were shot in black and white and grimy, shadowy urban locations characterise the genre.

“Gattaca”, is the “Classic Hollywood Narrative”. It is primarily about an individual on a quest which is life changing for him. Along the way, he meets characters of different persuasions that mould him, support him and at times distract him from the task at hand. Of course, in the end, good must triumph over evil, but it is not a clear cut as that. In this case, Vincent must grow through his experiences and the audience must feel satisfied with the ending even though it is a little predictable.

First and foremost, one should note that “Gattaca” is of the science fiction genre. It hypothesises about future worlds where everything could be perfect, but at the same time points out that this would come at a cost. It is a world of advanced technology which is not always being used for good purposes. In a way, it is about technology gone mad at the expense of human feelings and reality as we know it.

On the other hand, the film is also a suspense thriller. Will Vincent find a way to get to outer space? Will he get away with his scheme? Why is Jerome helping him in the first place? Will Anton allow him to get away with his plan? Will the space ship take off in spite of the murder and does it matter who the killer really is?

As well, we have the love story which somehow complicates matters as we wonder whether Irene will find out about Jerome/Vincent and if she will give them away when she does.

It is important to note that there are several kinds of love portrayed in the film, each of which is driven by different types of emotions. Firstly, there is the mother’s love for Vincent. It seems that it is she who instils in him the will to succeed. Then there is the filial love between the two brothers driven by both rivalry and normal brotherly love. Of course, the film would not be an entertainment were it not for the romantic love interest between “Jerome” and Irene. The strength of this emotion in all its guises is what drives the film forward. There is also, of course, Vincent’s love of his own dream which pushes him towards the peculiar behaviour in the first place and Jerome’s eventual love for Vincent which makes him really want to see success as the result of all of their hard work.