
NOT BORING MEDIA

THE TWINS SEPARATED THEN REUNITED WITH IDENTICAL LIVES

High-Interest Nonfiction Reading Passage

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ Reading Passage
- ✓ Comprehension Questions
- ✓ Answer Key
- ✓ Teacher Guide

GRADES 4-6 • LEXILE ~750L • DOK LEVELS 1-4

Reading they'll actually do.

TERMS OF USE

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WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ High-interest nonfiction reading passage (300-400 words)
- ✓ 6 comprehension questions spanning DOK levels 1-4
- ✓ Complete answer key with explanations
- ✓ Teacher guide with standards, pacing, and extensions

Questions or feedback? Leave a review or message us through TPT!

THE TWINS SEPARATED THEN REUNITED WITH IDENTICAL LIVES

In 1979, two men named Jim Lewis and Jim Springer met face-to-face for the first time at age 39. They were identical twins who had been separated at birth and adopted by different families in Ohio who knew nothing of each other's existence. What researchers would discover about their eerily parallel lives seemed to defy all probability and raised profound questions about the power of genetics.

Both men had been independently named James by their adoptive families without any knowledge of the coincidence. Both grew up with adopted brothers named Larry. Both had childhood dogs named Toy. Both married women named Linda, divorced those wives, and then married second wives named Betty. Both named their firstborn sons James Alan—with slightly different spellings.

The coincidences extended into small, seemingly random details of daily life. Both men bit their fingernails compulsively. Both suffered from the same type of severe tension headaches. Both drove the same color Chevrolet. Both worked part-time in law enforcement. Both took their families on vacation to the same specific beach in Florida. Both built white benches around trees in their yards.

The 'Jim Twins,' as they became known, became famous subjects in the groundbreaking Minnesota Study of Twins Reared Apart, which examined identical twins who had been separated at birth to study how much of human personality and behavior is determined by genetics versus environment. The study found that separated identical twins consistently showed remarkably similar personalities, interests, intelligence levels, and life choices despite completely different upbringings.

Skeptics reasonably pointed out that some apparent similarities could simply be coincidence—certain names were common, certain car colors were popular, certain jobs were typical for men of their generation. But researchers noted that the sheer number of parallels in the Jim Twins' case exceeded what statistical chance would predict by an enormous margin.

The study suggested that genetics influence personality, preferences, and life outcomes more profoundly than scientists had previously believed.

The Jim Twins remained close friends after their reunion, fascinated by their parallel lives. Their story continues to raise deep questions about identity and free will.

Word Count: 350 | Lexile: ~750L | Grades 4-6 | Source: NASA

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Name: _____ Date: _____

1

At what age did the twins meet?

- ☐ A) 9
- ☐ B) 19
- ☐ C) 39
- ☐ D) 59

2

What were both twins' wives named (in order)?

- ☐ A) Mary then Susan
- ☐ B) Linda then Betty
- ☐ C) Betty then Linda
- ☐ D) Anna then Maria

3

What was the Minnesota study's purpose?

- ☐ A) To reunite all twins
- ☐ B) To study genetic vs environmental influence on personality
- ☐ C) To prove twins are identical
- ☐ D) To find adoption fraud

4

Why were skeptics not entirely convinced?

- ☐ A) The twins were lying
- ☐ B) Some similarities could be coincidence (common names, popular choices)
- ☐ C) The study was fake
- ☐ D) Twins aren't real

5

What did the study suggest about genetics?

- ☐ A) Genetics have no effect
- ☐ B) Environment determines everything
- ☐ C) Genetics influence personality more than previously believed
- ☐ D) All twins are identical

6

What philosophical question does this raise?

- ☐ A) Names don't matter
- ☐ B) How much is determined by DNA versus choices and environment?
- ☐ C) Twins should never separate
- ☐ D) Florida is popular

ANSWER KEY

The Twins Separated Then Reunited With Identical Lives

1. C) 39

DOK 1 — Recall.

2. B) Linda then Betty

DOK 1 — Recall.

3. B) To study genetic vs environmental influence on personality

DOK 2 — Inference.

4. B) Some similarities could be coincidence (common names, popular choices)

DOK 2 — Inference.

5. C) Genetics influence personality more than previously believed

DOK 3 — Analysis.

6. B) How much is determined by DNA versus choices and environment?

DOK 4 — Extended Thinking.

TEACHER GUIDE

The Twins Separated Then Reunited With Identical Lives

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1 — Refer to details and examples in a text
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4 — Determine meaning of words and phrases
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.8 — Explain how author uses evidence
- NGSS — Connections to scientific practices

PACING OPTIONS

- Quick Read (10-15 min): Passage + questions 1-4
- Standard (20-25 min): Full passage + all questions
- Deep Dive (35-40 min): Add discussion + extension

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do the Jim Twins prove that genetics determines who we are?
- How much of your personality do you think is genetic versus learned?
- What would it be like to meet a twin you never knew existed?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Research the nature vs. nurture debate and create a presentation.
- Interview twins you know about their similarities and differences.
- Design a study that could test genetic vs. environmental influence on a specific trait.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Struggling: Pre-teach vocabulary, partner reading
- Advanced: Add research, compare to related events
- ELL: Visual supports, pre-teach context

SOURCE

- NASA / Stanford Solar Center