



Yale-New Haven  
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2009 Volume V: Evolutionary Medicine

---

## Genetic Testing: Modern-Day Eugenics?

Guide for Curriculum Unit 09.05.01  
by Joseph A. Corsetti

"Eugenics is the science which deals with all the influences that improve and develop the inborn qualities of a race," argued Sir Francis Galton in an editorial published in *Nature* in May 1904. The brief article is not a scientific study, but it serves as a succinct treatise of Galton's work and his motivations. Eugenists called for the improvement of the human race through better breeding.

This unit has three main areas of focus. First, it examines the social conditions that existed in the late 19th century that allowed the Eugenics Movement to emerge and flourish. Second, the unit explores how the Eugenics movement influenced other social constructs of the period, including methods of controlling the less desirable. The third part of the unit addresses the way eugenic science creeps into our present-day life. This mainly takes the shape of examining the use of prenatal genetic testing and its impact. The unit considers the social, ethical, and moral issues associated with genuine hereditary diseases, and the best way to address these valid and genuine concerns.

(Recommended for U.S. History and Ethics, grade 11)

---

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University  
For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>