

# Lesson Plan: The Great Debate - Are You Born This Way or Made This Way?

## Materials Needed:

- A notebook or journal and a pen/pencil
  - A computer or tablet with internet access
  - Optional: Art supplies (paper, colored pencils, markers) for the final project
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## Subject

Science, Psychology, Social Studies

## Grade Level

Appropriate for ages 12-14

## Time Allotment

60-75 minutes, plus time for the creative project

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

1. Define the concepts of "nature" (heredity) and "nurture" (environment) in your own words.
  2. Analyze different scenarios to identify the influence of both nature and nurture on a person's traits and behaviors.
  3. Formulate a well-reasoned opinion on the nature vs. nurture debate, using examples to support your view.
  4. Creatively express your understanding of the topic through a project of your choice.
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## Lesson Activities

### Part 1: The Hook - What Makes You, YOU? (10 minutes)

Let's start with a quick "thought experiment." In your notebook, create two columns. Label one "Things I Was Born With" and the other "Things I Learned." Spend a few minutes brainstorming things about yourself for each column.

- Think about your physical traits (eye color, hair color, height). Where do those go?
- Think about your skills (riding a bike, speaking a language, playing a game). Where do those go?
- Now think about tougher ones: Are you shy or outgoing? Are you good at math? Do you have a great sense of humor? Where would you put those? Are you sure?

This is the core of the nature vs. nurture debate! There are no right or wrong answers here; the goal is

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just to get you thinking.

## Part 2: Exploring the Concepts (15 minutes)

Now let's get some clear definitions. Watch the following short video to understand the key ideas:

- **Video:** "Nature vs. Nurture" by SciShow Psych (Search for this on YouTube). It's about 4 minutes long and does a great job explaining the basics.

After watching, answer these questions in your notebook:

1. **Define Nature:** In your own words, what does "nature" refer to in this debate? (Hint: Think genes, biology, heredity).
2. **Define Nurture:** In your own words, what does "nurture" refer to? (Hint: Think environment, family, culture, experiences).
3. **The Big Idea:** Does science think it's 100% one or the other? Or is it more complicated? Explain.

## Part 3: Case Study Investigation (20 minutes)

You are now a psychological detective! Your job is to read the two mini-case studies below and identify the potential influences of both nature and nurture.

### Case Study #1: The Amazing Musicians

Leo and his sister, Mia, are both incredible piano players. Their father is a professional concert pianist (Nature influence?), and they grew up in a house filled with music where they began lessons at age three (Nurture influence?). Leo is technically perfect but very shy on stage. Mia is a powerful, emotional performer who loves the spotlight, much like their outgoing mother.

- **Your Task:** In your notebook, list the "nature" factors and "nurture" factors that might contribute to Leo and Mia's musical talent. Why do you think their personalities on stage are so different?

### Case Study #2: The Separated Twins

(Based on a real famous study!) Two identical twins, Jim and Bob, were separated at birth and adopted by different families. They didn't meet again until they were 39 years old. When they met, they discovered uncanny similarities. They both loved carpentry, drove the same model of car, had dogs named "Toy," and even vacationed on the same beach in Florida. However, Bob was a quiet homebody, raised in a calm, rural town, while Jim was a talkative thrill-seeker, raised in a busy city.

- **Your Task:** In your notebook, list the similarities that strongly suggest a "nature" (genetic) influence. What differences suggest a "nurture" (environmental) influence?

## Part 4: The Creative Project - Show What You Know! (25+ minutes)

This is your chance to show your understanding in a fun, creative way. Choose **one** of the following projects to complete. This can be started now and finished later.

### Option A: Superhero Origin Story

- **Task:** Invent a new superhero. Write and/or draw their origin story (1-2 pages). You must clearly explain how both **nature** (their innate powers, genetic abilities) and **nurture** (their upbringing, a life-changing event, their mentors) shaped them into the hero they are today.

### Option B: Family Trait Detective

- **Task:** Interview one or two family members (a parent, grandparent, or sibling). Ask them about their talents, personality traits, and strong interests. Create a visual chart (like a Venn Diagram or a family tree infographic) that shows traits you share. For each shared trait, make a hypothesis: do you think it's mostly nature or nurture, and why?

### **Option C: The Great Debate Script**

- **Task:** Write a short, 2-page script for a play or TV show scene. The scene features two characters having a debate. One character, Dr. Gene, strongly believes nature is most important. The other, Dr. Enviro, believes nurture is the key. Your script should have them use examples to argue their points, but it must end with them realizing that both are essential.

### **Part 5: Final Reflection (5 minutes)**

To wrap up the lesson, answer this final question in your journal:

*"After exploring this topic, do you think it's more important to ask 'Is it nature OR nurture?' or 'How do nature AND nurture work together?' Explain your thinking with an example."*

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### **Assessment (How you'll know you've succeeded)**

Your creative project will be evaluated based on these simple criteria:

- **Clear Concepts:** Did you accurately show your understanding of both nature and nurture?
- **Thoughtful Examples:** Did you use specific, relevant examples to connect your ideas to the topic?
- **Creativity & Effort:** Did you put your own unique spin on the project and complete it thoughtfully?

### **Challenge/Extension (Optional)**

Curious to learn more? Research the term "epigenetics." It's a fascinating field of science that studies how your behaviors and environment can cause changes that affect the way your genes work. Write a short paragraph summarizing what you learn!