

## STUDY GUIDE 1

Joseph L. Graves, Jr., *The Race Myth: Why We Pretend Race Exists in America*

### Chapter One: “How Biology Refutes Our Racial Myths”

1. What are the criteria that Graves outlines which can be used to determine whether or not a specific population is a distinct race, biologically speaking?
2. Why don't any human populations qualify as distinct biological races? In what specific ways do they fail to meet the criteria outlined by Graves?
3. Why aren't physical differences proof that races exist?
4. What are some factors/pressures that account for genetic/trait variation among humans?
5. What effect do you think the timing of the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859 had on the interpretation and/or understanding of Darwin's claim?

### Chapter Two: “Great is Our Sin: A Brief History of Racism”

6. What did 19th century naturalists/scientists view as the relationship between biological features and social position?
7. Why was the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* such a revolutionary work for its time? What was the central challenge that Darwin's work posed to the thinking of his peers and the accepted ideas of the field?
8. What does Graves mean when he describes racist behavior as a “ghost of our evolutionary past”?
9. How Does Graves describe the relationship between biological evolution and cultural evolution? What is a meme? How and why is it replicated? How is this method of replication different from that of genes?

### Chapter Three: “Sexual Selection, Reproduction, and Social Dominance”

10. Graves suggests that “if we lived in a world that had solved the problem of how to fairly distribute its goods and services, no one would get bent out of shape over cultural differences.” Do you agree with this claim? If so, why? If not, why not?
11. What two events does Graves suggest “are probably the most important events responsible for the evolution of modern societies”? Why were these events so important?
12. According to Graves, is there a biological basis for social oppression? If so, what is that basis?
13. According to Graves, is there a biological basis for racial oppression? Why or why not?

### Chapter Four: “Jungle Fever: Race, Sexuality, and Marriage”

14. In what way(s) are mate selection within a social hierarchy and American societal taboos about interracial sex and marriage related?

15. Graves demonstrates the way in which social hierarchies have developed partly as a result of sexual selection. Moreover, within these hierarchies “privileged males have had greater sexual access to the bodies of both the privileged and the underprivileged, either through naked force, or through social coercion.” What have been some of the results of these developments as they have played out in American society where privileged and underprivileged groups have historically been racially defined?
16. What are the racialized sexual stereotypes in America that resulted from white male social dominance?
17. How have these stereotypes shaped laws, social customs, and behavior throughout American history? Why do you think these particular stereotypes were used to justify the “necessity” of the most extreme forms of social oppression, including the twin barbarities of rape and lynching?
18. Why have interracial sexual or marital relations elicited such severe responses from the “oppressive race caste system in America against its subordinates”?
19. Graves suggests that “Euro-American males display violence and have institutionalized terror against African American and other nonwhite males because of the link between human heterosexual behavior and social structure.” What is that link?
20. How did slavery of the ancient world differ from American slavery?
21. How does America’s racially stratified social order affect gender relationships both within “races” and between them?
22. At the end of this chapter Graves claims that “love really is the answer” to America’s racially determined social inequality. What does he mean? Do you agree? Why, or why not?

Chapter Five: “America Is Enough to Make You Sick: Differential Health and Mortality for Racial Minorities”

23. Graves identifies a health disparity in American society that breaks down along “racial” lines. What does he suggest is the cause of this disparity?
24. What does the biomedical industry suggest is the cause of the health disparity?
25. In what ways do the physical and social environments that individuals experience influence their predisposition to disease?
26. Graves appears to dismiss recent studies which conclude that certain medications prove more effective among whites than blacks, or vice-versa. If such studies turn out to survive the test of time, what would that say for Graves’ theory that “Racially based medical differences just do not exist”?
27. How does Graves connect the FHA loan program of the 1950s to the health disparity between “white” and “black” Americans of the 21st century?

Chapter Six: "Europeans, Not West Africans, Dominate the NBA: The Social Construction of Race and Sports"

28. In discussing the debate about whether or not athletic ability is racially determined, Graves refers to one group of scientists—who assert that athletic ability is racially determined—as "typologists". What, according to Graves is a typologist, and why does their argument for racially determined athletic ability break down? That is, if the typologists were correct, what should we expect to see in professional sports that we do not see?
29. Graves concedes that "athletic success is influenced by genes." If this is so, why isn't athletic success racially determined?
30. If race does not determine athletic ability or success what does? Also, why might we tend to see racial clusters within a variety of professional sports?
31. Who are John Carlos and Tommy Smith? What are they (in)famous for?
32. How have the specific claims of the racial typologists changed with regard to "black" track and field athletes?
33. Why does Graves insist that we must "deracialize our sports ideology"? For instance, if sports are "just a game" does it *really* matter if the thinking of racial typologists, which assumes racially determined athletic ability, prevails in American society? Why, or why not?

Chapter Seven: "On Whose Nature Nurture Never Could Stick: Race, Genetics, and Intelligence in the New Millennium"

34. Who was Sir Frances Galton? What is psychometry? How are Galton and his work connected to the eugenics movement of the early 20th century?
35. The idea that intelligence is a racially determined characteristic flowered in the early 20th century, with profound social consequences. In what ways did the belief in racially determined intelligence affect the social and political landscape of pre-war America?
36. What was the essential claim of pre-war psychometrists? What other movement(s) did their conclusions inspire?
37. Graves suggests that the Nazi program during W. W. II was the "legacy" of Sir Frances Galton and the pre-war psychometrists and eugenicists he inspired. Do you agree with Graves, or is he overstating the case?
38. How were the claims and arguments of pre-war psychometrists different from those of post-war psychometrists?
39. What is the fundamental flaw of the psychometric argument that is exposed by evolutionary theory?

Conclusion: "Two Paths...Choosing Up Sides or Joining Hands"

39. The subtitle of Graves's text is: "why we pretend race exists in America." Presumably, Graves has posed that question in the title of his book in order to answer it in the subsequent pages. What is his answer? Why *do* we pretend that race exists in America?