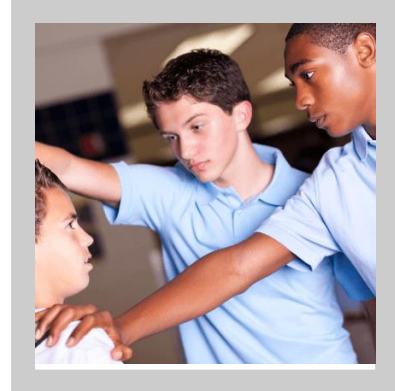


Name _____

Date _____

Being Bullied

ARE YOU A BULLY?—Researchers at Compass Academy have been asking this question for the last eight months, and according to a recent experiment they believe they have found the answer. Experiments show that one's propensity for being a bully is probably not the product of one's personality or background. Bullying may be a natural response to specific situations, hard-wired into the human brain. Given the right environmental conditions, anyone, even the most easygoing person, can quickly turn mean.



To arrive at this conclusion, researchers examined thirty sample populations, or "teams," consisting of twenty individuals each. In each of these teams, a leader was selected. Not just any leader would do. The population of leaders selected had to be very diverse; the researchers did not want their results to be skewed because all team leaders were white males aged 15 –18, for example. Therefore, leaders were selected so to represent a variety of traits. Each leader had a different age and gender, as well as different economic, social, and ethnic backgrounds.

After the teams had been established, researchers began the experiment. The teams were given a goal of forming a line from shortest to tallest, using every person on the team. Sounds pretty simple, right? But there was a catch: the leader was the only one allowed to move team members into position. Absolute power was given solely to the team leader, and team members had to obey him or her no matter what. What is more, in order to incentivize the teams, they were told that a \$2000 prize was to be awarded to the team that managed to form a perfect line in the least amount of time.

Given the relatively large team size, there was almost always a case in which the leader had to make a tough decision regarding who was taller. And, upon the decision, there was likely disagreement on behalf of the team members. Given that a \$2000 payoff was at stake, things often became rather heated. In the shuffle, it was not uncommon to hear team members utter such criticisms as, "Great, we're never going to win now," and "Who picked our team leader?" Researchers found that in roughly 80% of all cases in which such remarks were made, the team leader immediately entered bully mode, disparaging ornery team members with remarks such as "Shut up," and "Just do what I say and keep your mouth shut, okay?" In one such occasion, the team leader was recorded saying, "There's a reason I'm the boss here, buddy," when in actuality, there wasn't. In a particularly tense exchange, the team leader was overheard asking the team member if he "wanted to get hurt"—a classic bullying tactic—and researchers were forced to intervene. Unsurprisingly, this group did not win the prize.

What are we to glean from such a study? The belief that some people are born bullies is certainly shaken; it seems anyone can be a bully, no matter his or her background. So the next time you feel the bully within yearning to come out, don't let it. If you see someone else being a bully, don't judge him or her so quickly. Instead, realize that their bullying behavior doesn't just come from within. Rather, one study shows that it may very well come from without.

- 1) Based on its use in paragraph 1, it can be inferred that the word **propensity** belongs to which of the following word groups?
- A. inclination, proclivity, tendency
 - B. decision, action, affirmation
 - C. ability, aptitude, capacity
 - D. tug, gravity, pull
- 2) Based on information in the passage, it can be understood that something that is "hard-wired" into the brain is
- A. attached to the brain via physical wires
 - B. a result of one's environment
 - C. a product of the imagination
 - D. an inborn trait
- 3) Which of the following sentences from the passage best summarizes the main idea of the passage?
- A. "Researchers at Compass Academy have been asking this question for the last eight months, and according to a recent experiment, they believe they have found an answer."
 - B. "Given the right environmental conditions, anyone, even the most easygoing person, can quickly turn mean."
 - C. "One team leader was actually recorded saying, "There's a reason I'm the boss here, buddy" when in actuality, there wasn't."
 - D. "The belief that some people are born bullies is certainly shaken; it seems anyone can be abully, no matter his or her background."
- 4) In paragraph 2, the author writes, "The population of leaders selected had to be very diverse; the researchers did not want their results to be skewed because all team leaders were white males aged 15 –18, for example." Given the context of this quotation, it can be understood that the author means to say that the researchers wanted to
- A. ensure that their experiment was designed to test whether personality traits had a general correlation with bullying
 - B. avoid the risk of failing to include a certain social demographic in their experiment
 - C. eliminate the possibility that the public would view their experiment as racially prejudiced and therefore invalid
 - D. guarantee that no certain leader would feel excluded or left out
- 5) As used in paragraph 4, the word **disparaging** most nearly means
- A. inflicting physical harm
 - B. verbally abusing
 - C. challenging
 - D. firmly replying

- 6) According to the passage, "Given the right environmental conditions, anyone, even the most easygoing person, can quickly turn mean." In your experience, is this true? Why or why not?

Answers and Explanations

1) A

Core Standard: **Craft and Structure**

propensity (*noun*): a natural disposition towards a certain action.

In paragraph 1, the reader learns that researchers are trying to determine what makes a person behave as a bully. The researchers' "experiments show that one's propensity for being a bully is probably not the product of one's personality or background." Since the researchers are trying to determine why people behave as bullies, and their experiment shows that one's propensity for bullying is not determined by someone's personality, the reader can infer that *propensity* for bullying means natural inclination toward bullying. The word group *inclination, proclivity, tendency* contains words that indicate that someone is likely to do something because of his or her nature, so **(A)** is correct.

The word group *decision, action, affirmation* contains words that describe a process: the actor makes a decision to do something, takes that action, and then makes a positive judgment about that action. Since propensity is the natural inclination to do something, it is not necessarily a conscious decision or action, as described in this word family. This makes **(B)** incorrect.

The word group *ability, aptitude, capacity* contains words that indicate a quality or talent making someone capable of particular action. We would not generally describe someone who was likely to bully as talented at bullying, so this rules out **(C)**.

The word group *tug, gravity, pull* contains words that describe a physical force that moves objects toward the source of the force. While a propensity to bully does mean an inclination to bully, one is not physically pulled toward bullying, so **(D)** is incorrect.

2) D

Core Standard: **Integration of Knowledge**

In paragraph 1, we learn that "Experiments show that one's propensity for being a bully is probably not the product of one's personality or background. Bullying may be a natural response to specific situations, hard-wired into the human brain. Given the right environmental conditions, anyone, even the most easygoing person, can quickly turn mean." This tells us that the experiments show that bullying is not the product of personality, but is instead a natural response potentially triggered in any person because it is what the human brain is designed to do. An *inborn trait* is hereditary, present in a person at birth. Since something hard-wired into the human brain is something that is the same for everyone, something hard-wired into the human brain is an inborn trait. **(D)** is correct.

"Hard-wired" in the context of the passage means inborn, as a trait. Choice **(A)** refers to a literal, or actual, connection by physical, or tangible, wire. Bullying is behavior. Behavior is not physically attached to the brain. Therefore it is incorrect.

The experiment showed that anyone could be a bully in the right situation, so something hard-wired into the human brain is not something that results from one's environment.

Therefore, **(B)** is incorrect.

Choice **(C)** is incorrect because the bullying discussed in the passage is real, not a product of the imagination.

3) D

Core Standard: **Integration of Knowledge**

In this passage, we learn that researchers conducted experiments to determine whether bullying occurs because of an individual's background and personality. In these experiments, the researchers put people with varying characteristics into the same situation and found that although the people were very different, they were all equally likely to display bullying behavior. This idea is reflected in the statement presented in **(D)**, making it the correct choice.

The main idea of the passage is that researchers conducted an experiment and found that personality is not a predictor for bullying. The fact that some researchers conducted an experiment about bullying and think they found an answer is not the main idea, because it fails to include the actual findings of the experiment. This means **(A)** is incorrect.

The main idea is not that any person can quickly become mean, which is a more general statement. It is the specific theory that one's personality does not determine whether or not a person is likely to become a bully. This means **(B)** is incorrect.

The team leader's statement was used in the passage to illustrate the kind of bullying behavior that the team leaders engaged in. Since this detail is just part of the description of the experiment, it does not summarize the main idea of the passage and thus **(C)** is incorrect.

4) A

Core Standard: **Integration of Knowledge**

The researchers were trying to determine whether certain backgrounds and personalities were more likely to produce bullying than others, or if personality was not a factor in bullying. If the researchers only selected people with the same physical characteristics as team leaders, all that the test would indicate is whether or not people with those particular characteristics were likely to bully. The experiment could not indicate whether personality in general is or is not a predictor for bullying, because the researchers would not be able to exclude outside factors that could skew the results. **(A)** is correct.

The researchers were not concerned with including every social demographic in the experiment. They merely needed to have enough diversity to determine whether personality and background are factors or not. This makes **(B)** incorrect.

The passage does not provide information to support choices **(C)** and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

5) B

Core Standard: **Craft and Structure**

disparage (*verb*): to speak of someone in a way that is abusive or demeaning.

In paragraph 4, we learn that in many cases when the team members made comments questioning the team leader's abilities, "the team leader immediately entered bully mode, disparaging ornery team members with remarks such as 'Shut up' and 'Just do what I say and keep your mouth shut, okay?'" Since remarks such as these are very rude and treat the listener as inferior to the speaker, we can infer that *disparaging* means speaking to someone in such a way that is abusive or demeaning. **(B)** is correct.

Making remarks is speaking, and speech does not *inflict physical harm*, so this rules out **(A)**.

Challenging is formally objecting to something, not necessarily in a way that is abusive or demeaning. The team leaders' objections are not formal, but rude, so **(C)** is incorrect.

Firmly replying is responding in a way that is strong and certain. The team leaders do not reply strongly and surely, they reply rudely, so **(D)** is incorrect.