

Name _____

Scientist Spotlight: Dr. Nina Jablonski

Please read this document carefully before you start! Your homework submission should be *at least* 250 words total, addressing the questions at the bottom of the page.



Scientist Spotlight: Dr. Nina Jablonski

Dr. Nina Jablonski is an anthropologist and paleo-biologist that studies human evolution at Penn State University. She was born and raised on a farm in upstate New York, where she developed a passion for digging up fossils in a nearby creek. As a child she spent a lot of time watching National Geographic, which cultivated an interest in human evolution and led her to pursue a biology degree at Bryn Mawr College. Despite earning a degree in molecular biology and having pressure to attend medical school from her parents, Dr. Jablonski developed a passion for evolution and anthropology and chose to pursue a PhD in biological anthropology at the University of Washington.

Dr. Jablonski research focuses on the evolution of primates and humans. One of her major research areas includes the evolution of human skin, pigmentation, and hair. Her research describes how skin color and hair can play a role in human self-identities, and the major role that these evolutionary processes play in history and society.



- 1) To learn more about the evolution of skin color, watch the following talk: [Nina Jablonski: Skin color is an illusion | TED Talk](#)
- 2) Browse through this journal article to appreciate the science of studying human skin color and race: [Skin color and race - Jablonski - American Journal of Physical Anthropology - Wiley Online Library](#)

Instructions for Written Assignment:

After reviewing these resources, write a 250 word or more reflection with your responses TO BE SUBMITTED TO Blackboard, which addresses ideas related to the following questions:

- 1) ***What was most interesting to you in reviewing these resources?***

After reviewing the TED talk "Skin Color is an Illusion" by Nina Jablonski, what I found the most interesting was that Charles Darwin, during his extensive expeditions around the world, concluded that the most significant difference among humans was their skin

color. However, he believed that climate and location had nothing to do with skin pigmentation. I'm aware of Charles Darwin and his theory of evolution, but I didn't know that he thought skin color was unrelated to climate and location. This was surprising to me, as it seems counterintuitive given what we now know about the relationship between environment and physical traits.

2) What did you learn from these resources about the evolution of skin color?

From the resources, I learned that the evolution of skin color is closely linked to geographical location. Specifically, people who live closer to the equator tend to have darker pigmentation due to the higher levels of ultraviolet radiation, while those closer to the poles tend to have lighter skin. This adaptation is interesting because it shows how human beings have evolved in response to their environment.

3) What do these resources tell you about the types of people that do science?

These resources tell me that scientists are truly life-long learners and are dedicated to uncovering the mysteries of the world. They possess a natural curiosity, are passionate about discovery, and aren't afraid to go somewhere unfamiliar to pursue knowledge.

4) What new questions do you have after learning about Dr. Jablonski's research and how human skin color evolved?

- One of the main questions I have after watching the TED talk is why Charles Darwin thought that skin color didn't correlate to location and climate?**
- How long did it take to research and compile findings on the evolution of human skin color?**
- What methods were/proved the most efficient when gathering results?**
- What was the most challenging aspect of Dr. Jablonski's research?**