Tabula Rasa #1

1 An English philosopher named John Locke postulated the tabula rasa (blank slate) theory, which states that people learn and acquire ideas from external forces, or the environment. Humans are born with an empty mind, having no knowledge whatsoever. People acquire ideas from the surrounding world, turning simple ideas into complex ones. This blank slate of mind starts off devoid of any knowledge, but then it is “written on” as a person lives and experiences. Therefore, a person has no identity until after birth.

2 The tabula rasa theory has strikingly similar characteristics of the nurture theory because the environment has the ability to shape an individual’s mind and experiences. Each new experience serves as a stage of growth, expanding possibilities and gathering new knowledge. Both nurture and tabula rasa view the environment and an individual’s surroundings as essential in forming human traits.

3 If this theory holds true, then how are instincts and intuitions explained? The critics of the blank slate theory state that the theory cannot hold true because then the mind would need to have the “ability to learn or apply knowledge.” An adjustment to this theory can be made so that the ability to acquire knowledge is innate. Other than that, the human mind is a blank slate.

4 Evolutionary psychologists believe that the human mind has been changed very little since the existence of humankind. The main assumption of evolutionary psychology is that the human mind is essentially a working computer, evolving and adapting by natural selection. Minds are pre-programmed with certain mental functions, such as perception and emotion. With this in mind, evolutionary psychologists invalidate John Locke’s tabula rasa theory.

Tabula Rasa #2

1 "Tabula rasa" means "erased tablet" in Latin. The 17th-century English philosopher John Locke used this term to describe the infant's mind at birth, observes David Myers in his book, "Psychology." Pondering the origins of human knowledge in his essay "Concerning Human Understanding," Locke supposed the infant's mind to be as white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas. Wondering how the mind came to be furnished, he answered: experience.

**Debat**

2 Psychologists have questioned the extent to which the [newborn's](http://www.ehow.com/about_6494289_tabula-rasa-psychology.html) mind is a tabula rasa as opposed to a notebook already teeming with instructions---instructions composed in the alphabet of the genes. Sometimes called the nature-versus-nurture debate, this clash of perspectives has inspired illuminating research, as noted in "Human Development" by Diane Papalia et al. It has also cast grave doubt on Locke's supposition.

**Heredity**

3 Weighing the influence of experience against that of genetic inheritance, scientists have studied the development of identical twins and fraternal twins. Identical twins issue from the same fertilized egg and therefore possess exactly the same genes, whereas fraternal twins arise from separate eggs, bearing no more genetic similarity than do ordinary siblings, observes Donna Wong et al. in "Maternal Child Nursing Care." Twin studies reveal startling similarities between identical twins---similarities that are not present between fraternal twins---thereby suggesting a strong hereditary basis for many psychological characteristics.

**Experience**

4 On the other hand, Locke's belief in the power of experience to shape the young mind finds evidentiary support too. Children from impoverished environments, if given stimulating infant care, score better on intelligence tests at age 12, notes Myers. Even considering differences in income and education, children who grow up in [homes](http://www.ehow.com/about_6494289_tabula-rasa-psychology.html) that include fathers are less likely to develop certain psychological and social pathologies than children without fathers, Myers points out.

**Conclusion**

5 The findings of psychology falsify the tabula rasa supposition. But if the newborn's mind is no blank tablet on which experience may write whatever it will, neither is it a detailed set of directives engraved in stone. What a person becomes depends on the interaction between heredity and experience. It may, moreover, reflect something else as well, something separate from either nature or nurture. As Myers observes, people influence their own development---by the choices they make.

**Responses to Tabula Rasa #1** Answer in complete sentences!!!

1) Write synonyms or synonymous phrases for each of the underlined words

a)

b)

c)

d)

e)

2) What is John Locke’s tabula rasa theory?

3) Is tabula rasa more similar to nature or nurture?

4) Paragraph 3 introduces a problem with the theory. Explain it.

5) What are two basic principles of evolutionary psychology?

6) How does evolutionary psychology invalidate tabula rasa?

7) Which is a stronger theory? Tabula rasa or evolutionary psychology? Explain in3-5 sentences.

**Responses Tabula Rasa #2** Answer in complete sentences!!!

1) Write and define each of the underlined words.

a)

b)

c)

d)

e)

f)

2) Draw a picture that defines tabula rasa.

3) Summarize paragraph 2.

4) What is implied about nurture in paragraph 4?

5) What is the thesis (main argument) of this article? Hint: it’s located in the conclusion.