

Is the MBTI Meaningless?

Part 1 Comprehension *Decide if each statement is true or false.*

1. T / F The Myers-Briggs test has 93 questions.
2. T / F Most professional psychologists believe in the test.
3. T / F Catherine Briggs and her daughter used Carl Jung's ideas to make the Myers-Briggs Test.
4. T / F In the test, people can't be put into two opposing categories.
5. T / F A study showed that people rarely got different results when they took the test multiple times.
6. T / F Most Fortune 100 companies use the test in their hiring process.
7. T / F Studies have shown that the test accurately predicts people's success in a job.
8. T / F The MBTI descriptions are always positive.
9. T / F The speaker compares the MBTI to IQ tests.
10. T / F The speaker believes that the MBTI is useful for strengthening relationships.

Part 2 Language *Replace the underlined expression with an expression from the video.*

1. CPP supposedly earns about \$20 million dollars from the 2 million people that take it and companies that give it every year.
2. The only problem is that this test is totally worthless.
3. They took Jung's types but slightly changed the language/vocabulary.
4. 50% of people who took the test twice got different results.
5. The test supports the idea of people fitting easily/correctly into categories.

Part 3 Discussion *Discuss these questions with your group.*

1. What was your opinion of the MBTI before and after watching this video? Did it change?
2. The people in the video state that the test is meaningless? What is their argument? Do you agree?
3. What is your MBTI? Do you think it is accurate? In what ways?
4. Have you taken the test more than once? Did you get the same result each time?
5. How does the MBTI categorize personalities? Can you explain the four main dimensions?
(e.g. introversion/extroversion, sensing/intuition, thinking/feeling, judging/perceiving)?
6. In what situations do you think knowing someone's MBTI type could be helpful? How?
(e.g. at work, in friendships, in romantic relationships)
7. The video compares the MBTI to things like astrology, fortune-telling, horoscopes, blood type. How is it similar to these things? How is it different?
8. Some people argue that using personality tests like the MBTI for employment or hiring decisions is unfair and unreliable. What's your stance on this issue, and why?

Part 4 Sentence Building Write sentences about the video clip using the words given. You can change the word form or add words, but you cannot change the word order.

E.g. MBTI / use / 93 / question / place / test-taker / one / sixteen / personality / type

The MBTI uses 93 questions to place test-takers into one of sixteen personality types.

1. CPP / report / earn / about / \$20 / million / dollar / year / test
2. there / lot / evidence / that / indicate / test / total / meaningless
3. test / create / 1940s / Catherine Briggs / and / daughter / Isabel Briggs-Myers
4. they / base / test / on / work / enormous / influential / psychologist / Carl Jung
5. however / they / change / Jung / terminology / and / design / test / so / people / could / only / assign / one / personality / type
6. in / one / study / 50% / people / who / take / test / again / five / week / later / get / different / result
7. nevertheless / 89 / out / 100 / Fortune / 100 / company / use / test / hiring / process
8. one / reason / test / be / so / popular / be / it / only / give / positive / result
9. other / reason / be / result / be / vague / enough / be / broad / applicable / anyone
10. video / conclude / test / be / only / useful / one / thing / entertainment

Script

Okay, so there's a 93-question test called the Myers-Briggs type indicator.

And the company that makes it, CPP, reportedly earns about \$20 million dollars from the 2 million people that take it and companies that administer it every year.

So, you take this test. You answer these 93 questions, and it tells you you're one of these 16 different personality types.

The only problem is that this test is totally meaningless.

Clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, anyone working to understand human behavior who doesn't have a stake in the financial success of this test doesn't actually even believe in it.

So, let's step back a little.

In 1921, Carl Jung, an enormously influential early psychologist, hypothesized that humans fall into a number of different types.

There are perceivers and judgers. People who prefer sensing over intuition. There are thinkers and there are feelers.

But even at the time he realized that most people don't fit neatly into one category or another.

He wrote, "Every individual is an exception to the rule."

So then, a few decades later, a pair of Americans who had no formal training in psychology, Catherine Briggs and her daughter Isabel Briggs-Myers, decided to take these ideas and turn them into what they called a type-indicator.

Around 1945, they first began testing it. They took Jung's types but slightly altered the terminology and changed it so that every single person was assigned only one possibility or another. You couldn't be a little bit of an extrovert or a little bit of an introvert. But people don't actually work that way, so the results simply aren't reliable.

One study found that as much as 50% of people who took the test twice arrived at different results even though it was only 5 weeks later.

And a reported 89 of the Fortune 100 companies and 200 federal agencies use the test to separate employees and potential hires into 'types' and assign them appropriate training programs and responsibilities. But multiple studies have shown the test totally fails to predict people's success in various jobs.

"Wait! Why is the Myers Briggs so popular?"

Well, it really only gives positive results, and it plays into the idea of people fitting neatly into categories. People love categories.

You can't take the test and be told you're selfish or lazy or mean. The results are always positive.

Because the descriptions are vague, they're hard to argue with. This is called the Forer Effect, and is a technique long used by purveyors of astrology, fortune-telling, and other sorts of pseudoscience to persuade people they have accurate information about them.

There's something really attractive about assigning ourselves a personality. This is why horoscopes are so popular. But the truth is that human personalities are really complicated.

You know, there's absolutely nothing wrong with taking the test as a fun activity. The Myers-Briggs is useful for one thing: entertainment.

Answers

Part 1

1. ☒ T / ☐ F The Myers-Briggs test has 93 questions.
2. ☐ T / ☒ F Most professional psychologists believe in the test.
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4. ☒ T / ☐ F In the test, people can't be put into two opposing categories.
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6. ☒ T / ☐ F Most Fortune 100 companies use the test in their hiring process.
7. ☐ T / ☒ F Studies have shown that the test accurately predicts people's success in a job.
8. ☒ T / ☐ F The MBTI descriptions are always positive.
9. ☐ T / ☒ F The speaker compares the MBTI to IQ tests.
10. ☐ T / ☒ F The speaker believes that the MBTI is useful for strengthening relationships.

Part 2

1. CPP **reportedly** earns about \$20 million dollars from the 2 million people that take it and companies that **administer** it every year.
2. The only problem is that this test is totally **meaningless**.
3. They took Jung's types but slightly **altered** the **terminology**.
4. 50% of people who took the test twice **arrived at** different results
5. The test **plays into** the idea of people fitting **neatly** into categories.

Part 4

1. CPP reportedly earns about \$20 million dollars [a/per] year [from/off/off of] the test.
2. There is a lot of evidence that indicates the test is totally meaningless.
3. The test was created in the 1940s by Catherine Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs-Myers.
4. They based the test on the work of the enormously influential psychologist Carl Jung.
5. However, they changed Jung's terminology and designed the test so (that) people could only be assigned one personality type.
6. In one study, 50% of people who took the test again five weeks later got a different result.
7. Nevertheless, 89 out of 100 Fortune 100 companies use the test in their hiring process.
8. One reason (that) the test is so popular is (that) it only gives positive results.
9. Another reason is (that) the results are vague enough to be broadly applicable to anyone.
10. The video concludes (that) the test is only useful for one thing: entertainment.