

Short Biographies of Eminent People

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For each of the following people, explain how you would consider them to be intelligent using Gardner's eight intelligences. You may find that some of these people display more than one type.

Michael Jordan, former basketball player, Chicago Bulls

The greatest player in the history of the National Basketball Association, Michael Jordan possessed an intellectual understanding of the game of basketball. In addition to his jumping, shooting, running, passing, and guarding skills, Jordan had an uncanny ability to sense what other players would do before they did it, and adjust accordingly, even after leaving the ground. His predictions were based on his understanding of other players' skills, tendencies, and personalities. Jordan could also visualize the geometry of the game, anticipating with great accuracy where a ball would bounce, how high he would have to jump, and how fast other players could move into position. Jordan's long career required that he re-create himself as his physical abilities changed with age. As an older player, he couldn't jump as high, so he developed a mid-range jump shot to get to the basket past younger players.

Mohandas Gandhi, political and religious leader in India

Mohandas Gandhi's life was guided by his search for truth. He believed one could find truth only through tolerance and concern for others. As a teacher, he taught others to master fear and to practice nonviolent solutions to problems. Gandhi developed a method of direct social action based on nonviolence and truth that reflected his belief that how one behaves is more important than what one achieves. Gandhi's teachings enjoyed widespread following, ultimately leading to India's independence from Great Britain and the beginning of social change.

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Charles Darwin, naturalist and writer

After Charles Darwin received a bachelor's degree in theology from Cambridge University, he studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh. In 1836 he was a naturalist aboard the H.M.S. Beagle, an English science vessel, that traveled throughout the world. On that expedition, Darwin found fossils of extinct animals that closely resembled modern species. On the Galápagos Islands in the Pacific Ocean, he discovered variations among plants and animals of the same general type. Back in England studying his specimens, Darwin noted each organism's inherited combination of traits. From this work, he developed his theory of evolution and the idea of natural selection as a way to explain why some species disappeared and others changed and survived.

Oprah Winfrey, TV talk show host, actor, producer, educator, philanthropist

Oprah Winfrey is best known as host and producer of her own show, seen by 22 million viewers a week in the United States and aired in 113 countries. She has won prestigious awards in broadcasting, as well as the National Book Foundation's 50th Anniversary Gold Medal for her influential contribution to reading and books through her Oprah Book Club. Viewers trust Oprah's judgment and suggestions, appreciate the skill with which she engages others in discussion, and admire her forthright candor about her own life and struggles.