

THE GENETIC SAUCE CODE – ‘BLENDER’S INSTRUCTIONS’

The entire blender minus the base

What can be observed, is a jug with a sieve in it. There are green pieces of card stuck on the jug, and red pieces stuck on the sieve. Written on these pieces of card, are traits. The green ones being the desirable ones, and the red ones being the traits that are literally being filtered out. I chose red and green specifically, to emulate the role that those two colours play within the film ‘Gattaca’.

I deliberately chose to hand write on the cards. This is because some of the traits are very open to interpretation, such as ‘athletic’ – its definition probably varies from person to person. I wanted to demonstrate the ‘hand crafted’ aspect of genetic editing. Similarly, the over the top use of tape was to demonstrate that genetic editing has reached the stage where scientists can literally ‘stick’ a bit of DNA into an embryo.

I further developed the idea of ‘sticking’ genes inside an embryo, by placing broken egg shells into the sieve, and hanging a white porcelain egg inside the jug. The whiteness of the egg symbolises purity, all the unwanted bits have been filtered out. The porcelain aspect of it symbolises the artificial nature of the egg – while it’s still ‘egg shaped’, thus baring resemblance to the original egg, it’s no longer natural.

The ‘contents’ of the jug

There are 16 pieces of green card, 6 of these are generic desirable traits in a male (denoted by PP3 in the bottom right), 6 of these are occupational traits specific to a doctor (denoted by D), and 4 of these are custom traits (denoted by C). There is obviously limited space, so I chose these specific traits to represent a broader range of traits. As part of the custom traits, I included a couple ‘unusual’ traits, tongue roller and shoe size. These might seem like unimportant characteristics, but I wanted to demonstrate just how powerful and customisable genetic editing can be. As part of the PP3 traits, you will notice that there is a + sign next to the traits, I will go into this further down.

The handle of the jug

There are 7 individual pieces of blue tape on the handle, each with a letter on it – altogether spelling the word ‘science’. Symbolically, the colour blue is associated with truth and sadness. I thought this would be a perfect colour to use, as there is a certain bitter sweet truth associated with genetic editing – while we can achieve amazing things with it, the potential consequences of it are too great to ignore. The overall idea of this, however, is that science is the one with a ‘handle’ on things, it is the scientists who control the process.

The ‘contents’ of the sieve

There are 8 pieces of red card, each denoting a trait or characteristic that has been filtered out per the parents’ demands. I’ve included some highly controversial and sensitive traits, such as ‘Dark skin’, ‘LGBTQA+’ and ‘Religious’, to further demonstrate the controversy surrounding genetic editing, as many people could take offence by others wishing to specifically exclude some traits. To build upon the customisability point I addressed earlier, I’ve also included ‘hairy feet’.

The handle of the sieve

In contrast to the handle of the jug, this handle symbolises that the parents are in control of what traits their baby gets and doesn’t get, as they are the ones in control of the sieve. The lowest layer surrounding the handle is coloured paper, on top of this, on the lower half of the handle, is black tape.

The coloured paper symbolises individuality and variety, while the black tape covering the coloured paper is a metaphor for the embryo losing its variety after having gone through this process. There are 2 pieces of white tape on the black tape, one for mum and for dad. I chose white to show that both the mum and the dad have been through this process themselves – they were also white porcelain eggs at one point. Regardless of this, because of genetic recombination, the offspring of the parents will still come out with individual characteristics, as symbolised by the coloured paper. However, because they are also wanting a ‘designer baby’ the potential for a ‘unique’ baby is lost.

The base

There is a piece of card set to look like the tag of an item of clothing. The idea behind this card is to signify the potential commercial nature of this technology. The traits are selected from ‘packages’, with premium packages being an option (+ sign previously seen). The premium option is to demonstrate that even genetic editing will be deliberately limited to make more money.

The wire and plug

The plug is covered in red tape, to symbolise that it is the idiomatic ‘red tape’ that is stopping this technology, however the pins are left uncovered to show that it is possible to ‘power’ this technology regardless of red tape, which addresses the issue of ‘rogue labs’ doing their own experiments. The wire is covered in a specific colouring pattern commonly associated with the ‘earth’ wire in a plug. The wire symbolises people. The red tape blocks power from running into the wire, i.e. not giving this power to the people, instead, keeping them ‘down to earth’.