

Ink Blot Test

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An **ink blot test** is a personality test that involves the evaluation of a subject's response to ambiguous ink blots. This test was published in 1921 by Swiss psychiatrist Hermann Rorschach. The interpretation of people's responses to the Rorschach Inkblot Test was originally based on psychoanalytical theory but investigators have used it in an empirical fashion. When this test is used empirically, the quality of the responses is related to the measurements of personality.

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s the ink blot test was popular among clinical psychologists but quickly lost popularity as critics claimed it to be too subjective. Variations of the ink blot test have since been developed such as the Holtzman Inkblot Test and the Somatic Inkblot Series.

An ink blot test is a general category of projective tests. In projective tests, participants' interpretations of ambiguous stimuli are used to analyze inner thoughts, feelings, and personality traits. In the 19th

century, ink blots were used for a game called "Blotto". There are also tests that were developed to be used in clinical, organizational, and human resource departments. These projective tests are often organized in a taxonomy using the categories: Association, Construction, Completion, Arrangement, and Expression.

Herman Rorschach created the first systematic ink blot test of its kind in the early 1920s that interpreted personality characteristics of subjects taking the test. His test was widely popular but also critiqued. After his death, multiple other Ink Blot tests were formed. Some of these new tests include: The Howard Ink Blot Test, Holtzman inkblot technique, and Rorschach II Ink Blot Test.

Under the guidance of Rorschach, Hans Behn-Eschenburg developed 10 similarly designed inkblots to Rorschach's in 1920. Both men died before being able to develop a guide as how to measure, score, and diagnose off of either versions of the ink blot tests

Ink blots inspired artists such as Leonardo da Vinci and Victor Hugo in the 15th and 19th centuries. Alfred Binet also suggested using ink blots to assess visual imagination. Although the Rorschach test was widely used, its popularity died down because controversy over the validity of the test measurements. Hermann Rorschach never intended for the ink blot to be a sole assessment of personality, however some psychologists may have tried to use it as such. Many people thought the measurement of responses were too subjective which led psychologists to come up with a better way of measuring responses after Rorschach's death. For example, Holtzman inkblot technique was seen as less controversial, because the developers took previous criticism into consideration and aimed to make their test better. Another variation of the Rorschach test is the Howard Ink Blot Test. This test was aimed at group measurements of personality rather than an individual measurement. While these tests were seen to have improved validity of ink blot tests, psychologists are still skeptical which lead to the fallout of these projective tests.

Rorschach Test

The **Rorschach test** is a projective psychological test in which subjects' perceptions of inkblots are recorded and then analyzed using psychological interpretation, complex algorithms, or both. Some psychologists use this test to examine a person's personality characteristics and emotional functioning. It has been employed to detect underlying thought disorder, especially in cases where patients are reluctant to describe their thinking processes openly. The test is named after its creator, Swiss psychologist Hermann Rorschach. The Rorschach can be thought of as a psychometric examination of pareidolia, the active pattern of perceiving objects, shapes, or scenery as meaningful things to the observer's experience, the most common being faces or other patterns of forms that are not present at the time of the observation. In the 1960s, the Rorschach was the most widely used projective test.

Although the Exner Scoring System (developed since the 1960s) claims to have addressed and often refuted many criticisms of the original testing system with an extensive body of research,^[7] some researchers continue to raise questions about the method. The areas of dispute include the objectivity of testers, inter-rater reliability, the verifiability and general validity of the test, bias of the test's pathology scales towards greater numbers of responses, the limited number of psychological conditions which it accurately diagnoses, the inability to replicate the test's norms, its use in court-ordered evaluations, and the proliferation of the ten inkblot images, potentially invalidating the test for those who have been exposed to them.

The use of interpreting "ambiguous designs" to assess an individual's personality is an idea that goes back to Leonardo da Vinci and Botticelli. Interpretation of inkblots was central to a game, *Gobolinks*, from the late 19th century. The Rorschach test, however, was the first systematic approach of this kind.

After studying 300 mental patients and 100 control subjects, in 1921 Hermann Rorschach wrote his book *Psychodiagnostik*, which was to form the basis of the inkblot test. After experimenting with several hundred inkblots which he drew himself, he selected a set of ten for their diagnostic value. Although he had served as Vice President of the Swiss Psychoanalytic Society, Rorschach had difficulty in publishing the book and it attracted little attention when it first appeared. Rorschach died the following year.

It has been suggested that Rorschach's use of inkblots may have been influenced by German doctor Justinus Kerner who, in 1857, had published a popular book of poems, each of which was inspired by an accidental inkblot. French psychologist Alfred Binet had also experimented with inkblots as a creativity test, and, after the turn of the century, psychological experiments where inkblots were utilized multiplied, with aims such as studying imagination and consciousness.

In 1927, the newly founded Hans Huber publishing house purchased Rorschach's book *Psychodiagnostik* from the inventory of Ernst Bircher. Huber remains the publisher of the test and related book, with Rorschach a registered trademark of Swiss publisher Verlag Hans Huber, Hogrefe AG. The work has been described as "a densely written piece couched in dry, scientific terminology".

After Rorschach's death, the original test scoring system was improved by Samuel Beck, Bruno Klopfer and others. John E. Exner summarized some of these later developments in the *comprehensive system*, at the same time trying to make the scoring more statistically rigorous. Some systems are based on the psychoanalytic concept of object relations. The Exner system remains very popular in the United States, while in Europe other methods sometimes dominate, such as that described in the textbook by Ewald Bohm [de], which is closer to the original Rorschach system and rooted more deeply in the original psychoanalysis principles.

Rorschach never intended the inkblots to be used as a general personality test, but developed them as a tool for the diagnosis

of schizophrenia. It was not until 1939 that the test was used as a projective test of personality, a use of which Rorschach had always been skeptical. Interviewed in 2012 for a BBC Radio 4 documentary, Rita Signer, curator of the Rorschach Archives in Bern, Switzerland, suggested that the blots selected by Rorschach were not random, but rather were carefully chosen to be as ambiguous and "conflicted" as possible.