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## Sneakers on the Brain

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### Before Reading Poll

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What do you think about this statement?

**There are sneakers that cost more than the latest iPhone.**

Agree

Disagree

Explain why you voted the way you did.

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## Article

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**RED BANK, New Jersey** (Achieve3000, March 17, 2021). For \$615,000 you could buy the very latest, greatest version of the iPhone for 600 of your closest friends. Alternatively, you could purchase more than a thousand PlayStation 5 consoles or pick up a new yacht or two. But in August of 2020, one shopper made a different choice, shelling out \$615,000 for a single pair of sneakers.

These were no ordinary kicks, of course. They were Nike Air Jordan 1s that once belonged to Michael Jordan himself. The basketball superstar was wearing them when he slam-dunked a ball with so much force that he shattered the backboard. The left shoe has a shard of glass in its sole to prove it.

The auction house that sold these high-priced high tops didn't divulge the buyer's name. But that person probably belongs to the legion of footwear fanatics known as sneakerheads. Drawn by the shoes' athletic appeal and cultural clout, these enthusiasts collect and trade them as a hobby. Some even make a career of it. You could say they've got sneakers on the brain.

Sneakerhead culture isn't new. It kicked off in the 1980s with the launch of the Air Jordan brand in 1985 as its driving force. Michael Jordan was a rookie then, but his high-flying skills had already earned him the nickname Air Jordan. His popularity with fans took off, and so did sales of the shoes bearing his name. Around this time, sneakers stepped off the court and onto the street, becoming an important part of casual fashion. They were also a focal point for collectors, especially in hip-hop culture. In the 1986 Run-DMC hit "My Adidas," for example, a group member raps about owning 50 pairs of his favorite brand.

In the decades that followed, devotees sometimes went to extremes to buy sneakers that were uncommonly cool, exceptionally rare, or both. In 2005, when Nike produced only 150 pairs of the Pigeon Dunk, which had New York City's unofficial avian mascot embroidered on the heel, people camped outside a store in Manhattan for days during a *snowstorm* to score a pair.

Today, sneakerhead culture is alive and kicking. It appeals to trendsetting teens and kids, adult fans of street fashion, and big-time collectors. Three sisters who go by the name "Chicks with Kicks" own what may be the world's largest collection. It consists of more than 6,000 pairs...and counting. It would take the trio more than five years to wear all those shoes, but they prefer not to tread on their treasures. They keep them in an air-conditioned, humidity-free storage unit.

The business of buying and selling sneakers is booming. It's fueled in part by the Internet and social media. Apps help shoppers locate hard-to-find shoes, whether they're up-and-coming releases, current models that are sold out in stores, or old classics. Know someone still pining for Pigeon Dunks? An authentic, vintage pair that retailed for \$200 in 2005 can now be picked up on a resale site. That is, if the buyer has about \$30,000 to spend.

But not all sneakerhead commerce happens online. Events like Sneaker Con take place in cities around the world. Thousands of enthusiasts get together to buy, sell, and swap sneakers. Attendees can have rare or valuable purchases authenticated by experts, who, for example, can analyze whether or not extravagantly priced Yeezys are legit or counterfeit.

These conventions are also a great place for foot fashionistas to show off their style. While a few sneakerheads keep their collections carefully stashed away, many don't just have sneakers on the *brain*. They like to pull those prized possessions out of their mint condition boxes and parade them on their *feet*!



Photo credit: Nikki van Toorn/Sneakerness International  
*Sneaker fans examine some of the sneakers on display at the Sneakerness Convention. Events like this take place in cities around the world where thousands of sneaker seekers get together to buy, sell, and swap shoes.*

**Dictionary**

**authenticate** (*verb*) to make sure that something is genuine

**divulge** (*verb*) to give out information

**focal point** (*noun*) center of activity or attention

**legit** (*adjective*) true or reasonable

**vintage** (*adjective*) of special interest or value because it is from a time in the past

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## Activity

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### PART 1

#### Question 1

Which of these is **most** important to include in a summary of this Article?

- Ⓐ Sneakers became an important part of casual fashion in hip-hop culture in the 1980s as evidenced by the Run-DMC hit that includes a rap about owning 50 pairs of Adidas sneakers.
- Ⓑ Sneakerheads are a group of footwear fanatics who have created a culture that centers around buying, selling, and trading rare and valuable sneakers that they can show off or collect.
- Ⓒ Sneakerheads can use apps to locate hard-to-find shoes such as the Pigeon Dunks, which had people camping outside a Nike store in Manhattan for days during a snowstorm in 2005.
- Ⓓ Sneakers can attract big-time collectors like the three sisters who own one of the world's largest sneaker collections but keep them stored in an air-conditioned, humidity-free storage unit.

#### Question 2

Read the following passage from the Article:

**Three sisters who go by the name "Chicks with Kicks" own what may be the world's largest collection [of sneakers].... It would take the trio more than five years to wear all those shoes, but they prefer not to tread on their treasures. They keep them in an air-conditioned, humidity-free storage unit.**

What is one inference the reader can make from this passage?

- Ⓐ The three sisters don't wear shoes from their collection because they want to keep their shoes in peak condition.
- Ⓑ The three sisters don't wear shoes from their collection because they don't like how the shoes feel on their feet.
- Ⓒ The three sisters don't wear shoes from their collection because it would be hard to return them to storage.
- Ⓓ The three sisters don't wear shoes from their collection because it would take too long to wear every pair.

#### Question 3

Suppose Elijah wants to find out about Michael Jordan. He would find **most** of his information \_\_\_\_\_.

- Ⓐ on a spreadsheet of popular court shoes
- Ⓑ in a book about basketball superstars
- Ⓒ on a website for sneaker auctions
- Ⓓ in a newspaper article about professional sports

#### Question 4

Which is the closest **synonym** for the word *divulge*?

- (A) amend
- (B) reveal
- (C) corrupt
- (D) omit

Question 5

Which of these statements from the Article is an opinion?

- (A) They were Nike Air Jordan 1s that once belonged to Michael Jordan himself.
- (B) These conventions are also a great place for foot fashionistas to show off their style.
- (C) They keep them in an air-conditioned, humidity-free storage unit.
- (D) Thousands of enthusiasts get together to buy, sell, and swap sneakers.

Question 6

Which question is **not** answered by the Article?

- (A) Where can sneakerheads go to have rare or valuable shoe purchases authenticated by experts?
- (B) Where do the sisters who go by "Chicks with Kicks" keep their collection of 6,000 sneakers?
- (C) Who bought a pair of Nike Air Jordan 1s that once belonged to Michael Jordan for \$615,000?
- (D) Who slam-dunked a basketball with so much force that the backboard shattered into pieces?

Question 7

The Article states:

**Attendees can have rare or valuable purchases authenticated by experts, who, for example, can analyze whether or not *extravagantly* priced Yeezys are legit or counterfeit.**

Which is the closest **antonym** for the word *extravagantly*?

- (A) professionally
- (B) favorably
- (C) moderately
- (D) notably

Question 8

According to the Article, why did sneakerheads camp out for days during a snowstorm?

- Ⓐ They were waiting to attend the auction where the Air Jordan 1s that Michael Jordan wore were being sold.
- Ⓑ They were waiting to see the group Run-DMC give a live performance of their 1986 hit "My Adidas."
- Ⓒ They were trying to get one of the 150 pairs of Pigeon Dunk sneakers that Nike was selling at a store in Manhattan.
- Ⓓ They were trying to get a legit pair of extravagantly priced Yeezys that were being sold at a Sneaker Con event.

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## After Reading Poll

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Now that you have read the article, indicate whether you agree or disagree with this statement.

**There are sneakers that cost more than the latest iPhone.**

Agree

Disagree

Explain why you voted the way you did. Then read and respond to what others have to say.

Sorry, comments are not available at this time. Please try again later.

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## Thought Question

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What evidence can you find to support the idea that the sneakerhead culture is alive and kicking?

## Poll Results

OPINION STATEMENT: **There are sneakers that cost more than the latest iPhone.**

BEFORE READING	AFTER READING
<b>HOW YOU VOTED</b>	
Agree	Agree
Disagree	Disagree

WORLDWIDE RESULTS					
Agree		86%	Agree		95%
Disagree		14%	Disagree		5%

**11%** changed their opinion after reading the article.

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## Stretch Article

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**RED BANK, New Jersey** (Achieve3000, March 17, 2021). For \$615,000 you could buy the very latest, greatest version of the iPhone for 600 of your closest friends. Alternatively, you could purchase more than a thousand PlayStation 5 consoles or pick up a new yacht or two. But in August of 2020, one shopper made a different choice, shelling out \$615,000 for a single pair of sneakers.

These were no ordinary kicks, of course. They were Nike Air Jordan 1s that once belonged to Michael Jordan himself. The basketball superstar was wearing them when he slam-dunked a ball with so much force that he shattered the backboard. The left shoe has a shard of glass in its sole to prove it.

The auction house that sold these high-priced high tops didn't divulge the buyer's name, but that person probably belongs to the legion of footwear fanatics known as sneakerheads. Drawn by the shoes' athletic allure and cultural clout, these enthusiasts collect and trade them as a hobby. Some even make a career of it. You could say they've got sneakers on the brain.

Sneakerhead culture isn't new. In fact, it kicked off in the 1980s. According to insiders, the launch of the Air Jordan brand in 1985 was the main stimulus. Michael Jordan was still a rookie then, but his high-flying skills had already earned him the nickname Air Jordan. His popularity with fans took off, and so did sales of the shoes bearing his name. Around this time, sneakers stepped off the court and onto the street, becoming an important part of casual fashion and a focal point for collectors, especially in hip-hop culture. In the 1986 hit "My Adidas," for example, a member of the group Run-DMC raps about owning 50 pairs of his favorite brand.

In the decades that followed, devotees sometimes went to extremes to buy sneakers that were uncommonly cool, exceptionally rare, or both. In 2005, when Nike produced only 150 pairs of the Pigeon Dunk, which had New York City's unofficial avian mascot embroidered on the heel, people camped outside a store in Manhattan for days during a *snowstorm* to score a pair.

Today, sneakerhead culture is alive and kicking. It appeals to trendsetting teens and kids, adult fans of street fashion, and big-time collectors. Three sisters who go by the name "Chicks with Kicks" own what may be the world's largest collection, consisting of more than 6,000 pairs...and counting. If they each sported a different pair every day, it would take the trio more than five years to wear all those shoes. But they prefer not to tread on their treasures, keeping them in an air-conditioned, humidity-free storage unit.

The business of buying and selling sneakers is booming, fueled in part by the Internet and social media. Apps help shoppers locate hard-to-find shoes, whether they're up-and-coming releases, current models that are sold out in stores, or old classics. Know someone still pining for Pigeon Dunks? An authentic, vintage pair, which retailed for \$200 in 2005, can now be picked up on a resale site, provided the buyer has about \$30,000 to spend.

But not all sneakerhead commerce happens online. At events like Sneaker Con, which takes place in cities around the world, thousands of enthusiasts get together to buy, sell, and swap sneakers. Attendees can have rare or valuable purchases authenticated by experts, who, for example, can scrutinize whether or not a pair of extravagantly priced Yeezys are legit or counterfeit.

These conventions are also a great place for foot fashionistas to show off their style. While a few sneakerheads keep their collections carefully stashed away, many don't just have sneakers on the *brain*. They like to pull those prized possessions out of their mint condition boxes and parade them on their *feet*!



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*Sneaker fans examine some of the sneakers on display at the Sneakerness Convention. Events like this take place in cities around the world where thousands of sneaker seekers get together to buy, sell, and swap shoes.*

**Dictionary**

**allure** (*noun*) appeal

**focal point** (*noun*) center of activity or attention

**scrutinize** (*verb*) to look closely at something

**vintage** (*adjective*) of special interest or value because it is from a time in the past

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## Stretch Activity

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### PART 1

#### Question 1

Which of these is **most** important to include in a summary of this Article?

- Ⓐ Sneakerheads can use apps to locate hard-to-find shoes such as the Pigeon Dunks, which had people camping outside a Nike store in Manhattan for days during a snowstorm in 2005.
- Ⓑ Sneakers became an important part of casual fashion in hip-hop culture in the 1980s as evidenced by the Run-DMC hit that includes a rap about owning 50 pairs of Adidas sneakers.
- Ⓒ Sneakers can attract big-time collectors like the three sisters who own one of the world's largest sneaker collections but keep them stored in an air-conditioned, humidity-free storage unit.
- Ⓓ Sneakerheads are a group of footwear fanatics who have created a culture that centers around buying, selling, and trading rare and valuable sneakers that they can show off or collect.

#### Question 2

Read the following passage from the Article:

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What is one inference the reader can make from this passage?

- Ⓐ The three sisters don't wear shoes from their collection because they don't like how the shoes feel on their feet.
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- Ⓒ on a spreadsheet of popular court shoes
- Ⓓ in a book about basketball superstars

#### Question 4

Which is the closest **antonym** for the word *vintage*?

- (A) conventional
- (B) noteworthy
- (C) random
- (D) contemporary

Question 5

Which of these statements from the Article is an opinion?

- (A) But in August of 2020, one shopper made a different choice, shelling out \$615,000 for a single pair of sneakers.
- (B) But not all sneakerhead commerce happens online.
- (C) Three sisters who go by the name "Chicks with Kicks" own what may be the world's largest collection, consisting of more than 6,000 pairs...and counting.
- (D) These conventions are also a great place for foot fashionistas to show off their style.

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Question 7

The Article states:

**Sneakerhead culture isn't new. In fact, it kicked off in the 1980s. According to insiders, the launch of the Air Jordan brand in 1985 was the main *stimulus*.**

Which is the closest **synonym** for the word *stimulus*?

- (A) investment
- (B) endorsement
- (C) propellant
- (D) hindrance

Question 8

According to the Article, why did sneakerheads camp out for days during a snowstorm?

- Ⓐ They were trying to get one of the 150 pairs of Pigeon Dunk sneakers that Nike was selling at a store in Manhattan.
- Ⓑ They were waiting to attend the auction where the Air Jordan 1s that Michael Jordan wore were being sold.
- Ⓒ They were trying to get a legitimate pair of extravagantly priced Yeezys that were being sold at a Sneaker Con event.
- Ⓓ They were waiting to see the group Run-DMC give a live performance of their 1986 hit "My Adidas."