



American Expression E2004 Blue blood

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"Blue blood" is a colloquial expression often used to describe individuals who come from noble or aristocratic families. The term has historical roots and is closely associated with the idea that the blood of the upper class appears blue when seen through their fair and pale skin, in contrast to the reddish or purple hue of the veins in those with darker or more tanned complexions.

The concept of "blue blood" has its origins in medieval Europe, particularly in Spain. During this time, the Spanish aristocracy, which included royalty and nobility, often boasted of their light skin as a mark of their social status. This perception of pale skin being a sign of privilege and nobility may have been influenced by the fact that those in the upper class tended to have less exposure to the sun, as outdoor labor was typically associated with the lower classes.

The term "blue blood" itself likely comes from the Spanish phrase "sangre azul." It is said that the Spanish nobility, particularly the Castilian nobles, emphasized their pure European ancestry and believed it set them apart from the Moors and other groups in the Iberian Peninsula who had darker skin. This emphasis on purity and lineage was often tied to their claim to rule over others.

Over time, the idea of "blue blood" expanded beyond Spain and became a symbol of nobility in various European countries. It was associated with the privileges, social hierarchy, and inherent superiority attributed to those of noble birth. This concept played a significant role in the rigid class systems of many European societies, where the aristocracy held power and wealth while the commoners had limited opportunities.

It's important to note that the idea of "blue blood" is a social construct and not grounded in scientific fact. Blood appears red due to the presence of hemoglobin, which carries oxygen through the circulatory system. The color of one's blood is not determined by their social status or ancestry but rather by physiological factors.

In modern times, the use of the term "blue blood" has evolved. While it still refers to those with noble or aristocratic lineage to some extent, it is often used more figuratively. People may use it to describe individuals who come from privileged backgrounds or who display an air of entitlement. Additionally, the term can be employed in a tongue-in-cheek or ironic manner to comment on the persistence of class distinctions in society.

In summary, "blue blood" is a historical and cultural concept that originally referred to the perceived paleness of the skin in European nobility. It symbolized their claims to purity and privilege, but it is now used more broadly to describe those from privileged backgrounds or as a commentary on class distinctions. It's important to recognize that the literal meaning of "blue blood" has no scientific basis and is purely a social construct.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. How has the concept of "blue blood" evolved over time, and in what ways does it continue to influence society's perceptions of privilege and nobility today?
  2. Can you provide examples of historical figures or families who were associated with "blue blood," and how did this status affect their lives and roles in society?
  3. In what cultures or societies outside of Europe has the idea of "blue blood" been present, and how does it manifest in their respective contexts?
  4. What are some modern-day implications of the concept of "blue blood" in terms of class distinctions, social hierarchies, and the perception of privilege?
  5. How has the understanding of human genetics and ancestry challenged or debunked the notion of "blue blood" and its association with noble lineage?
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