



## **Skin Colour - Why do people have different coloured skin?**

### **Fact**

- The colour of a human's skin depends on how much melanin there is in their skin.
- Melanin is the pigment that gives your skin its colour.
- The more melanin you have in your skin the darker it is and the less melanin the lighter it is.
- Melanin also helps protect your skin from the sun
- People who's ancestors lived in very hot places, close to the equator where there was a lot of strong sunlight will have more melanin in their skin so they will have dark skin.
- People who's ancestors lived in cold places, far away from the equator where there was not a lot of strong sunlight will have less melanin in their skin so they will have light skin.

### **Do you know**

- The equator is the name given to the invisible line that runs around the middle of the earth between the North and South Poles
- The sun's rays fall directly on the equator so the sunlight is stronger.
- Nearer the Poles the sun's rays fall on the earth at an angle so the sunlight isn't as strong.
- Although melanin helps protect your skin from the sun even dark skinned people need to use sun block to protect themselves from the UV rays in the sunlight
- Some people have little or no melanin in their skin and their skin and hair is completely white – they're called albinos.

### **Experiments you can do**

How much melanin do you have in your skin?

Compare your skin to the skin of members of your family and to your friends in your classroom. Do you have a lot of melanin and have dark skin or do you have less melanin and have fair skin.

Find out where the ancestors of each of your friends come from and see how that has affected the colour of their skin.

### **Other Investigations**

Find the equator on a globe and look at all the countries near the equator. Think about the people that live in those countries and what those countries are like. Would there be a lot of rain and cold temperatures or even snow in those countries? What would the weather be like and how does that affect the skin of the people living there?

### **Jokes**