The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks – Book Questions Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Thanks to the Helena Education Foundation for funding this project.

The Prologue will give you an overview of the author and the story behind the book.

**PART 1 - Chapter 1 – The Exam (pg. 13-17)**

1. In Chapter 1, the author starts painting a picture of the life of Henrietta Lacks. What important information about Henrietta’s life did you learn in Chapter 1?
2. Describe how John Hopkin’s hospital in 1950 was different from hospitals today.



1. What did the doctor find in Henrietta’s exam?

**Chapter 2 – Clover (pg. 18-26)**

1. Henrietta’s mother died in 1924 when she was four years old? Where did Henrietta go to live?
2. At what age did Henrietta have her first child? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Who was the father?

**Chapter 3 – Diagnosis and Treatment (pg. 27-33)**

1. TeLinde was a doctor at Hopkins who researched cervical cancer. Who did he often use as research subjects?
2. What scientist was trying to grow “immortal human cells” and John Hopkins? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. How did doctors treat Henrietta’s cancer?

**Chapter 4 – The Birth of HeLa (pg. 34-41)**

1. What “weird” ingredients were put in the tissue culture liquid (medium) to help the cells grow?
2. In 1951, what was the biggest problem facing tissue culture?
3. What does HeLa stand for?
4. How long did it take HeLa cells to double?

**Chapter 5 – “Blackness Be Spreading All Inside” (pg. 42-48)**

1. After reading through Chapter 5, identify at least 2-3 issues in Henrietta’s medical care that have helped shape modern medicine.

**Chapter 6 – “Lady’s on the Phone” (pg. 49-55)**

1. What barriers (at least 3) did the author of this book (Rebecca Skloot) face in interviewing the Lacks family? Be sure to include information about the Tuskegee syphilis study as an example.

**Chapter 7 The Death and Life Of Cell Culture (pg. 56-62)**

1. Explain, using Carrel as an example, why scientific experiments must be peer reviewed and be able to be replicated.

**Chapter 8 – A Miserable Specimen (pg. 63-66) -** This chapter details how Henrietta’s health deteriorated over a month. I didn’t include questions because some of you may find it difficult to read if you have known someone with cancer.

**Chapter 9 – Turner Station (pg. 67-76)**

1. What information did Rebecca discover in Turner’s station?

**Chapter 10 – The other side of the Tracks (pg. 77-82 )**

1. Where does Cootie think Henrietta’s cancer came from?

**Chapter 11 – “The Devil of Pain Itself” (pg. 83-88 )**

1. Describe the progression of Henrietta’s cancer in the eight months between her diagnosis and death.
2. What was Henrietta’s final request? What does this request tell you about her?
3. What questions do you have after Part 1 of this book? What else would you like to learn or find out?

**PART 2 – Chapter 12 – The Storm (pg. 89-92) Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

1. Why did Day agree to an autopsy for Henrietta?

**Chapter 13 – The HeLa Factory (pg. 93-104)**

1. In 1951 HeLa cells were mass produced to help with a vaccine for which disease? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What year were the 1st cells (HeLa) sent through the mail? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. List reasons HeLa cells were the ideal cell for experimenting.
4. What 3 ways did HeLa cells help quickly advance science?
5. List at 5 studies that were conducted with HeLa cells.

**Chapter 14 – Helen Lane (pg. 105-109)**

1. What 2 pieces of misinformation were given to the press that kept Henrietta’s family from knowing her cells were alive?

**Chapter 15 – “Too Young to Remember” (pg. 110-117)**

1. Explain some of the hardships the Lacks children faced after their mother’s death.

**Chapter 16 – “Spending Eternity in the Same Place” (pg. 118-126)**

1. How are the white and black Lackes related? Who are their common ancestors?
2. Where was Henrietta buried?

**Chapter 17 – Illegal, Immoral, and Deplorable (pg.127-136)**

1. In Southam’s research, he wanted to see the results of injecting HeLa cells into people with and without cancer. What two populations did Southam inject with HeLa cells?
2. What is the Nuremberg Code and why did it come about?
3. In what year did the National Institute of Health (NIH) require approved peer reviewed design and informed consent in experimental design in order to be funded?

**Chapter 18 – “Strangest Hybrid ” (pg. 137-143)**

1. What other species did scientists fuse with HeLa cells to make hybrids?
2. What information did researches gain from experiments with the hybrid cells?

**Chapter 19 – “The Most Critical Time on This Earth Is Now” (pg. 144-151)**

1. What was happening in the lives of Henrietta’s children in the late 60s and early 70s?

Joe –

Sonny-

Lawrence –

Deborah –

**Chapter 20– The HeLa Bomb (pg. 152-157)**

1. What is meant by “The HeLa Bomb”?
2. Why was the HeLa Bomb such a big deal?

**Chapter 21 – Night Doctors (pg. 158-169)**

1. What did the Lackses believe Johns Hopkins did to black people?
2. What were night doctors?
3. Who did Rebecca finally meet with in this chapter?

**Chapter 22– “The Fame She So Richly Deserves” (pg. 170-178)**

1. In the early 70s two items were confirmed:
	1. HeLa cells were from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ not Helen Lane.
	2. HeLa cells had \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ many cell lines including ones outside of the country.

**PART 3 - Chapter 23 – “It’s Alive” (pg. 179-190) Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

1. In this chapter the Lacks children gave blood samples. Why did the new law on informed consent cover routine procedures such as blood draws?

**Chapter 24 – “Least They Can Do” (pg. 191-198)**

1. Who has made money from selling HeLa cells?
2. You have just read about the start of the HIPAA law. When you go to the doctor you (or your parent) has signed acknowledgement of this law. Why did this law go into effect?

**Chapter 25 – “Who Told You You Could Sell My Spleen? ” (pg. 199-206)**

1. How did John Moore’s court case relate to HeLa?
2. What was the final result in the California Supreme Court in the Moore Case?

**Chapter 26 – Breach of Privacy (pg. 207-211)**

1. How did Henrietta’s daughter Deborah find out about her mother’s cancer?

**Chapter 27 – The Secret of Immortality (pg. 212-217)**

1. What is an example of how HeLa cells advanced medical research in the 70s? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In the 80s? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What enzyme allowed Henrietta’s cells to divide indefinitely? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ How was this different from normal cells?

**Chapter 28 – After London (pg. 218-231)**

1. What’s the deal with Dr. Sir Lord Keenan Kester Cofield?

**Chapter 29 – A Village of Henriettas (pg. 232-240)**

1. What fictional movie did Deborah have stored with the information about her mother?

**Chapter 30– Zakariyya (pg. 241-249)**

1. Zakariyya uses the term “disrespect” to describe Gey’s treatment of Henrietta and the family. Explain the reasons why he feels disrespected. Do you believe Gey was disrespectful? Explain.

**Chapter 31 – HeLa, Goddess of Death (pg. 250 – 258)**

1. Why did Deborah decide to go see her mother’s cells? What obstacle almost kept her from doing so?

**Chapter 32 – “All That’s My Mother” (pg. 259-267)**

1. What misconceptions did Deborah have about HeLa that Christoph helped answer?
2. What does Chirstoph mean when he says they should treat cells like oil?

**Chapter 33 – The Hospital for the Negro Insane (pg. 268 – 278)**

1. Describe the conditions at “The Hospital for the Negro Insane”.

**Chapter 34 – The Medical Records (pg. 279 – 285)**

1. Why was Deborah so nervous about sharing Henrietta’s medical records with Rebecca Skloot?

**Chapter 35 – Soul Cleansing (pg. 286 – 293)**

1. Describe what happened between Gary and Deborah in this chapter.

**Chapter 36 – Heavenly Bodies (pg. 294-296)**

1. How was the way the Lackses explained HeLa cells different from the scientific explanation?

**Chapter 37 – “Nothing to Be Scared About” (pg. 297-304)**

1. What medical reasons explain why Deborah’s behavior was so erratic in Clover?
2. Why was the Henrietta Lacks conference rescheduled?

**Chapter 38 – The Long Road to Clover – (pg. 305 – 310)**

1. What events happened in 2009 suggest that if Rebecca Skloot had not begun researching the story of HeLa a decade earlier, it may have been lost forever?
2. What was your favorite part of this book?
3. What did you learn from reading this book?
4. Rate this book on a scale from 1-10 (10 being the best). Explain your answer.

