

## Further Reading

**The Glass Universe**  
**Dava Sobel (2016)**  
**SCIENCE SPACE SOB**

The little-known true story of the unexpected and remarkable contributions to astronomy made by a group of women working in the Harvard College Observatory from the late 1800s through the mid-1900s.

**Code Girls**  
**Liza Mundy (2017)**  
**HISTORY MILITARY WW2MUN**

Recruited by the U.S. Army and Navy from small towns and elite colleges, more than ten thousand women served as codebreakers during World War II. While their brothers and boyfriends took up arms, these women learned the meticulous work of code-breaking. Their efforts shortened the war (and) saved countless lives.

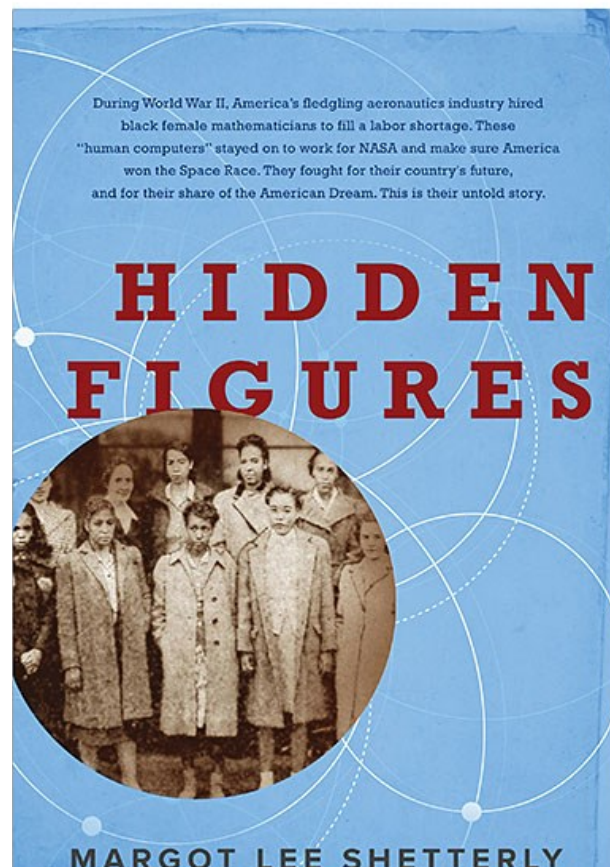
**The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks**  
**Rebecca Skloot (2010)**  
**BIOGRAPHY LACKS**

Her cells--taken without her knowledge--became one of the most important tools in medicine. The first "immortal" human cells grown in culture, they are still alive today, though she has been dead for more than sixty years. HeLa cells were vital for developing the polio vaccine; uncovered secrets of cancer and viruses; and have been bought and sold by the billions.

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## Book Discussion Guide



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# About the Book

An account of the previously unheralded but pivotal contributions of NASA's African-American women mathematicians to America's space program; describes how they were segregated from their white counterparts by Jim Crow laws in spite of their groundbreaking successes.

## Discussion Questions

1. What are some reasons for wanting more mathematicians at Langley in the early 1940s?
2. In what ways was Melvin Butler, the personnel officer at Langley, progressive in his hiring practices? In what ways was he restricted by convention?
3. Describe Dorothy Vaughan: what is she like? What do you learn of her background? What does this job mean for Dorothy in terms of social mobility?
4. From what we know so far, in what ways do Dorothy and Katherine's experiences mirror each other? In what ways are they different?
5. Are the women who become "girl computers" held to a higher standard? Or do they hold themselves to one? Why or why not?
6. Why does Miriam Mann keep removing the cafeteria sign? What does her act of defiance represent?
7. How do you think Langley employees reconcile the difference between the work they do that is innovative and advances humankind with the work they do that destroys it?
8. Describe Mary Jackson: What do we learn about her background? How is she similar to Dorothy Vaughan and Katherine Goble?
9. What kind of disagreement did Mary and John Becker have? Do you think it is a moment that Mary will use as motivation in the future?
10. Why did Katherine get attached to the Flight Research Division? Why is this change of department significant for her?
11. In what ways does Katherine conform to Southern convention at Langley, and in what ways does she refuse to do so? Why?
12. In what ways does the rise of computing and advancements in computing technology affect the girl computers?
13. Would you consider NACA and NASA socially progressive institutions for their time? Why or why not?
14. How are the women in Hidden Figures able to express confidence in their work and abilities? In what ways is that confidence validated by their coworkers? Why is this emotional experience such an important part of their story?