

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher:	CP English 10 teachers	School:	Liberty High School
Book Title:	The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks	Genre:	Literary Nonfiction
Author:	Rebecca Skloot	Pages:	400
Publisher:	Broadway	Copyright:	March 8, 2011

In a brief rationale, please provide the following information relative to the book you would like added to the school's book collection for classroom use. You may attach additional pages as needed.

Book Summary and summary citation: (suggested resources include book flap summaries, review summaries from publisher, book vendors, etc.)

The CP English 10 team is utilizing this text to bridge our first quarter study of close reading the human story with our second quarter focus of research and persuasion. Seeing as the text is an example of literary nonfiction and chronicles both the research process of an investigative journalist and the story of the Henrietta Lacks and her family it is an ideal text for this purpose. It is also an opportunity for interdisciplinary planning with biology classes.

From: OLHS Library Catalog

Examines the experiences of the children and husband of Henrietta Lacks, who, twenty years after her death from cervical cancer in 1951, learned doctors and researchers took cells from her cervix without consent, which were used to create the immortal cell line known as the HeLa cell; provides an overview of Henrietta's life; and explores issues of experimentation on African-Americans and bioethics.

From: Rebecca Skloot

Her name was Henrietta Lacks, but scientists know her as HeLa. She was a poor black tobacco farmer whose cells—taken without her knowledge in 1951—became one of the most important tools in medicine, vital for developing the polio vaccine, cloning, gene mapping, in vitro fertilization, and more. Henrietta's cells have been bought and sold by the billions, yet she remains virtually unknown, and her family can't afford health insurance.

Soon to be made into an HBO movie by Oprah Winfrey and Alan Ball, this New York Times bestseller takes readers on an extraordinary journey, from the “colored” ward of Johns Hopkins Hospital in the 1950s to stark white laboratories with freezers filled with HeLa cells, from Henrietta's small, dying hometown of Clover, Virginia, to East Baltimore today, where her children and grandchildren live and struggle with the legacy of her cells. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* tells a riveting story of the collision between ethics, race, and medicine; of scientific discovery and faith healing; and of a daughter consumed with questions about the mother she never knew. It's a story inextricably connected to the dark history of experimentation on African Americans, the birth of bioethics, and the legal battles over whether we control the stuff we're made of.

Provide an instructional rationale for the use of this title, including specific reference to the OLSD curriculum map(s): (Curriculum maps may be referenced by grade/course and indicator number or curriculum maps with indicators highlighted may be attached to this form)

From the Common Core Standards:

RI.9-10.3. Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

RI.9-10.7. Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

RI.9-10.8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

RI.9-10.10. By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 9–10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

W.9-10.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

W.9-10.1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

W.9-10.7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

W.9-10.8. Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

W.9-10.9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

From the OLS Curriculum Map:

Read increasingly challenging whole texts in a variety of literary (e.g., poetry, drama, fiction, nonfiction) and nonliterary (e.g., textbooks, news articles, memoranda) forms.

Use close-reading strategies (e.g., visualizing, annotating, questioning) in order to interpret increasingly challenging texts

Identify, analyze, and evaluate the effectiveness of persuasive techniques (e.g., appeals to emotion, reason, or authority; stereotyping) and the presence of bias in literature, film, advertising, and/or speeches

Summarize and paraphrase information in increasingly challenging texts, identifying key ideas, supporting details, inconsistencies, and ambiguities

Locate important details and facts that support ideas, arguments, or inferences in increasingly challenging texts, and substantiate analyses with textual examples that may be in widely separated sections of the text or in other sources

Evaluate source information (e.g., primary and secondary sources) for accuracy, credibility, currency, utility, relevance, reliability, and perspective

Compile and systematically organize important information to support central ideas, concepts, and themes

Include two professional reviews of this title: (a suggested list of resources for identifying professional reviews is shown below. Reviews may be “cut and pasted” (with citation) into the form or printed reviews may be attached to the form)

Review #1

New York Times Book Review:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/07/books/review/Margonelli-t.html>

“The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks” is much more than a portrait of the Lacks family. It is also a critique of science that insists on ignoring the messy human provenance of its materials.

“Scientists don’t like to think of HeLa cells as being little bits of Henrietta because it’s much easier to do science when you dissociate your materials from the people they come from,” a researcher named Robert Stevenson tells Skloot in one of the many ethical discussions seeded throughout the book. (Excerpt)

Review #2

From Booklist

Starred Review The “first immortal human cells,” code-named HeLa, have flourished by the trillions in labs all around the world for more than five decades, making possible the polio vaccine, chemotherapy, and many more crucial discoveries. But where did the HeLa cells come from? Science journalist Skloot spent 10 years arduously researching the complex, tragic, and profoundly revealing story of Henrietta Lacks, a 31-year-old African American mother of five who came to Johns Hopkins with cervical cancer in 1951, and from whom tumor samples were taken without her knowledge or that of her family. Henrietta died a cruel death and was all but forgotten, while her miraculous cells live on, “growing with mythological intensity.” Skloot travels to tiny Clover, Virginia; learns that Henrietta’s family tree embraces black and white branches; becomes close to Henrietta’s daughter, Deborah; and discovers that although the HeLa cells have improved countless lives, they have also engendered a legacy of pain, a litany of injustices, and a constellation of mysteries. Writing with a novelist’s artistry, a biologist’s expertise, and the zeal of an investigative reporter, Skloot tells a truly astonishing story of racism and poverty, science and conscience, spirituality and family driven by a galvanizing inquiry into the sanctity of the body and the very nature of the life force. --Donna Seaman --

Selected for More than Sixty Best of the Year Lists Including:

New York Times Notable Book

Entertainment Weekly #1 Nonfiction Book of the Year
New Yorker Reviewers' Favorite
American Library Association Notable Book
People Top Ten Book of the Year
Washington Post Book World Top Ten Book of the Year
Salon.com Best Book of the Year
USA Today Ten Books We Loved Reading
O, The Oprah Magazine Top Ten Book of the Year
National Public Radio Best of the Bestsellers
Boston Globe Best Nonfiction Book of the Year
Financial Times Nonfiction Favorite
Los Angeles Times Critics' Pick
Bloomberg Top Nonfiction
New York magazine Top Ten Book of the Year
Slate.com Favorite Book of the Year
TheRoot.com Top Ten Book of the Year
Discover magazine 2010 Must-Read
Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year
Library Journal Top Ten Book of the Year
Kirkus Reviews Best Nonfiction Book of the Year
U.S. News & World Report Top Debate-Worthy Book
Booklist Top of the List—Best Nonfiction Book

What alternate text(s) could also fulfill the instructional requirements?

<u>Title:</u> Into Thin Air	<u>Author:</u> Jon Krakauer
<u>Title:</u> Fast Food Nation	<u>Author:</u> Eric Schlosser
<u>Title:</u> The Jungle	<u>Author:</u> Upton Sinclair
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>

Document any potentially controversial content:

Any controversial content in this text is given in the context of scientific inquiry and medical diagnosis, or as elements crucial to understanding the complexities of the Lacks family story. Below are representative samples:

"When sex first started hurting, she thought that it had something to do with baby Deborah..." (14)

"Reader's Digest ran articles by Carrel advising women that a husband, 'should not be induced by an oversexed wife to perform a sexual act,' since sex drained the mind. (60)

"Cousins are not supposed to be having sex with each other. That's uncalled for." (115)

"She'd never seen a man's penis and didn't know what it meant that he was rubbing it. She just knew it felt wrong" (116). This portion of the text describes attempted molestation of a Lacks child. This recollection includes dialogue including "whore" and "rubber" in the context of the mistreatment of a child without a mother.

In dialogue recalled as part of the research, the word "fuck" is used three times. "I'm gonna kill your mother fuckin' ass" (146) and "I jerked free of her grip and told her to get the fuck off me and chill the fuck out."(283)

The word "vagina" is used eight times as an anatomical term.

Again, elements of this text that may be controversial are factual accounts of the experiences of Henrietta Lacks and her family or are used in the context of medical accuracy.

Keeping in mind the age, academic level, and maturity of the intended reader, what is the suggested classroom use: (check all that apply)

Gifted/Accelerated Regular At Risk

GRADE LEVEL(S): 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Reading level of this title (if applicable):

Date Submitted to Department Chair:

Suggested Professional Literary Review Sources:

School Library Journal

Horn Book

Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates)

Library Journal

Book Links

Publisher's Weekly

Booklist

Kirkus Review

Wilson Library Catalog

English Journal (and other resources of the National Council of Teachers of English)

The Reading Teacher (International Reading Association)

Literature for Today's Young Adults