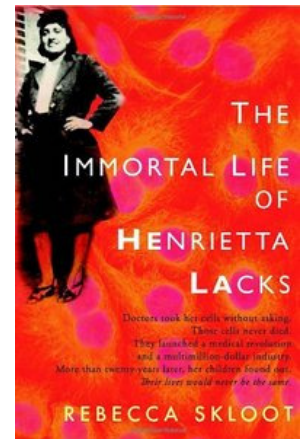


The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot
Reading Guide from the SJSU Campus Reading Program

Read for the pleasure of the knowledge gained, the power of the narrative, the satisfaction from the experience. Since you'll have many opportunities to talk to others at SJSU about the book, as you read, you may want to jot down some notes about people, events, and passages that you find interesting or provocative. Or perhaps you'll underline or make notes in the margin of the text itself. Bring your notes to the discussion group you attend. If you have questions, visit the website (www.sjsu.edu/reading/) or send an email to scot.guenter@sjsu.edu

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER AS YOU READ....

- Does this book teach you anything new about the process of science? Anything new to you here related to how the practice of medicine has changed (or not) over time? Did you find anything interesting in learning how HeLa cells have served the development of medicine? What about how they are used in the scientific process itself?
- Another aspect of the book is the way it explores the Lacks family history. Did you find any sections particularly touching or troubling here? Which, and why? What did you think about Henrietta as a woman, wife, or mother? How do you feel about some of the many other people we meet as we read through this work? Are there any you particularly admire, or others you dislike? Why?
- How does this book make you feel about gender differences or racial differences and how society handled them in 20th century America? What about dealing with people who are considered special, needing institutionalization? Do you think things have changed much today in any of these areas?
- How do you feel about the way some people got very rich through the proliferation and use of HeLa cells? What kind of rules do we have for what happens to parts of our bodies, and who can or should profit from body parts? (Are HeLa cells considered body parts or not, according to the book? Is harvesting HeLa cells different from, say, supplying a kidney for a transplant?)
- Did the author get more involved with the Lacks family as her research continued? Did you? Have you learned anything meaningful about science, ethics, social work, or African American history as a result of reading this book?



For more information on the author and book, online discussion links and fall events visit www.sjsu.edu/reading/ .