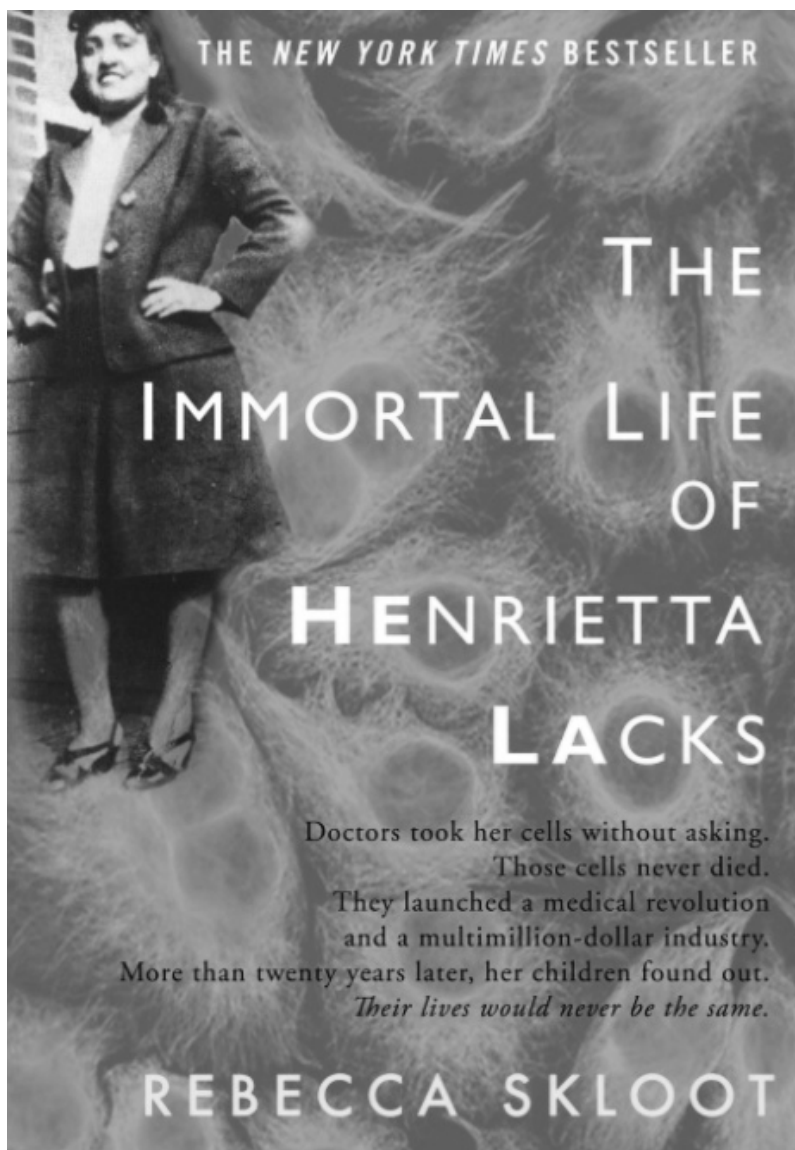


*All Bonaventure Reads 2010*

*The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*

**Reading Guide**



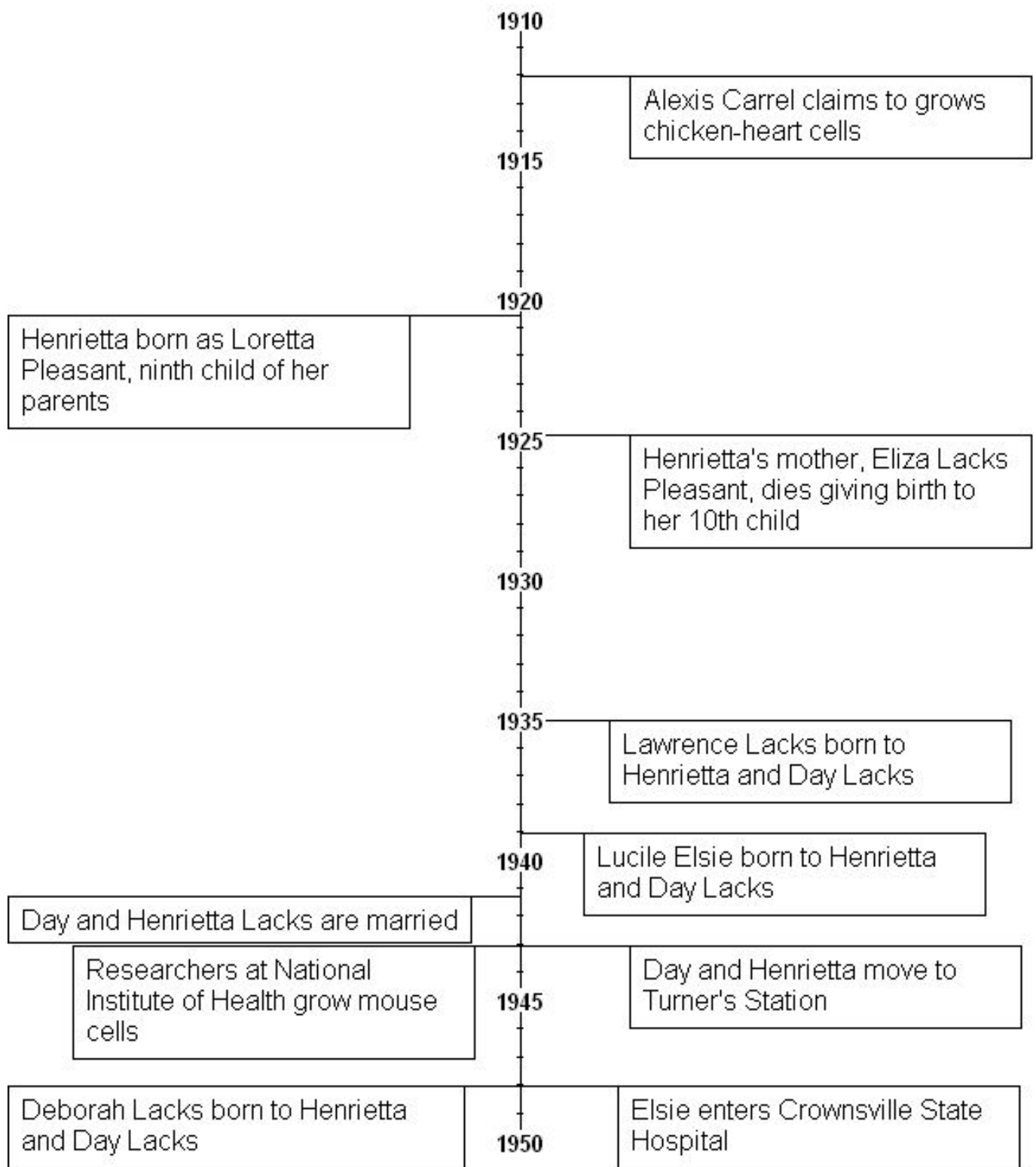
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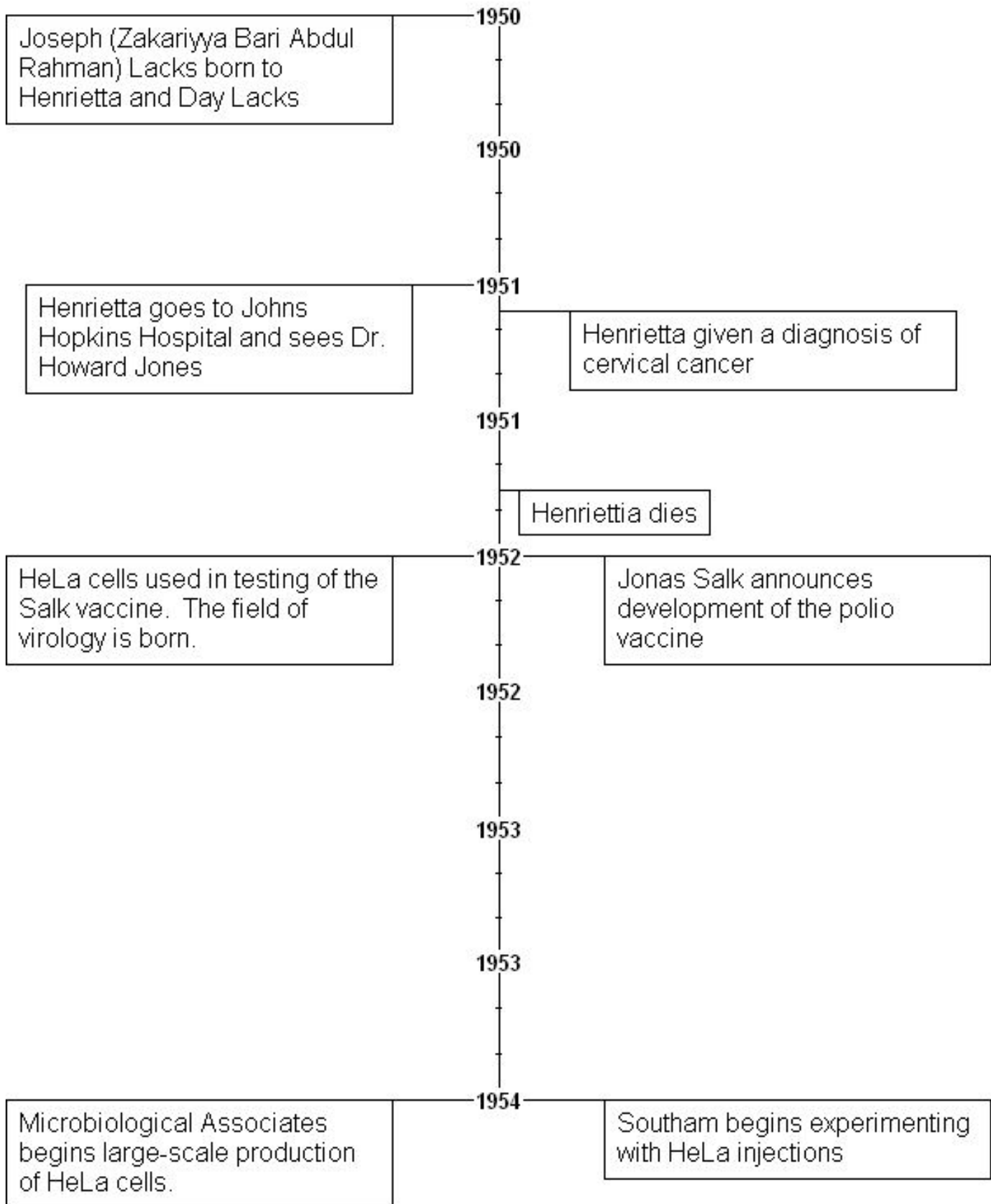
First-Year Experience

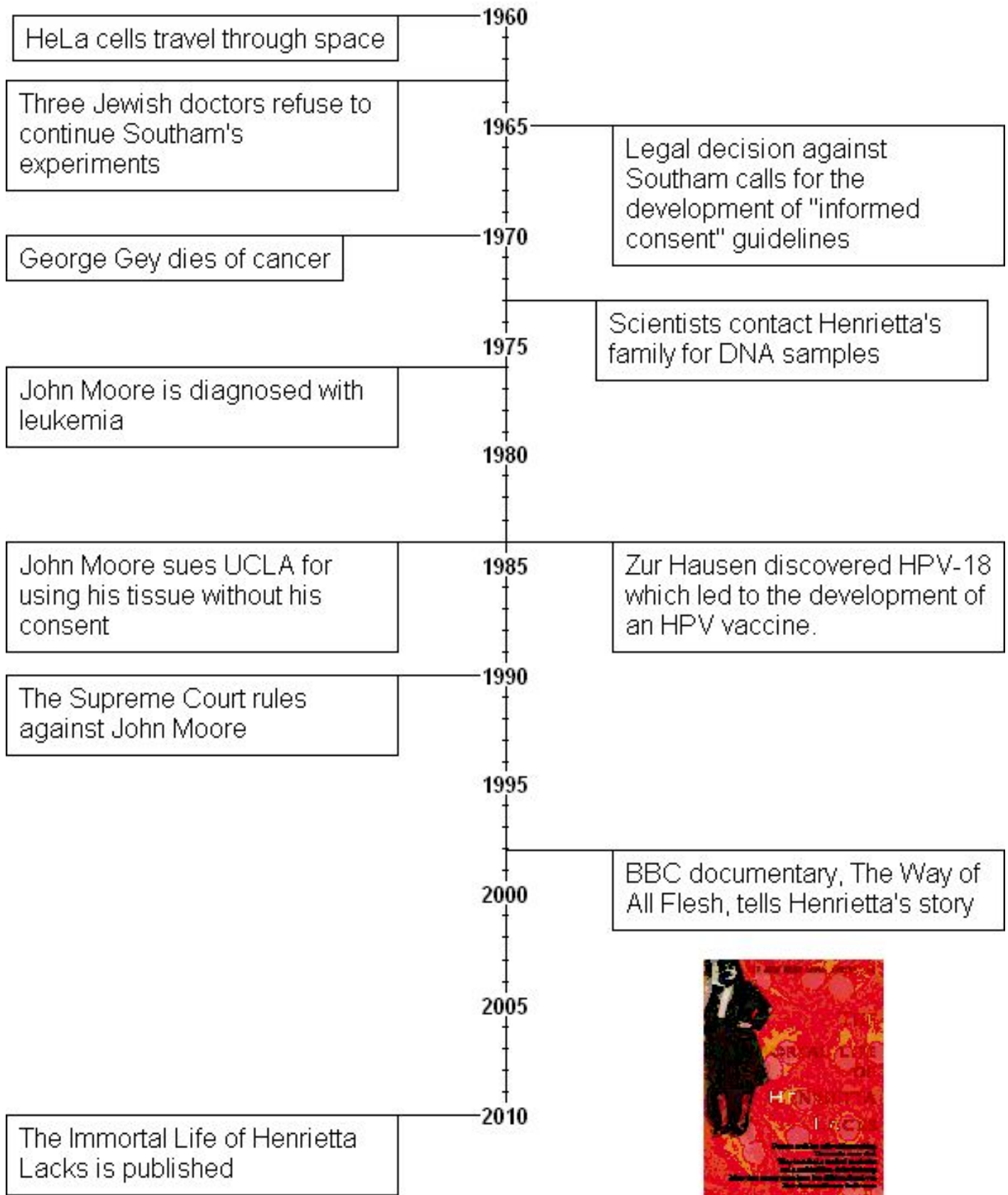
[www.sbu.edu/fye](http://www.sbu.edu/fye)

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**Chapter 1: “The Exam”**

**Summary:**

Henrietta is examined at the gynecology clinic at Johns Hopkins Hospital by Dr. Howard Jones, and her brief medical history is reviewed. The medical history gives the reader an understanding of her background and sophistication.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. How would you describe Henrietta’s experiences and attitudes toward medical care prior to her cancer diagnosis?
2. Why did Henrietta go to Johns Hopkins rather than another hospital?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• David (Day) Lacks</li><li>• Henrietta Lacks</li><li>• Sadie</li><li>• Margaret</li><li>• Howard Jones</li><li>• Deborah Lacks</li><li>• Joe Lacks</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b>
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**Chapter 2: “Clover”**

**Summary:**

When her mother dies Henrietta and her nine siblings are split to live amongst their relatives. Henrietta was sent to live with her grandfather, Tommy Lacks, in Clover, VA. Her cousin, David (Day), also lives with her grandfather.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. Describe Henrietta’s experiences with segregation when she was growing up in Clover.
2. Why were jobs at Sparrows Point so attractive to black men even though they were paid less than white men doing the exact same jobs?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Loretta Pleasant</li><li>• Eliza Lacks Pleasant</li><li>• Johnny Pleasant</li><li>• Tommy Pleasant</li><li>• Lawrence Lacks</li><li>• Lucile Elsie Pleasant</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b>
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### **Chapter 3: “Diagnosis and Treatment”**

#### **Summary:**

Henrietta undergoes radium treatment and surgery for her cancer. The author describes what was known about cancer at the time as well as state-of-the-art treatments. Two tissue samples are taken from Henrietta before her tumor is removed.

#### **Questions to Ponder:**

1. What was the current medical thinking about cervical cancer at the time of Henrietta’s diagnosis?
2. Comment on the use of radium as a cancer treatment and as a cause of cancer.
3. Carefully read the permission form Henrietta signed before her surgery. Given that she had a sixth grade education do you think she understood what she signed?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b>	<b>Key Terms:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Richard Wesley TeLinde</li><li>• George Gey</li><li>• Margaret Gey</li><li>• Lawrence Wharton</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Epidermoid carcinoma</li><li>• Invasive/noninvasive carcinoma</li><li>• Carcinoma in situ</li></ul>






### **Chapter 4: “The Birth of HeLa”**

#### **Summary:**

The tissue samples taken from Henrietta begin to grow...something that had never happened before. George Gey agrees to share the growing cells.

#### **Questions to Ponder:**

1. Comment on your perception of the sterility of the Gey’s lab.
2. Why do you think George Gey agreed to share the cells?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b>	<b>Key Terms:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mary Kubicek</li></ul>	

**Chapter 5:** “Blackness Be Spreading All Inside”

**Summary:**

Henrietta tries hard to maintain as normal a life as possible while continuing to undergo cancer treatments. At first, the treatments appear to be successful and her tumor disappears. Elsie is moved to Crownsville State Hospital.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. Describe Henrietta’s reaction to her infertility.
2. How well do you think she understood her illness? Her treatment?

**Chapter 6:** “Lady’s on the Phone”

**Summary:**

Rebecca Skloot contacts Roland Pattillo in an attempt to reach Henrietta’s family. Her first and second contacts with Deborah are very different and leave Rebecca confused. Rebecca also is able to talk with Henrietta’s husband, Day.

**Questions to Ponder:**

3. Why did Roland Pattillo ask Rebecca what she knew about African-Americans and science before he would give her Deborah’s phone number?
4. Why do you think Deborah deferred to “the men” when making a decision about whether or not to talk with Skloot?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Roland Pattillo</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b>
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**Chapter 7:** “The Death and Life of Cell Culture”

**Summary:** Rebecca provides historical context for Gey’s breakthrough in human cell growth. Gey shares cells, at no cost, with researchers working to cure cancer.

**Questions to Ponder:**

5. Why do you think Gey’s breakthrough was ignored by both the general public and the medical community?
6. Do you think Carrel’s claims about his immortal cells would go unchallenged today?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Alexis Carrel</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b>
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**Chapter 8: “A Miserable Specimen”**

**Summary:** Though Henrietta’s doctors told Henrietta she was fine, from June 1951 Henrietta was in increasing pain. At last, doctors confirmed that tumors were growing inside Henrietta. She had no choice but to stay in the hospital, however, radiation treatments and painkillers failed to stop the spread of cancer throughout Henrietta’s body. Cells were again taken from Henrietta without her knowledge.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. What does “benevolent deception” mean, according to this author?
2. Why did the doctor say that Henrietta was “a miserable specimen”?
3. Do you think that Henrietta received thorough and proper medical care?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sadie</li><li>• Margaret</li><li>• Day</li><li>• Dr. George Gey</li><li>• Laure Aurelian</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• miserable specimen</li><li>• benevolent deception</li><li>• immortal</li></ul>
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**Chapter 9: “Turner Station”**

**Summary:**

The author travels to Baltimore to try to interview Henrietta’s family. She doesn’t succeed but meets residents in Henrietta’s old neighborhood in Turner Station, outside of Baltimore.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. How did Turner Station change from the 1940s to the time the author visited there?
2. Why do you think people were reluctant to talk to the author, Rebecca Skloot?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• David “Sonny” Lacks Jr.</li><li>• Michael Rogers</li><li>• Courtney Speed</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Turner Station</li><li>• Clover, Virginia</li></ul>
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**Chapter 10: “The Other Side of the Tracks”**

**Summary:**

Rebecca travels to Clover, to talk to Henrietta’s cousins and meets “Cootie,” Henrietta’s cousin who still suffers from the effects of a childhood bout with polio.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. What kind of place is Clover?
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2. What does Cootie say about “spirits” in Clover?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hector Henry, “Cootie”</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “the other side of the tracks”</li><li>• polio</li><li>• spirits</li></ul>
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**Chapter 11:** “The Devil of Pain Itself”

**Summary:**

This chapter relates Henrietta’s final and unimaginably painful days. Henrietta’s cousin Emmett and six other men visit Henrietta in the hospital and donate blood to help her. However, repeated transfusions and powerful painkillers are useless. Before she passes away, Henrietta asks Day and her sister to take good care of the children, especially little Deborah, when she is gone.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. How did Emmett describe Henrietta in the hospital?
2. Have you or someone in your family ever been sick and in great pain? Did members of your extended family including cousins come and help you or your family member?
3. Though Henrietta’s family was not materially wealthy, could we say that the Lacks family was rich in other ways?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emmett, Elsie, Gladys, and Deborah Lacks</li><li>• Sadie</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• transfusion</li><li>• analgesics</li></ul>
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**Chapter 12:** “The Storm”

**Summary:**

This chapter describes what happened during Henrietta’s autopsy: as the doctor and his assistant took tissue samples from Henrietta’s cancer-ridden body, the assistant finally realized that Henrietta was a “real person,” not only a source of cells. The chapter also relates what happened during Henrietta’s funeral and burial, including a sudden deadly storm just at the moment when Henrietta’s coffin was lowered into her grave.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. Scientists and doctors are often criticized for treating people as a body...as specimens...as numbers or statistics...as an entry in a medical chart... a cell line...and not as individual human beings. Recall the numerous examples of this in the book.
2. Are you familiar with the custom of public viewing of a deceased’s body? What significance does this have for a community?
3. How did Cousin Peter interpret the sudden storm? Do you agree?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dr. Wilbur (pathologist)</li><li>• Peter Lacks (cousin)</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• code of ethics</li><li>• uremia</li><li>• autopsy</li></ul>
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**Chapter 13: “The HeLa Factory”**

**Summary:**

This chapter describes how Henrietta’s cells spread from Dr. Gey’s lab to the global science community, how Henrietta’s cells were used in the world’s first cell production factory, and how HeLa allowed others to make a fortune from the sale and transport of her cells “to any scientist interested...” Henrietta’s cells began the multibillion-dollar industry of selling human biological materials.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. Compare the experiments on and distribution of Henrietta’s cells done by the Tuskegee Institute with the Tuskegee syphilis studies (p. 50), both conducted by the same Institute at the same time. What are the similarities and differences between the two projects?
2. Do you think that the good brought by research carried out using Henrietta’s cells outweighs the ethical offenses of Dr. Gey and his laboratory?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Jonas Salk</li><li>• William Scherer</li><li>• Charles Bynum</li><li>• Sam Reader</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• polio (infantile paralysis)</li><li>• neutralization tests</li><li>• virology</li><li>• transformation and cloning</li><li>• standardization of tissue culturing</li></ul>
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**Chapter 14: “Helen Lane”**

**Summary:**

From 1954 until the 1970s, the woman behind the HeLa cells would be known either as Helen Lane or Helen Larson. Her family did not know that cells were extracted from Henrietta while she was alive and that her cells still lived in laboratories worldwide.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. Did Gey give accurate information to journalists?
2. In your opinion did Gey act ethically in this matter?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Helen Lane</li><li>• Helen Larson</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• cell culture</li></ul>
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**Chapter 15: “Too Young to Remember”**

**Summary:**

This chapter explains what life was like for Henrietta’s children right after she died. Henrietta’s children, especially Deborah and Joe, were forced to endure a traumatic and disheartening childhood after Henrietta passed away.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. Henrietta’s cousins called Ethel “that hateful woman.” In what ways did Ethel live up to that name?
2. Choose three words to describe what life was like for Henrietta’s children in the years after her death.
3. Why did Joe grow up to be such an angry child?
4. What influence did Bobbette have on Deborah’s life?
5. Do you think it would have been beneficial to Deborah if someone had told her more about her mom and Elsie? Why or why not?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ethel</li><li>• Galen</li><li>• Henrietta’s Children- Lawrence, Sonny, Deborah, and Joe</li><li>• Bobbette</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tuberculosis</li></ul>
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**Chapter 16: “Spending Eternity in the Same Place”**

**Summary:**

In this chapter, the author meets with several of Henrietta’s relatives to learn more about Henrietta’s life and who she truly was as a person.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. Who is Cliff and where did he bring Rebecca? Why did he bring her there?
2. What did the author learn about Henrietta and her past in this chapter?
3. Why does Henrietta have some “colored” family members and some “white” family members?
4. In what ways did race affect Henrietta’s upbringing and family life?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cousin Cootie</li><li>• Cliff Lacks</li><li>• Mourning</li><li>• George</li><li>• John Smith Pleasants</li><li>• Edmund Pleasant</li><li>• Henrietta Pleasant</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Robin Lacks</li><li>• Albert Lacks</li><li>• Winston Lacks</li><li>• Benjamin Lacks</li><li>• Tommy Lacks</li><li>• Carlton and Ruby Lacks</li><li>• Gladys and Lillian Lacks</li></ul>
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## **Chapter 17: “Illegal, Immoral, and Deplorable”**

### **Summary:**

This chapter explains the immoral research that doctors were performing on uninformed patients using HeLa cells. The chapter describes why the National Institutes of Health (NIH) determined that medical research involving human subjects had to be approved.

### **Questions to Ponder:**

1. In your opinion, was the cancer research Dr. Chester Southam performed on patients truly immoral, illegal, and deplorable? Why or why not?
2. What were the dangers and benefits of Southam’s research?
3. How did the Nuremberg Code and the NIH affect the medical laws in place today?
4. Predict what will happen to cancer research and scientific progress now the NIH has cracked down on medical ethics.

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chester Southam</li><li>• William Hyman</li><li>• Bertil Bjorklund</li><li>• State Attorney General Louis Lefkowitz</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Virologist</li><li>• Innocuous</li><li>• Informed consent</li><li>• Nuremberg Code</li><li>• National Institutes of Health (NIH)</li><li>• Board of Regents</li></ul>
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## **Chapter 18: “Strangest Hybrid”**

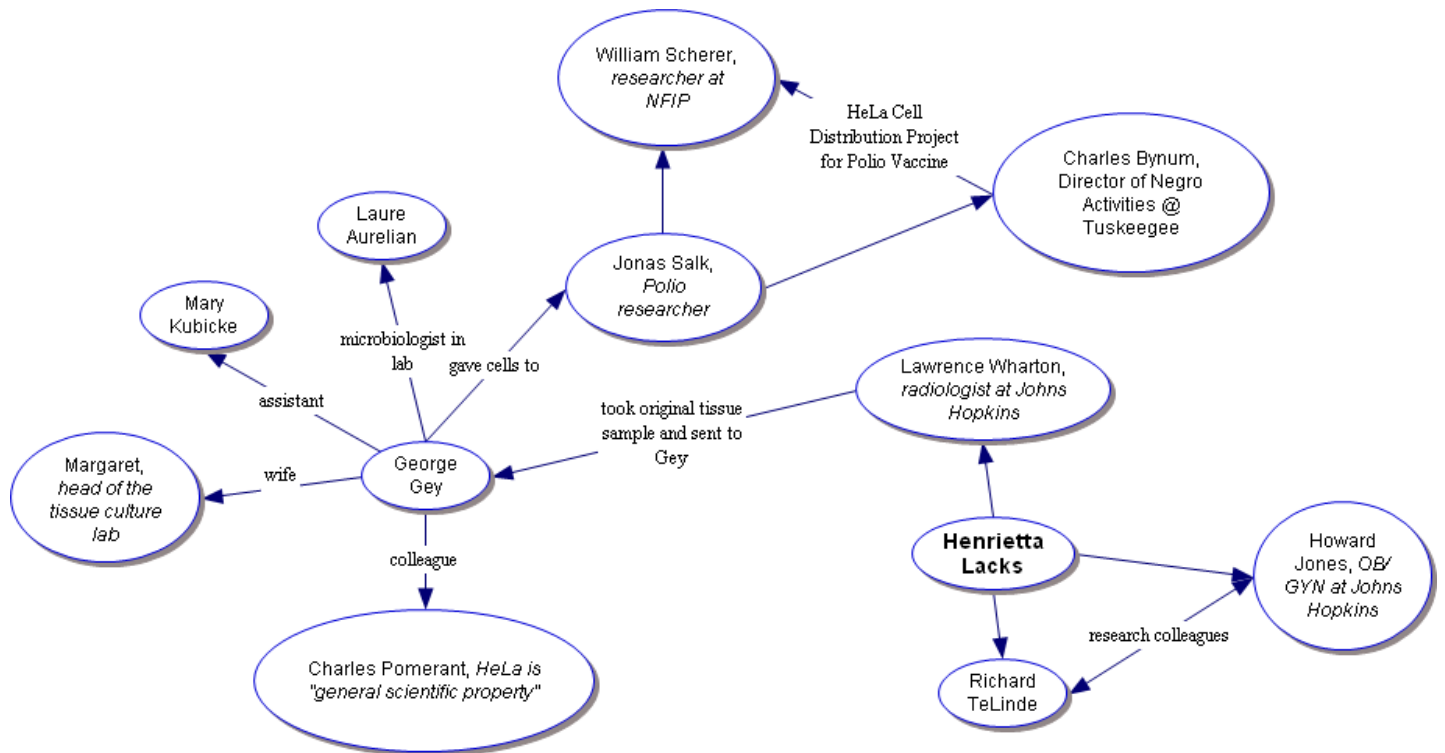
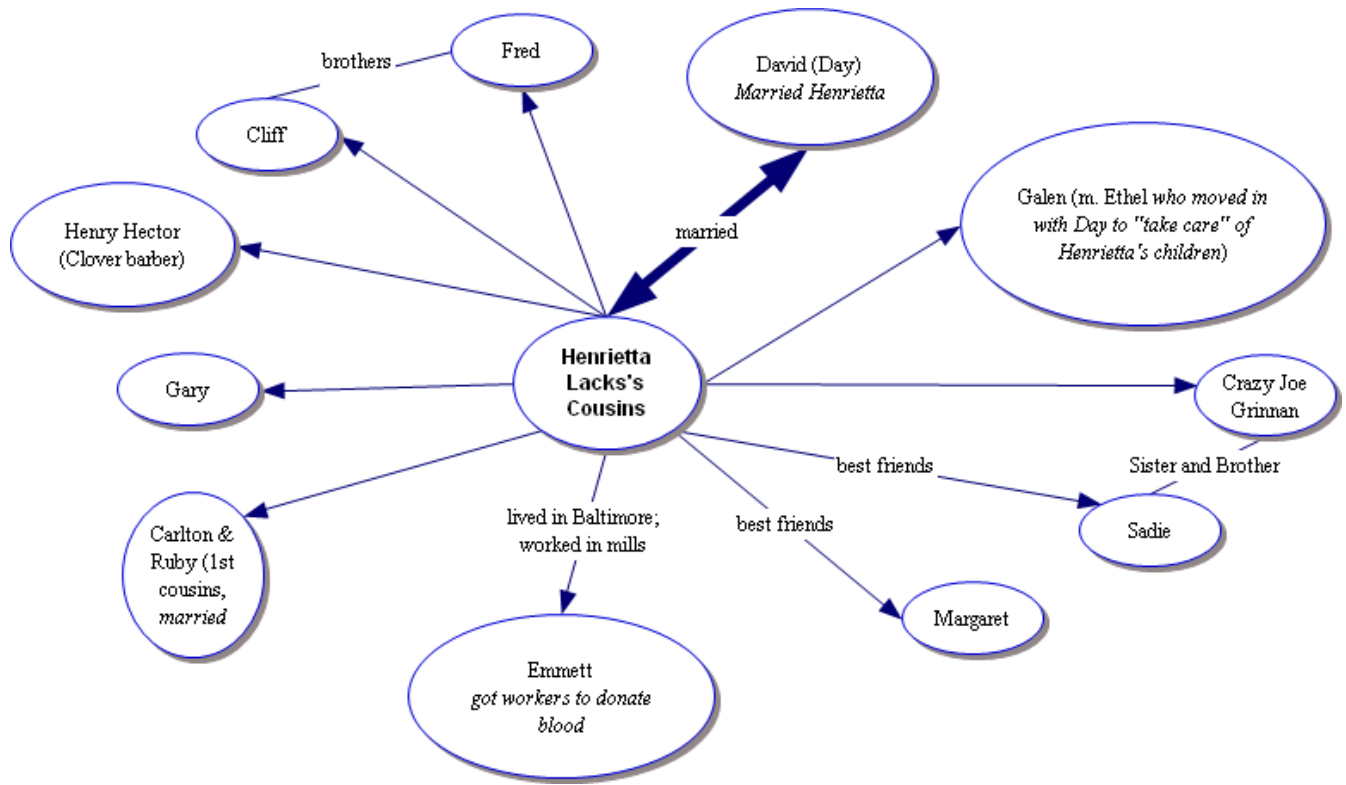
### **Summary:**

This chapter explains how HeLa cells positively and negatively impacted medical and scientific research in the 1960s. The chapter also describes the advantages and disadvantages of fusing HeLa cells with animal cells for research purposes.

### **Questions to Ponder:**

1. Why were scientists worried that the medical field of tissue and cell culturing was becoming a disaster? What was going wrong?
2. Up to this point in the book, what are some of the ways that HeLa cells have impacted medicine and medical research? Example- HeLa cells helped to create the Polio vaccination
3. Why was the Cell Culture Collection committee formed? What was their job?
4. What was the purpose behind fusing animal and human cells?
5. Why were some people so against the idea of scientists fusing HeLa cells with animal cells?
6. Do you agree or disagree with scientists creating animal-human cell hybrids? Explain.

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• George Hyatt</li><li>• Lewis Coriell</li><li>• Robert Stevenson</li><li>• Henry Harris</li><li>• John Watkins</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• L-Cells</li><li>• Somatic cell fusion</li></ul>
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**Chapter 19:** “The Most Critical Time on this Earth is Now”

**Summary:**

This chapter describes how difficult life was for both Joe and Deborah. The reader learns about how Joe ends up in prison and why Deborah decides to leave Cheetah to become a single mother.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. Why was Joe nicknamed “Crazy Joe”? Does he live up to that name?
2. What does Joe mean when he writes “the most critical time on this earth is now”? How can you relate to that statement?
3. Compare and contrast the relationship of Deborah and Cheetah to the relationship between Henrietta and Day described at the beginning of the book. How are the relationships similar and different?
4. Predict the shocking news Deborah is about to get. Based on how the author described Deborah at the beginning of the book, how do you think she is going to handle the news?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Alfred “Cheetah” Carter</li><li>• Eldridge Lee Ivy</li><li>• June</li><li>• Zakariyya Bari Abdul Rahman</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ominously</li><li>• Insubordination</li><li>• Inferiority complex</li></ul>
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**Chapter 20:** “The HeLa Bomb”

**Summary:**

This chapter explains a major cell culturing problem that was discovered in 1966. It was believed that all of the cells that had been cultured and used for medical research up until this point had been contaminated by HeLa cells. If proven to be true, this could be a huge setback for doctors and scientists.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. What exactly was the “HeLa Bomb”?
2. Why were scientists and doctors so concerned with the news that Stanley Gartler delivered at the conference?
3. What would happen to scientific and medical research if Gartler’s idea of HeLa contamination is true?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stanley Gartler</li><li>• T.C. Hsu</li><li>• Robert Change</li><li>• Leonard Hayflick</li><li>• Robert Stevenson</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ascertain</li><li>• Spontaneous transformed human cell cultures</li><li>• Cell-line contamination</li><li>• G6PD-A</li></ul>
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**Chapter 21: “Night Doctors”**

**Summary:**

In this chapter, we begin to understand how Henrietta’s family feels about her cells being taken from her without consent. The family starts to tell Rebecca Skloot about Henrietta’s life and why they perceive themselves to be victims of an extreme injustice.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. Why do you think Henrietta’s family treated Rebecca differently than all the other reporters who wanted information? What made her different?
2. Who were the night doctors and what did they do? What type of impact did they leave on society?
3. What was the initial purpose of Johns Hopkins Hospital? Did the doctors uphold the original purpose? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think no one informed the Lacks family Henrietta’s cells were taken? Why were family members not updated on what Henrietta’s cells were doing for science and medicine?
5. Why were Lacks family members furious at the end of the chapter?
6. If you were a member of Henrietta’s family, would you be upset about the HeLa cell situation? Why or why not?

**Chapter 22: “The Fame She So Richly Deserves”**

**Summary:**

George Gey is diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and passes away. After his death, colleagues publish a tribute article and Henrietta is finally named as the ‘donor’ of the HeLa cell line.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. Would you be an organ or tissue donor? Why or why not?
2. Would you volunteer for medical research? Explain your answer.

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walter Nelson- Rees</li> </ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b>
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**Chapter 23: “It’s Alive”**

**Summary:**

Henrietta’s family finally learns her cells are alive. The family is notified and asked to give blood samples. Deborah believes she is being tested for cancer.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. Why is effective communication so important? How do you communicate effectively?
2. How would you feel and react if you found out doctors had taken cells or tissue from a family member without consent?
3. Did Susan Hsu act in an ethical manner when she spoke with the Lacks family? Why or why not?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Susan Hsu</li> </ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informed Consent</li> </ul>
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**Chapter 24:** “Least They Can Do”

**Summary:**

Michael Rogers, a writer for Rolling Stone magazine, publishes a story about Henrietta and her family. This is the first time the mainstream media reports about Henrietta and her family, and that they were black. Henrietta’s sons become convinced Hopkins stole her cells and made millions.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. George Gey didn’t make money from of the HeLa cell line. He also didn’t patent the roller drum that could have made him a fortune. What does this say about Gey and his character?
2. What do you think the implications were when the world discovered in 1976 that one of the most important tools in medicine came from a black woman?
3. Choose three words that describe how you feel when someone takes credit for something you do. How do you react?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Michael Rogers</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b>
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**Chapter 25:** “Who Told You You Could Sell My Spleen?”

**Summary:**

John Moore sues his doctor, David Golde, for using cells taken from his spleen to try to patent proteins that the cells produced. Golde stood to make millions from this patent and Moore wanted some of the money.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. Does a patient retain rights to his cells and tissue after they are removed from his body?
2. Should John Moore have received a settlement from this case? Why or why not?
3. Did Golde act ethically and in the best interest of his patient throughout treatment? Provide examples to strengthen your argument.

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• John Moore</li><li>• David Golde</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Patent</li></ul>
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**Chapter 26:** “Breach of Privacy”

**Summary:**

Deborah received a copy of Michael Gold’s book. The book quoted details from Henrietta’s medical records, including the autopsy; her family hadn’t given permission for these records to be released.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. Why is doctor/patient confidentiality so important?
2. Should the dead have rights to privacy? Why or why not?
3. Choose three words that describe how you feel when someone doesn’t have respect for your privacy. How do you react to this?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• David Pullam</li><li>• Michael Gold</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b>
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**Chapter 27: “The Secret of Immortality”**

**Summary:**

The author describes how Henrietta’s cancer started and why it spread so quickly. Rebecca also explains why Henrietta’s cells are immortal.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. If you were given the option to be immortal, would you? Why or why not?
2. Should scientists be able to manipulate DNA to produce “designer babies”? Defend your argument.

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b>	<b>Key Terms:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• HPV</li><li>• Telomere and telomerase</li><li>• Hayflick Limit</li></ul>
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**Chapter 28: “After London”**

**Summary:**

The BBC makes a documentary about Henrietta and her family. Roland Pattillo organizes the HeLa Cancer Control Symposium in Atlanta. The city of Atlanta declares October 11 as Henrietta Lacks Day. Sir Lord Keenan Kester Cofield enters Deborah’s life and files a lawsuit against her, Johns Hopkins, and many others.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. If you had cells that could lead to a great medical discovery, would you donate them for “the good of science,” or would you sell them? Explain your answer.
2. How did Kidwell’s (Hopkins attorney) attempt at protecting Deborah lead to her breakdown?
3. Why do you think the group from Hopkins that had been working on a way to honor Henrietta suddenly stopped their planning?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Richard Kidwell</li><li>• Terry Sharrer</li><li>• Barbara Wyche</li><li>• Adam Curtis</li><li>• Sir Lord Keenan Kester Cofield</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b>
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**Chapter 29: “A Village of Henriettas”**

**Summary:**

Deborah agrees to cooperate with Rebecca on the book; they commence collaboration on July 9, 2000 near the Baltimore harbor.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. Deborah campaigned to learn more, and have others understand, about her mother and her sister. Why were their untold stories vital to Deborah?
2. Toward the end of the chapter, Rebecca asked Deborah about the folder of Henrietta’s medical records Deborah carried in her satchel; why might Deborah have snapped “we ain’t ready for that” at Rebecca when Rebecca thought Deborah had laid the file out for examination?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gary</li><li>• Christoph Lengauer</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>fluorescent in situ hybridization (FISH)</i></li></ul>
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### **Chapter 30: “Zakariyya”**

#### **Summary:**

With Deborah as chauffeur and her grandsons Davon and Alfred as rear-seat passengers, Rebecca goes to Zakariyya’s apartment so she can interview Henrietta’s youngest son.

#### **Questions to Ponder:**

1. Zakariyya said, to Rebecca: “...we can’t even go see a doctor cause we can’t afford it. Only people that can get any good from my mother cells is the people that got money...” Discuss the ethical implications of Zakariyya’s statement.
2. How do you think Ethel’s treatment of young Zakariyya (given name Joe) affected his adolescence then later-life legal skirmishes?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b>	<b>Key Terms:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Zakariyya (Zuh-CAR-ee-uh)</li></ul>
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### **Chapter 31: “Hela, Goddess of Death”**

#### **Summary:**

Respectful of Deborah’s quandary as to whether Rebecca – or others – was being paid for Henrietta’s story, Rebecca pledges to establish a Henrietta Lacks Descendants Scholarship when the book is published. Rebecca also introduces Deborah to the World Wide Web which leads Deborah to fascinating and long-winded *Henrietta* and *HeLa* searches.

#### **Questions to Ponder:**

1. By this time, Rebecca began sending Deborah media packets containing both factual and outlandish fictional stories of HeLa cell use; why do you think Rebecca chose this time period to let Deborah sift these fiction and non-fiction accounts.
2. Henrietta’s great granddaughter Erika earned a master’s degree in psychology in May 2010. If you have access to records, trace your family’s education tree – from your great grandparents on both sides to you.

### **Chapter 32: “All That’s My Mother”**

#### **Summary:**

Deborah, Zakariyya, and Rebecca meet Christoph at his Johns Hopkins lab to examine HeLa cells and discuss their commerce.

#### **Questions to Ponder:**

1. Do you think there was any symbolism to Deborah, Zakariyya, and Rebecca meeting at the Hopkins’s Jesus statue on May 11, 2001 as they readied to see Henrietta’s cells; Henrietta herself had nearly passed the statue 50 years earlier (January 29, 1951) as “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks” began at Johns Hopkins.
2. Christoph told Deborah and Zakariyya, about their mother’s cells: “Once there is a cure for cancer, it’s definitely largely because of your mother’s cells.” He then used an analogy about ownership rights of finding oil on property. Discuss your thoughts about the *Henrietta Cells and Oil Rights Ownership* conundrum.

**Chapter 33:** “The Hospital for the Negro Insane”

**Summary:**

Deborah and Rebecca embark on a week-long quest to discover Elise’s history, starting at the former *Hospital for the Negro Insane* – at the time of their visit renamed *The Crownsville (MD) Hospital Center*. (The Hospital subsequently closed in July 2004.)

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. Discuss Lurz’s gentle statement to Deborah about her quest to learn details of Elise’s life: “Sometimes learning can be just as painful as not knowing.” Relate that statement to an event in your life.
2. If you were given a genealogy opportunity, what dead relative – who you have never met – would you explore?

<b>People Introduced in this Chapter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Paul Lurz</li></ul>	<b>Key Terms:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pneumoencephalography</li></ul>
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**Chapter 34:** “The Medical Records”

**Summary:**

Rebecca and Deborah begin sorting and reviewing Henrietta’s and Elise’s medical records while staying at a hotel somewhere between Annapolis (MD) and Clover (VA).

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. During her decade of researching and writing “Immortal Life,” and especially during this hotel stay, how do you think Rebecca maintained her – for the most part – equilibrium and literary focus amidst the Lacks children’s chaotic lives and erratic behavior?
2. Ponder events described at the bottom of page 283: did Rebecca’s reaction affect the book’s progress?

**Chapter 35:** “Heavenly Bodies”

**Summary:**

Deborah becomes emotionally and physically overwhelmed with insight about her mother and sister.

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. How did Gary affect Deborah’s manic behavior?
2. Describe how you think readers reacted to Gary’s prayer that God transfer Deborah’s burdens to Rebecca.

**Chapter 36:** “Heavenly Bodies”

**Summary:**

Gary gives Rebecca a Bible and shares with her passages that reflect his belief: “Henrietta was chosen...And when the Lord chooses an angel to do his work, you never know what they going to come back looking like.”

**Questions to Ponder:**

1. Discuss your feelings about Rebecca’s question: “You believe Henrietta is in those cells?”
2. Do you think researching and writing this book, plus interacting with Lacks family members, affected Rebecca’s religious mind-set?

**Chapter 37: “Nothing to Be Scared About”**

**Summary:**

Deborah’s poor health precludes her from accompanying Rebecca during 2001 research trips; Rebecca only reports positive findings to Deborah. Deborah prepares to attend a community college to better understand science and to speak at a National Foundation for Cancer Research conference in honor of her mother when the September 11 attacks occur.

**Questions to Ponder:**

- 1. After Deborah suffered a stroke her once-erratic behavior was replaced by a calmer unwavering demeanor. What factors might have contributed to Deborah’s steely determination?
- 2. What waylaid Deborah’s educational plans; how did that affect the next Lacks generation?

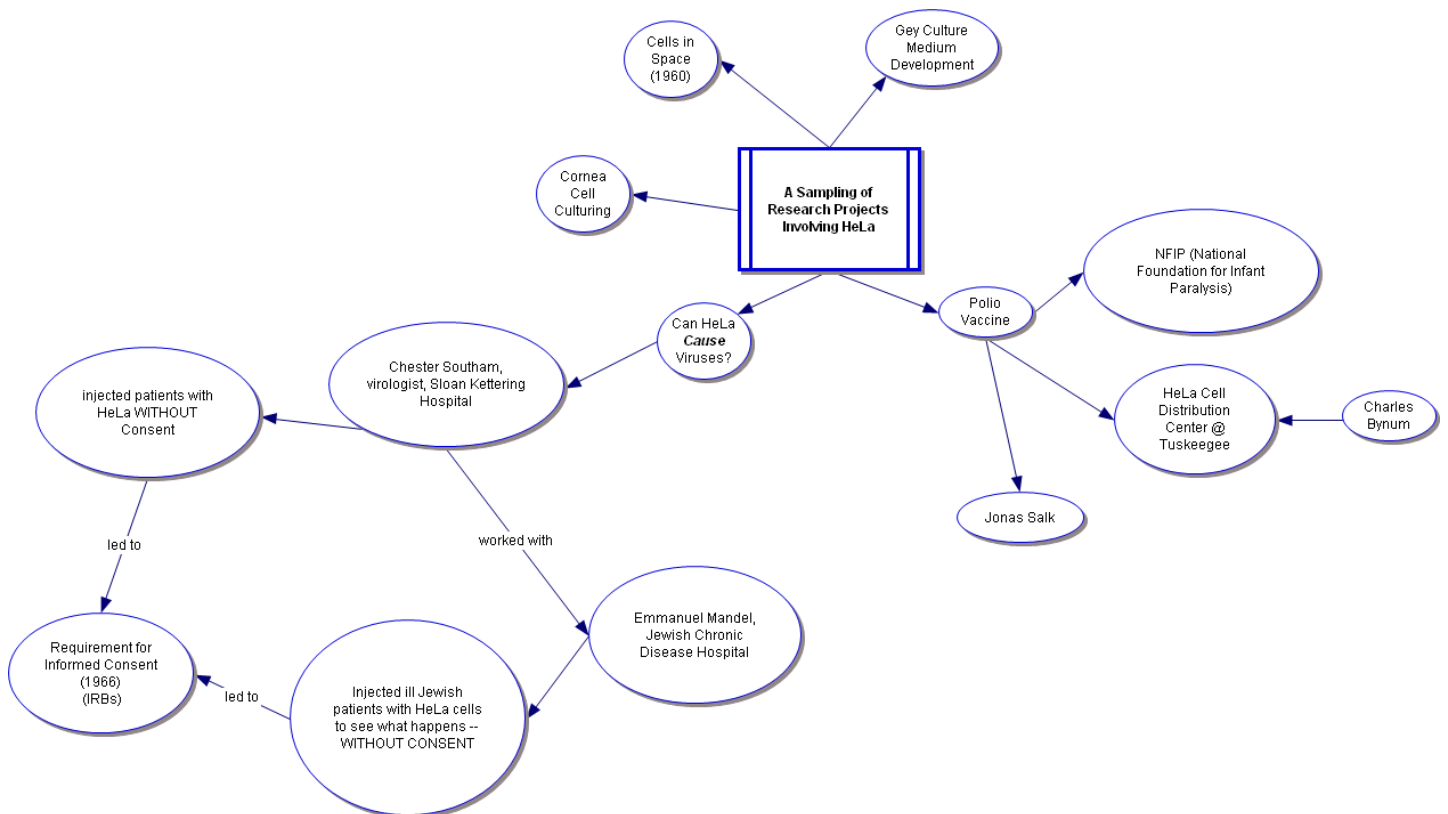
**Chapter 38: “The Long Road to Clover”**

**Summary:**

Rebecca returns to Clover in 2009, book finished, to reminisce in the town where Henrietta’s journey began. Her myriad calls to Deborah, to whom Rebecca promised to read the book, went unanswered and voice messages were not returned. A call to Sonny confirms Deborah died just after Mother’s Day 2009.

**Questions to Ponder:**

- 1. Contrast Henrietta’s great grandchildren’s dreams and lives in 2009 with that of their great grandmother at their ages.
- 2. Research, if possible, what dreams one or more of your great grandparents had as 18 year olds as well as their lifestyles. How does this compare to, and impact, your life as a St. Bonaventure University freshman?



# Family Tree for Henrietta Lacks

5 Generations

