

ENGLISH II 2018 SUMMER READING PHILLIP O. BERRY

The English II Team at Phillip O. Berry Academy of Technology extend a warm welcome to you as you reflect on your freshmen year of high school and prepare meaningfully for the upcoming school year. In the spirit of resilience, growth, and perseverance, we have chosen a novel that will serve as an anchor throughout our course. All students enrolled in **English II** for the upcoming school year are expected to read the novel *The Immortal Life of Henriette Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot and complete the subsequent assignment.

It is the student's responsibility to obtain a copy of the assigned text(s). The works can be accessed through the public library or through local bookstores, which have been notified of these selections. **FOR ALL LEVELS:** Accountability for the reading will take place during the 2017-2018 academic year in conjunction with individual teacher syllabi.

Tenth Grade English: *The Immortal Life of Henriette Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot (ISBN: 1400052181).

It is strongly recommended and imperative that all rising sophomores (English II and Honors English II) purchase this novel and read it over the summer.

Remember: Summer Reading is **REQUIRED** for all English courses. Below you can see the accompanying assignment with the novel.

Essay Assignment: Please complete the following questions either in a spiral notebook, composition notebook, or your responses may be typed. Please adhere to proper MLA format as you complete your work and do your best thinking—submission of your assignment is expected on the first day of the semester when you return from the summer holiday. Happy Reading Ladies and Gentlemen!

Guiding Questions: NOTE: This is NOT a summary of the book. This is YOUR analysis of the situations presented by the author. (Analysis is basically "taking something apart," in order to understanding it better by considering its component parts separately as well as together.)

1. In a review for the New York Times, Dwight Garner writes, "Ms. Skloot is a memorable character herself. She never intrudes on the narrative, but she takes us along with her on her reporting." How would the story have been different if she had not been a part of it? What do you think would have happened to scenes like the faith healing on page 289? Are there other scenes you can think of where her presence made a difference? Why do you think she decided to include herself in the story? Be sure to refer to specific scenes to support your assertions, and included proper citations for your quotes or paraphrased scenes.

2. This is a story with many layers. Though it's not told chronologically, it is divided into three sections. Discuss the significance of the titles given to each part: Life, Death, and Immortality. How would the story have been different if it were told chronologically?

3. Analyze the ways in which Skloot's style exemplifies the writer's rule of "show, don't tell" as she develops the characters of Henrietta, Deborah, George Gey, or other key figures in

the book. Address TWO characters in your answer. In your analysis, include at least two specific textual references (direct quotes) with proper citations to support your assertions.

4. As a journalist, Skloot is careful to present the encounter between the Lacks family and the world of medicine without taking sides. Since readers bring their own experiences and opinions to the text, some may feel she took the scientists' side, while others may feel she took the family's side. What is your conclusion regarding which "side" she is on? Do you perceive that she falls on one side or the other, or somewhere in the middle? Include at least two specific textual references (direct quotes) with proper citations to support your assertions. Additionally, Deborah says, "But I always have thought it was strange, if our mother cells done so much for medicine, how come her family can't afford to see no doctors? Don't make no sense" (9). Should the family be financially compensated for the HeLa cells? If so, whom do you believe that money should come from? Do you feel the Lacks's deserve health insurance even though they can't afford it?

5. Reflect upon Henrietta's life: What challenges did she and her family face? What do you think their greatest strengths were? Consider the progression of Henrietta's cancer in the last eight months between her diagnosis and death. How did she face death? What do you think that says about the type of person she was? Include at least two specific textual references (direct quotes) with proper citations to support your assertions. English 12 Summer Reading Assignment 3 The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks

6. Skloot begins the book with the following quote from Elie Wiesel: "We must not see any person as an abstraction. Instead, we must see in every person a universe with its own secrets, with its own treasures, with its own sources of anguish, and with some measure of triumph." Analyze the book in light of this quote. Explain the various ways in which both the scientific community and the media are guilty of having viewed Henrietta and her family as abstractions. What are the consequences of this perspective? How is Skloot's different perspective evident in the way she conducted her research and wrote the book? Include at least two specific textual references (direct quotes) with proper citations to support your assertions.