

## HeLa Study Guide, Parts 1-2

### Prologue (note: includes epigraph and “Deborah’s voice”)

1. Consider the epigraph of this book and why it was selected. It is better to answer this after reading the book.

*(“In literature, an **epigraph** is a phrase, quotation, or poem that is set at the beginning of a document or component. The epigraph may serve as a preface, as a summary, as a counter-example, or to link the work to a wider literary canon, either to invite comparison or to enlist a conventional context.”*

from [www.literaturestackexchange.com](http://www.literaturestackexchange.com))

2. How did Henrietta Lacks die?
3. Why were her cells unusual?
4. Why were her cells important?
5. What are a couple of reasons given for why her family was angry?

### **PART ONE: LIFE**

#### Ch 1: The Exam

1. Why did Henrietta go to John Hopkins?
2. How was she treated there as a “colored” woman?

#### Ch 2: Clover

1. What life changing events (more than one!) happened when Henrietta was four?
2. Who else did she share a bedroom with? How were they related?
3. What kind of work was there in Clover?
4. How old was Henrietta when she had her first child?
5. What was *The Great Migration*?

#### Ch 3: Diagnosis and Treatment

1. What did TeLinde, and other doctors of his day, often do without patients knowledge or consent?
2. How did they justify it?
3. What did Dr. Wharton do to Henrietta just before beginning radiation treatment, without her knowledge?

#### Ch 4: The Birth of HeLa

1. What people were important to “the birth of HeLa” success in the lab and why?
2. What did the head of the lab do with the cells?

#### Ch 6: Lady’s on the Phone

1. Know: Tuskegee Syphilis Study.
2. Know: Mississippi Appendectomies.

*(chapters 5, 7-9, 14,16, 18-19 are essential to understanding the story, but no details are needed)*

### Ch 10: The Other Side of the Tracks

1. Why did the doctor lie and say that Cootie was his son?

### Ch 11: The Devil of Pain Itself

1. What year did Henrietta die?

## **PART TWO: DEATH**

### Ch 12: The Storm

1. What made Mary, the autopsy nurse, realize that Henrietta is “a real person”?  
(compare this to the epigraph)

### Ch 13: The HeLa Factory

1. What crisis in 1913 led to the formation of a HeLa factory?
2. Where was the first HeLa factory and what was going on there simultaneously?

### Ch 15: Too Young to Remember

1. What physical challenge did all the Lacks children share that made it difficult to be successful in a traditional school setting?
2. What may have caused the issue?

### Ch 17: Illegal, Immoral, and Deplorable

1. Know about Southam’s experiments.
2. What is the first line of the Nuremberg Code?
3. What year was it developed and what was the setting?
4. Why did 3 doctors resign over Southam’s experiments?
5. How did the NIH change its grant funding rules as a result?

### Ch 20: The HeLa Bomb

1. Be able to explain the “technical problem” a geneticist ran into.
2. How was this a *bomb* that shook up biological research all over the world?

### Ch 21: Night Doctors

1. Who were “night doctors”?
2. Why did the KKK come to wear white cloaks?

## **AFTERWORD**

After reading the afterword, respond with several paragraphs (below) about how you feel about what happens to your tissues and how it relates to the issues in this book.