

## **Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review**

Teacher: CP English 9 Team    Grade: 9    School: OOHS

Book Title: The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks    Genre: Non-fiction

Author: Rebecca Skloot    Pages: 369

Publisher: Crown Publishing Group    Copyright: 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.)

Henrietta Lacks, a poor Southern tobacco farmer, was buried in an unmarked grave sixty years ago. Yet her cells - taken without her knowledge - became one of the most important tools in medical research. Known to science as HeLa, the first "immortal" human cells grown in culture are still alive today, and have been bought and sold by the millions. Rebecca Skloot takes us on an extraordinary journey from the "colored" ward of Johns Hopkins Hospital in the 1950s to East Baltimore today, where Henrietta's family struggles with her legacy.

([www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com))

**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)

- Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text
- 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.
- Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose

**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

[www.BarnesandNoble.com](http://www.BarnesandNoble.com)

Who, you might ask, is Henrietta Lacks (1920-1951) and why is she the subject of a book? On the surface, this short-lived African American Virginian seems an unlikely candidate for immortality. The most remarkable thing about her, some might argue, is that she had ten children during her thirty-one years on earth. Actually, we all owe Ms. Lacks a great debt and some of us owe her our lives. As Rebecca Skloot tells us in this riveting human story, Henrietta was the involuntary donor of cells from her cancerous tumors that have been cultured to create an immortal cell line for medical research. These so-called HeLa cells have not only generated billions of dollars for the medical industry; they have helped uncover secrets of cancers, viruses, fertilization, cloning, and

gene mapping. A vivid, exciting story; a 2010 Discover Great New Books finalist; a surprise bestseller in hardcover.

Review #2

Publisher's Weekly

Science journalist Skloot makes a remarkable debut with this multilayered story about “faith, science, journalism, and grace.” It is also a tale of medical wonders and medical arrogance, racism, poverty and the bond that grows, sometimes painfully, between two very different women—Skloot and Deborah Lacks—sharing an obsession to learn about Deborah’s mother, Henrietta, and her magical, immortal cells. Henrietta Lacks was a 31-year-old black mother of five in Baltimore when she died of cervical cancer in 1951. Without her knowledge, doctors treating her at Johns Hopkins took tissue samples from her cervix for research. They spawned the first viable, indeed miraculously productive, cell line—known as HeLa. These cells have aided in medical discoveries from the polio vaccine to AIDS treatments. What Skloot so poignantly portrays is the devastating impact Henrietta’s death and the eventual importance of her cells had on her husband and children. Skloot’s portraits of Deborah, her father and brothers are so vibrant and immediate they recall Adrian Nicole LeBlanc’s *Random Family*. Writing in plain, clear prose, Skloot avoids melodrama and makes no judgments. Letting people and events speak for themselves, Skloot tells a rich, resonant tale of modern science, the wonders it can perform and how easily it can exploit society’s most vulnerable people

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

Title: Into Thin Air    Author: Jon Krakour

Title:                      Author:

Title:                      Author:

Title:                      Author:

Title:                      Author:

Title:                      Author:

**Document any potentially controversial content:**

This book discusses controversial spiritual and ethical issues.

**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:** 22 February 2012

**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