

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks
 “Prologue – The Woman in the Photograph”
Critical Reading Study Guide

- **Materials needed:** The reading, a highlighter, a pen or pencil, a good English-English dictionary
 - **Instructions:**
 - Before reading the Prologue, read through this study guide to be aware of what you will need to do and how much time it will take.
 - Be sure to answer all questions and complete all tasks, even if they don’t require you to write anything!
 - I would prefer that you not make any annotations in your native language, especially for vocabulary.
 - DO NOT USE ANY KIND OF DICTIONARY UNTIL YOU SEE INSTRUCTIONS TO DO SO!
1. PREVIEWING:
 - 1) Look at the whole selection. How long do you think it will take you to read this without stopping to figure out vocabulary?
 - 2) Read the Book Summary at the top of page 1.
 - 3) Quickly read the first sentence of each paragraph.
 2. READING:
 - 1) Read the article through one time. Read somewhat quickly but try to understand as best you can. You’ll be able to go back later and figure out confusing sections and vocabulary. Don’t do any writing or highlighting yet.
 - 2) Now get your pencil. For each paragraph, make an annotation in the left margin for the following:
 - RS = Paragraphs mostly about the author, Rebecca Skloot
 - HL = Paragraphs mostly about the person, Henrietta Lacks
 - HeLa = Paragraphs mostly about Henrietta’s cells, the “HeLa” cells
 If paragraphs include information about more than one of these, write both or all three annotations.
 - 3) Put a question mark in the right margin for any sentences of this reading you don’t understand yet.
 3. VOCABULARY (No, you cannot use your dictionary quite yet! Almost!):
 - 1) Scan the reading to find the following words. When you find them, highlight them in the reading. They appear here in the same order as they appear in the reading.
 - Oblivious, immortal, advances, inconceivable, alternative, tissues, nutrients, wounds, goes haywire (idiom), enormous, vicious, suppress, precision, quirk, omnipresent, snippets, gnawing, glare, fixated, ethical, debate, conspiracy, metaphorically, agnostic, voodoo, predominantly, piss [someone] off (slang; offensive), struggle

2) Hopefully you already know some of these words. For the ones you do not, find three that you can explain ONLY USING CONTEXT CLUES from the reading. Write these three words and your GUESS about their meanings here. (See page 530 of WW if you need to review what CONTEXT CLUES means.)

1.

2.

3.

3) IT'S DICTIONARY TIME! Choose 3 additional words from the list (not words that you already know or that you used for the context exercise above) to fill in the chart below. Please use a good English-English dictionary, and remember you should not translate.

Vocabulary Word and Line # from Prologue	Appropriate Dictionary Definition	Part of Speech (noun, verb, adjective, etc.) and related forms	Synonyms (if any)

4) If there are other words in the reading you don't know, spend a little time to figure them out using appropriate strategies (Guessing the meaning from context, looking at word parts, using a dictionary **IN THAT ORDER**).

4. GRAMMAR – VERB TENSE & TIME SHIFTS

- 1) Re-read the 4th paragraph, lines 14-21.
- 2) Underline every verb phrase you find.
- 3) Make a list of the different tenses and forms you find in this paragraph. Be ready to identify them. It's OK to make annotations on the reading.

5. COMPREHENSION & DISCUSSION - We will talk about these in class, but please read through the questions and think about how you might answer.

- 1) Describe who Henrietta Lacks was and what happened to her.
- 2) What are *HeLa cells*? Why were they given this name?
- 3) Briefly summarize what has happened with HeLa cells.
- 4) How did the author first learn about HeLa cells?
- 5) What is a cell and what does it do?
- 6) When and how did Henrietta die?
- 7) Why do you think Skloot was so interested in Henrietta as a person?
- 8) Why did Henrietta's family feel that "science and the press had taken advantage of them"? (line 113).
- 9) Why do you think Henrietta's family was so confused about what was happening with Henrietta's cells?
- 10) Read the paragraph on lines 135 to 144. What can you INFER about the author, Rebecca Skloot?
- 11) Read the two paragraphs on lines 145 to 161 that compare the backgrounds of Skloot and Deborah. Who can you identify with more? Are you more similar to Skloot or Deborah? Please explain.
- 12) Now that you've seen a short video about Henrietta's story and read the prologue to the book, how would you feel about reading the whole book?