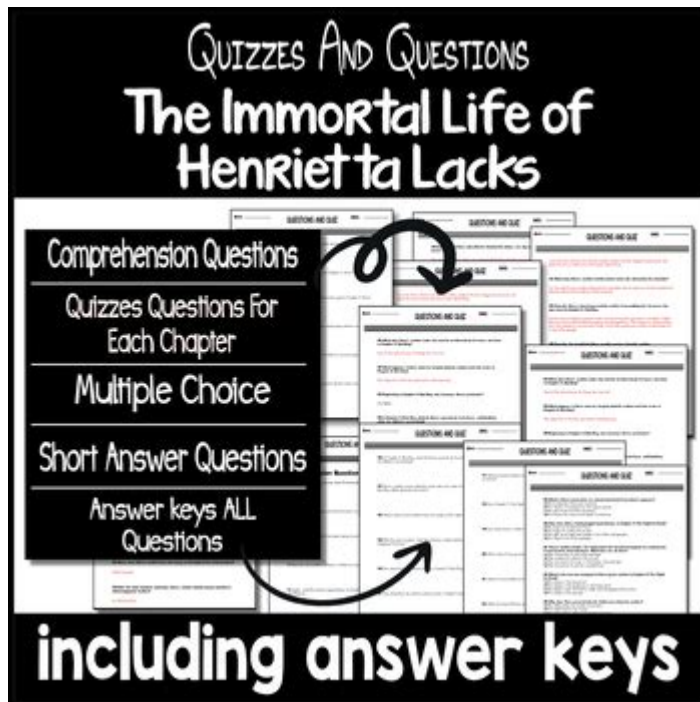


# Henrietta Lacks Assignment Answer Key



Henrietta Lacks assignment answer key refers to a set of study guides, answers, and insights related to the life and legacy of Henrietta Lacks, a woman whose cells were taken without her consent in the early 1950s and became one of the most important tools in medicine. Her story has sparked discussions about ethics, race, and medical research, and has led to a deeper understanding of the importance of informed consent in scientific studies. This article will provide a comprehensive overview of Henrietta Lacks, the significance of her contribution to science, the ethical considerations surrounding her case, and how it is commonly reflected in educational assignments.

## Who Was Henrietta Lacks?

Henrietta Lacks was born on August 1, 1920, in Roanoke, Virginia. Coming from a poor African American family, Lacks faced significant challenges throughout her life. She married David Lacks in 1941, and together they had five children. In 1951, Lacks sought treatment for cervical cancer at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland. During her visit, without her knowledge or consent, doctors took a sample of her tumor cells. These cells would later be known as HeLa cells, named after the first

two letters of her first and last names.

## **The Importance of HeLa Cells**

HeLa cells are vital for several reasons:

1. **Immortality:** Unlike normal human cells, which have a limited lifespan, HeLa cells can divide indefinitely in a laboratory setting. This property has made them invaluable for research.
2. **Medical Research:** HeLa cells have been used in numerous medical breakthroughs, including the development of the polio vaccine, cancer research, and understanding the effects of radiation and toxic substances.
3. **Contributions to Genetics:** HeLa cells have been instrumental in the field of genetics, notably in the discovery of how viruses can alter human DNA.
4. **Vaccine Development:** The cells were crucial in the testing and production of vaccines, including those for measles, mumps, and rubella.
5. **Research on Human Behavior:** HeLa cells have also been utilized in psychological and social studies, providing insights into human behavior and disease.

## **Ethical Issues Surrounding Henrietta Lacks' Case**

The story of Henrietta Lacks raises significant ethical concerns regarding informed consent and the treatment of minority patients in the medical field.

# Informed Consent

Informed consent is a cornerstone of ethical medical practice. It entails providing patients with sufficient information about a procedure so they can make an educated decision regarding their care.

In Henrietta Lacks' case:

- Lack of Consent: The doctors at Johns Hopkins took her cells without her knowledge or permission.

At the time, it was common practice to use tissue samples for research without informing patients.

- Cultural Implications: The case highlights broader issues of race and exploitation in medical research.

Lacks was an African American woman from a marginalized community, raising questions about whether her race influenced the decision to use her cells without consent.

## Impact on Medical Ethics

Henrietta Lacks' story has led to significant changes in medical ethics:

- New Regulations: Her case has contributed to the establishment of stricter regulations regarding patient consent in medical research.

- Awareness: It has raised awareness about the need for transparency in clinical trials and research practices.

- Advocacy for Patients: Organizations now advocate for patients' rights, emphasizing the importance of informed consent.

# Educational Assignments on Henrietta Lacks

In educational settings, Henrietta Lacks' story is often used to teach students about ethics, biology, and the intersection of race and medicine. Assignment prompts may include:

1. Research Paper: Write a paper discussing the impact of HeLa cells on modern medicine. Include specific examples of medical advancements that utilized HeLa cells.
2. Ethics Discussion: Analyze the ethical implications of Henrietta Lacks' case. Discuss how informed consent should be handled in medical research today.
3. Presentation: Create a presentation detailing Henrietta Lacks' life and the legacy of her cells. Highlight the scientific breakthroughs made possible by HeLa cells.
4. Creative Assignment: Write a fictional diary entry from Henrietta Lacks' perspective during her treatment at Johns Hopkins. Consider her thoughts on her diagnosis and the discovery of her cells' importance.
5. Case Study Analysis: Examine a contemporary case in medical research that raises ethical questions similar to those posed by Henrietta Lacks' story. Discuss how researchers navigated issues of consent and ethics.

## Conclusion

Henrietta Lacks' story is a powerful reminder of the intersection of ethics, race, and medical research. Her contribution to science through HeLa cells has paved the way for numerous medical advancements, but it also serves as a cautionary tale about the importance of informed consent and ethical treatment in clinical settings. As students engage with assignments related to Lacks, they learn not just about biology and medicine, but also about the fundamental rights of individuals in research.

The legacy of Henrietta Lacks continues to inspire dialogue about ethics in science, ensuring that her story is not forgotten and that her contributions are recognized and respected in the ongoing evolution of medical ethics.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Who was Henrietta Lacks and why is she significant in medical history?**

Henrietta Lacks was an African American woman whose cancer cells were taken without her knowledge in 1951. These cells, known as HeLa cells, became one of the most important tools in medicine, contributing to numerous breakthroughs in research and treatment.

### **What ethical issues are raised by the case of Henrietta Lacks?**

The case raises significant ethical issues regarding informed consent, as her cells were taken without her consent, and the exploitation of African American individuals in medical research.

### **How did HeLa cells contribute to scientific advancements?**

HeLa cells were the first immortal human cell line and have been used in various research areas, including cancer, virology, genetics, and the development of the polio vaccine.

### **What impact did Henrietta Lacks' story have on biomedical ethics?**

Her story has led to increased awareness and discussions about consent, patient rights, and the importance of ethical standards in medical research.

### **What is the significance of the book 'The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks'?**

This book by Rebecca Skloot chronicles Henrietta Lacks' life and the legacy of her cells, highlighting

issues of race, ethics, and the intersection of science and personal stories.

## What was the response of Henrietta Lacks' family regarding the use of her cells?

Henrietta Lacks' family was initially unaware of the use of her cells and later expressed concerns about the lack of consent and the commercialization of her cells without compensation to them.

## How has the medical community changed in response to the Henrietta Lacks case?

The medical community has made strides toward more rigorous ethical standards, including the establishment of guidelines for informed consent and the treatment of human subjects in research.

## What are some current discussions around the legacy of Henrietta Lacks?

Current discussions focus on issues of racial injustice in medicine, the need for equitable treatment in research, and the importance of recognizing contributions from marginalized communities.

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