**HELA STUDY WEEK 1**

**Prologue: The Woman in the Photograph**

1. How does the author describe the structure of cells?

2. What is mitosis? What beneficial biological processes involve mitosis?

3. What happens when there is a mistake during the process of mitosis?

4. According to Defler, how important was the discovery of HeLa cells?

5. As a high school student, Skloot began researching HeLa cells to find out more about Henrietta Lacks. Examine pages 5 and 6 and write down each step that Skloot took to begin her research.

**Chapter One: The Exam**

1. What did Henrietta’s first doctor assume the source of the lump on Henrietta’s cervix was? What stereotype or bias might this assumption be based upon?

2. Why did David Lacks take Henrietta to the public wards at Johns Hopkins instead of a closer hospital?

3. What is a biopsy?

4. Compared to other tumors, what was unique about Henrietta’s tumor?

5. Based on her medical chart, how would you describe Henrietta’s feelings about doctors?

6. What did Howard Jones find “interesting” about Henrietta’s medical history? What does this finding suggest about Henrietta’s cancer?

**Chapter Two: Clover**

1. Skloot uses vivid imagery and details to describe Henrietta’s childhood in Clover.

Locate a passage that you found particularly effective or memorable, and explain why you selected it.

2. How old was Henrietta when she had her first child with Day?

3. Did Henrietta receive any medical treatment during her youth? Why or why not?

**Chapter Three: Diagnosis and Treatment**

1. How are different types of cancer categorized?

2. How did they treat Henrietta’s cancer?

3. Explain how the development of the Pap smear improved the survival rate of women diagnosed with cervical cancer.

4. How did TeLinde hope to prove that his hypothesis about cervical cancer was correct?

5. Explain what an immortal cell line is.

6. Analyze the consent statement that Henrietta signed on page 31. Based on this statement, do you believe TeLinde and Guy had the right to obtain a sample from her cervix to use in their research?

7. Do you think Henrietta would have given explicit consent to have a tissue sample used in medical research if she had been asked? Do you think she would have understood what was being asked of her? Explain your answers.

**HELA STUDY WEEK 2**

**Chapter Four: The Birth of HeLa**

1. Summarize the main obstacles Gey and his assistants faced in their effort to grow cells.

2. Where did the name “HeLa” come from?

4. Explain how Gey’s roller-tube culturing technique works.

5. What happened to the HeLa cells that Mary cultured?

6. Gey chose to give away samples of HeLa to his colleagues almost immediately. Do you think this was a good decision? Explain your answer.

**Chapter Five: “Blackness Be Spreadin All Inside”**

1. What were the side effects of the cancer treatment?
2. What important information did Henrietta’s doctor fail to give her before starting her cancer treatment? How did she react when this information was eventually shared with her?

**Chapter Six: “Lady’s On the Phone”**

2. Paraphrase the information on page 50 describing the Tuskegee Syphilis Study.

3. What do the Tuskegee Syphilis Study and the Mississippi Appendectomies suggest about the history of African Americans and medicine?

**Chapter Seven: The Death and Life of Cell Culture**

1. What did Gey hope to accomplish with HeLa cells?

2. What did HeLa allow scientists to do for the first time?

3. Who was Alexis Carrel? Why did he win the Nobel Prize?

4. What controversial beliefs did Carrell have?

5. Give an example of propaganda that was used to fuel the public’s fear and distrust of tissue culture.

6. What details suggest that Carrel’s claims about the immortal cell line were not scientifically sound?