

Henrietta Lacks

1. Question & Research Task

Beginning in 2011 the Centers for Disease Control recommended that all 11- and 12-year-old children receive vaccinations for HPV, a virus that has links to several forms of cancer and possible links to heart disease. Chances are, many of you have had this vaccine.

The development of this vaccine and [the polio vaccine](#), as well as studies on how human cells react in space, are all the result of research using "HeLa cells" which were acquired from a local woman named [Henrietta Lacks](#). She did not give consent for her cells to be taken, and her story has led to changes in medical ethics, but her cells inspired science that is now inside most of us.

But how did this happen? What were the conditions in Baltimore at the time that allowed this to happen?

In this Slam Dunk, you will conduct brief, focused research to respond to the inquiry question:

How did the culture of Baltimore in the 1940's and 1950's shape the experiences of Henrietta Lacks?

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Click the image to launch a video about the 2017 film about Henrietta Lacks created by Oprah Winfrey. Your teacher or librarian may show this video for in school access.

Image Source: NBC News

***NOTE: If you are prompted to log in to access a database or digital content links, your teacher/librarian can provide login information.**

2. Information Sources

Choose several of the information sources linked here to complete the Student Activity on Slide 3.

[Eugenics, Jim Crow and Baltimore's Best](#)

[Map of Jim Crow Laws PDF](#) (Maryland: pages 11-12)

[Baltimore's Civil Rights Heritage](#)

[Sparrows Point, Dundalk and Turners Station Neighborhood Information](#)

[Dundalk Timeline](#)

[History of Sparrows Point](#)

[Turner Station as African-American Enclave](#) (Baltimore Sun article: Enter through [NIE/Baltimore Sun](#) and ask your teacher/librarian for the login info)

[A Picture of Black Baltimore](#) (Baltimore Sun article: Enter through [NIE/Baltimore Sun](#) and ask your teacher/librarian for the login info)

[Bethlehem Steel Legacy Project](#), [Bethlehem Steel Photos](#)

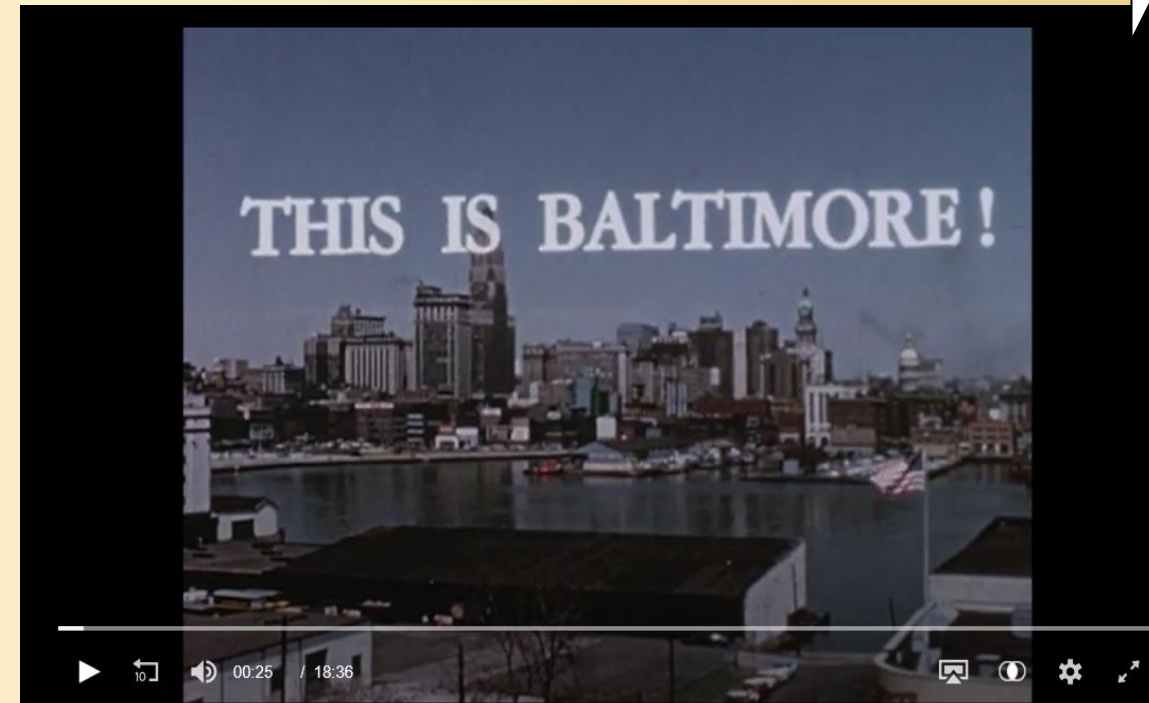
[Photo of the Hopkins Main Building](#), [Aerial Photo](#)

[Segregated Medical Care](#), [Hopkins' statement on Henrietta Lacks](#)

[HeLa and Patient Rights](#)

[Women's History at the Maryland State Archives](#)

[African-American History in Maryland Digital Archive](#)



Click the link to learn about to view a 1959 video promoting Baltimore's industries and economy. Your teacher or librarian may show this video for in school access.

Image Source: WJZ Archival Footage via [MARMIA](#) and the Baltimore City Historical Society

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3. Student Activity

Use the information sources on Slide 2 to take notes about the culture of Baltimore in the 1940's and 1950's, using one of the methods below or another as directed by your teacher.

- [Cornell Notes](#)
- NoodleTools note cards – access from BCPS [Apps Portal](#)



“Preston Gardens, located along St. Paul St. from E. Centre St. to Lexington St., was created in 1917 after several power plays by Mayor James Preston allowed him to seize land from an African American community in the area. It was turned into a park, which he named after himself.”

4. Assessment Activity

How did the culture of Baltimore in the 1940's and 1950's shape the experiences of Henrietta Lacks?

Read the description of the patient on page 16 of the text *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*.

Use your research notes to annotate the patient description, making connections to the local history you researched. How might Henrietta's experiences, and the views and actions of her doctor, have been shaped by the culture of Baltimore at the time?

Refer to [this rubric](#) as a guide to success criteria for your annotations.



Aerial photograph taken in 1938 of the Bethlehem Steel Company Sparrows Point Yard in Baltimore County. The row of silo-like tanks in the foreground marks the location of the blast furnace, the rows of slender stacks at right angles to the blast furnaces are the open-hearth shops. Also in the foreground is a ship being tied up at the ore dock.

5. Enrichment Activities

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The view from 1955 from a helicopter of Baltimore harbor looking northwest toward downtown. Photograph by Marion E. Warren.

Image Source: [Maryland State Archives](#)

The book *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* alludes to medical research gone awry with Tuskegee, but all medical research has also benefitted billions of people worldwide.

Spend some time exploring the following links. Then, answer the question in a well-developed paragraph that will be scored using the PARCC rubric, ***Has medical research been more beneficial to humanity for health and medicine-related reasons, or do the ethical concerns surrounding some medical research make the results tainted or unusable? In other words, do the benefits outweigh the problems?***

[This man's blood has saved millions](#)

Tuskegee Syphilis Study [Source 1](#) [Source 2](#)

[Skid Row Cancer Study](#)

***NOTE: If you are prompted to log in to access a database or digital content links, your teacher/librarian can provide login information.**

6. Teacher Resources

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Learning Standards Alignment

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.7

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Reading: 1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Writing: 7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

AASL Standards Framework for Learners Inquire: Build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems.

Think: Learners display curiosity and initiative by:

I.A.2 Recalling prior and background knowledge as context for new meaning.

Create: Learners engage with new knowledge by following a process that includes:

I.B.1 Using evidence to investigate questions. I.B.3 Generating products that illustrate learning.

Share: Learners adapt, communicate, and exchange learning products with others in a cycle that includes:

I.C.1 Interacting with content presented by others.

Grow: Learners participate in an ongoing inquiry-based process by:

I.D.2 Engaging in sustained inquiry.

Grade 12 Content Area: ELA

Objective: Students will explore the culture of Baltimore in the 1940's and 1950's by integrating and evaluating multiple sources of information in order to develop a context for reading *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*.

Time Frame: Two 90-minute class periods

Differentiation strategies for this lesson:

- Have students use learning supports provided in any BCPS Digital Content in the [Apps Portal](#) included in this lesson.
- Refer to [Digital Content Snapshot/Support pages](#) on BCPS Innovation Hub if needed.

Notes to the teacher:

- Collaborate with your school library media specialist to plan and implement this lesson.
- Students will need their student ID numbers to access BCPL links.
- For the assessment, the teacher will need to prepare copies of page 16 of the text.
- If this Slam Dunk Lesson includes links to YouTube videos, the teacher/librarian may screen videos for the class.