**Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Henrietta Lacks Reading Guide: Chapters 20-25**

**Chapter Twenty: The HeLa Bomb**

1. Explain the meaning of the idiomatic expression “to drop a bomb.”
2. What did Stanley Gartler discover about eighteen of the most commonly used cell cultures?
3. How was Gartler able to link the contamination problem to HeLa?
4. What unique abilities did HeLa have that allowed it to contaminate cultures without researchers being aware that contamination had occurred?
5. Why would HeLa contamination be a problem for researchers?
6. What is “spontaneous transformation”? What did Gartler suggest about spontaneous transformation?
7. How did the scientific community respond to Gartler’s theory about HeLa contamination?

**Chapter Twenty-One: Night Doctors**

1. What does the author’s choice of descriptive details reveal to the reader about her impression of Sonny Lacks?
2. Explain the connection that Sonny makes between his mother’s personality and the ways he believes HeLa cells have been used.
3. Sonny and Lawrence repeat the refrain “That’s a miracle,” when discussing the scientific advances made possible by their mother’s cells. What does this refrain suggest about their worldview and values?
4. The description “His light brown face had grown tough with age, cracked but soft, like a pair of well-worn work boots,” conveys a strong impression of Day Lacks. What does it suggest about his life and personality?
5. Give an example of indirect characterization that reveals that the Lacks family distrusts doctors.
6. What are “night doctors?” Where did the term originate and why? What do the Lackses believe “night doctors” do? Is their belief based on real events? Explain your answer.
7. Why did Johns Hopkins start a medical school and hospital in a poor black neighborhood? What purpose was the school/hospital intended to serve?
8. What does the 1969 Johns Hopkins study reveal about the researcher’s attitude and assumptions about race?
9. Why is the fact that the Lacks family cannot get health insurance an example of irony?
10. What is the Lacks family’s biggest complaint about the way they have been treated by Johns Hopkins and Dr. Gey?

**Chapter Twenty-Two: “The Fame She So Richly Deserves”**

1. What type of cancer was George Gey diagnosed with?
2. What specific request did Gey make prior to going into surgery? Why didn’t his surgeons honor his request?
3. After finding out that his cancer was terminal, what reason did Gey give for his decision to offer himself as a research subject?
4. Did Gey benefit or profit in any way from his participation in the research studies?
5. Do Gey’s attitude and actions after his own diagnosis of terminal cancer change your opinion of him? Explain your answer.
6. What did Howard Jones realize when he reviewed Henrietta’s medical records?
7. What was the purpose of President Nixon’s National Cancer Act?
8. Explain how Henrietta’s real name became public knowledge.
9. Do you agree that Henrietta should have been correctly identified in order to “give her the fame she so richly deserves,” or do you think her anonymity should have been protected? Explain your answer.

**Chapter Twenty-Three: “It’s Alive”**

1. The title of this chapter contains an allusion to the classic horror movie *Frankenstein*. What does this allusion suggest about the tension between scientific discovery, and public perception and fear of such discoveries?
2. How did Bobette find out about HeLa?
3. How long had Henrietta been dead when her family found out that her cells were still alive?
4. Why did researchers want DNA samples from Henrietta’s family?
5. Did researchers explain why they wanted DNA samples to the Lacks family? Did the family give informed consent for the research done on those samples?
6. Why did the Lacks family think the doctors were taking their blood?
7. From a legal standpoint, how is the fact that the doctors failed to obtain consent prior to taking blood from the Lacks family in 1973 different from their initial failure to obtain consent from Henrietta in 1951?
8. What were some of Deborah’s fears and concerns after she found out that her mother’s cells were still alive?
9. Why did advances in genetic research necessitate establishing the legal requirement that doctors or researchers obtain informed consent documentation prior to taking DNA samples from patients for research?
10. Analyze the last paragraphs of this chapter. What does Hsu’s request reveal about her attitude towards the Lackses? What does Skloot reveal by ending the chapter with Hsu’s request?

**Chapter Twenty-Four: “Least They Can Do”**

1. What motivated Michael Rogers to find the Lacks family?
2. How did Rogers discover Henrietta’s real name?
3. Paraphrase the paragraph in Rogers’s article that the Lacks family found extremely upsetting. What conclusion did they draw about George Gey and Johns Hopkins?
4. What facts about George Gey’s life support the assertion that he never personally profited from the development of HeLa?
5. Explain how the sale of HeLa evolved into a business. Describe the extent to which the profits from that business are likely a direct result of the sale of HeLa cells. In what other ways do scientists, corporations, and individuals profit as a result of HeLa?
6. Why did Deborah begin researching her mother’s cells? What effect did her research have on her?
7. What information about the Lackses was published by McKusick and Hsu? Why is the publication of this information troubling from an ethical and legal standpoint?

**Chapter Twenty-Five: “Who Told You You Could Sell My Spleen?”**

1. Summarize John Moore’s story.
2. Describe the lawsuit that set a legal precedent for patenting biological “products” such as cell lines.
3. Why did Ted Slavin start Essential Biologicals?
4. Why did scientists find the Moore lawsuit deeply troubling?
5. Summarize the pros and cons of giving patients legal ownership of their cells.
6. What was the Supreme Court of California’s decision regarding the Moore lawsuit? Summarize the reasoning behind the decision.
7. Do you agree with the court’s ruling? Explain your answer.