Supplemental Materials

for

The HeLa Documentary Film: An Engaging Writing and Culturally Relevant Assignment on Cell Division and Ethics for Nonscience Majors

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Appendix 1: Questions prepared by the authors for the documentary film.

Henrietta Lacks Documentary Questions

Directions: Please answer the questions from the documentary shown in class. Submit your answers to me typed and stapled (if you have more than one page) by next Wednesday October 30, for MW classes and on next Thursday for my 9:30 TR class. Please retype the questions or attach this sheet from Blackboard from under the assignment section. That means you give Dr. Jordan a hard copy on the day your class meets. Please write in complete sentences. You may give it to another classmate or submit it early if you cannot attend class on next week. Ten (10) points are deducted for every day that you are late. The assignment is worth 30 points! So do your best!!! These points will be added to your activity grade. You can find this film on YouTube or under the announcement section of blackboard for this class.

1. What was Ms. Lacks’ background? Where was she from? When was she born? What was the occupation of her descendants?

2. How did she pass (die)? What was her diagnosis?

3. How were her cells different? Review the cell cycle and cell division as you answer this question.

4. Do you think Dr. Guy’s isolation of her cells without her knowledge and without her family’s knowledge unethical? Explain.

5. What were some of the uses for her cells?

6. What racial issues were raised as a result of the studies with her cells?

7. How did HeLa’s cells negatively impact the war on cancer?

8. How did her family finally discover that her cells were still being studied and sold?

9. Do you think that the Lacks family could ever be properly compensated for the decades of commercial sale of her cells? If so, what would be suitable compensation?
10. In a brief paragraph, describe how the Henrietta Lack's story has similarities to the Tuskegee Syphilis Study (Research both stories). What were at least 2 ethical concerns that changed how research on human beings is now conducted?

11. Please write whether you thought this was an effective exercise to do for the class (both the film and the questions). If you like one part better (more effective) than the other please let me know. As a part of improving our teaching of Biology, we are asking your input on various assignments in class. Thank you!

Questions designed by both authors. Instructors can design their own questions for this exercise.
Appendix 2: Students’ responses to selected questions and other suggested topics.

One student echoed our goal by stating

This exercise exposed the class to some additional historical facts about the unethical mistreatment of blacks. It introduced Henrietta Lacks whom I had never heard of prior to this exercise. I believe that this exercise will heighten our awareness about the possibilities when it comes to providing tissue samples or giving blood. The ethical question will always be a topic of concern.

Other students appreciated the science as well as the cultural relevance to their lives.

Watching this film was interesting from a scientific aspect as well as a life lesson standpoint. This film has helped me to be better connected to my worth as a human being, as well as who I am as an African American, therefore making it [the film] more meaningful.

List of other topics that may incorporate film or scientific or medical ethics.

1. USPHS Study of the Untreated Negro Male in Macon County better known as the “Tuskegee Syphilis Study.”
2. HIV/AIDS Epidemic & Implications in Underserved Populations
3. Valdez Oil Spill
4. The Gulf Coast Oil Spill
5. The Use of Prisoners in Medical Studies
6. Not In My Backyard: The Erin Brockovich Story