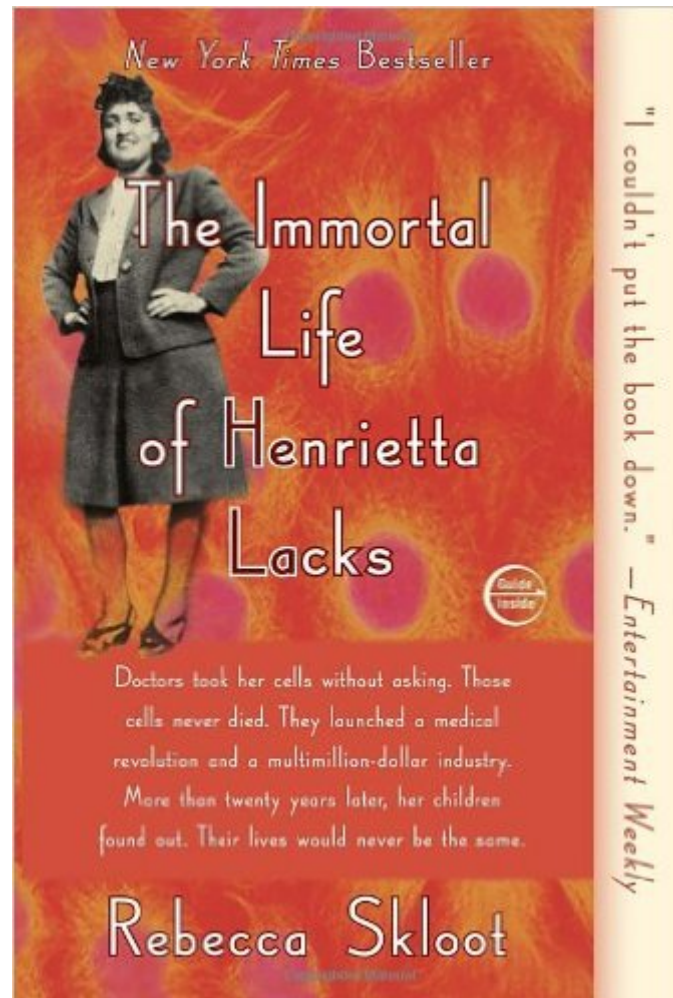


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# The Immortal Life Of Henrietta Lacks



## Synopsis

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER Her name was Henrietta Lacks, but scientists know her as HeLa. She was a poor black tobacco farmer whose cells "taken without her knowledge in 1951" became one of the most important tools in medicine, vital for developing the polio vaccine, cloning, gene mapping, and more. Henrietta's cells have been bought and sold by the billions, yet she remains virtually unknown, and her family can't afford health insurance. This phenomenal New York Times bestseller tells a riveting story of the collision between ethics, race, and medicine; of scientific discovery and faith healing; and of a daughter consumed with questions about the mother she never knew.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars See all reviews (4,872 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

Wow. This book should be required reading for scientists and students of life. The true story of Henrietta Lacks and her family has finally been told, beautifully, in this book. The book encompasses science, ethics, and the story of a family who was terribly wronged in the pursuit of scientific research. I could gush about this book for pages but I'll try first to hit the main points of why this book is so remarkable in list form for the sake of brevity: 1. The author clearly developed a strong relationship with the Lacks family, which was absolutely critical to ensuring the story was told accurately and with the respect to Henrietta Lacks that was so deeply deserved. 2. The storytelling is amazingly moving despite the need to convey a lot of scientific information. It reads like fiction. 3. Ms. Skloot's research into the science is impeccable. 4. The book is FAIR. It presents the unvarnished truth, obtained DIRECTLY from as many principal people involved in the story as is humanly possible. It would have been easier to simplify the story into heroes vs. villains, but Ms.

Skloot deftly handles all sides of the story. For some detail: I have worked with HeLa cells in the past, but did not know even the barest information about the story of Henrietta Lacks until a few years ago. It simply was not common knowledge, until a few less ethical folks released her name and medical records to the public. This obviously should not have been done without the express permission of the Lacks family, which Ms. Skloot obtained. In the past, others have not been as ethical. The book covers Ms. Lacks' early life, how her cells came to be harvested, and what happened to both the cells and her family afterward.

This is hands down one of the best books I've read in years and I wish I could give it more stars. It is going to be difficult to capture exactly what makes this book so outstanding and so captivating, but I'm going to give it my best shot. First of all I want to say I am STUNNED that this is the author's first book. She has poured ten years of her heart, soul, mind and her life in general in this book. What she has given birth to in that long period of labor is worthy of her sacrifice and honors Henrietta Lacks and her family. Other reviews have given the outline of this amazing story. What I want to stress is that Ms. Skloot has navigated the difficult terrain of respecting Mrs. Lacks and her family, while still telling their story in a very intimate, thorough, factual manner. What readers may not know is that the Lacks family isn't just a "subject" that the author researched. This is a real family with real heartaches and real challenges whose lives she entered into for a very long season. The Lacks' family has truly benefitted from the author's involvement in their life and that is something I am very appreciative of. I believe that Ms. Skloot was able to give Henrietta's daughter, Deborah, a real sense of healing, deliverance, peace and identity that she had been searching for her whole life...that story alone would have made the book for me. It would have been very easy for the author to come across as condescending or patronizing or possibly as being exploitive as she wrote about a family that is poor and uneducated.

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