

COMMON CORE SPEAKING AND LISTENING: POINT OF VIEW

This activity addresses the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, specifically the Speaking and Listening Standards for grade 7 students.

The story of Henrietta Lacks, featured in chapter 5 of *For the Good of Mankind? The Shameful History of Human Medical Experimentation*, shows both the tragedy and the hope that can result from human medical experimentation. Without her knowledge, her cancerous cells were used for groundbreaking medical research that continued long after her death, though neither she nor her family received any compensation.

Henrietta Lacks is buried in Clover, Virginia. In 2010 her grave was marked with a new headstone, inscribed with the epitaph below. An epitaph is a brief statement in memory of a deceased person.

Henrietta Lacks, August 01, 1920–October 04, 1951.

In loving memory of a phenomenal woman, wife and mother who touched the lives of many.

Here lies Henrietta Lacks (HeLa). Her immortal cells will continue to help mankind forever.

Eternal Love and Admiration, From Your Family

With a small group, discuss the meaning of the epitaph. Be sure to address the following questions:

- Why do you think Henrietta's cells are mentioned?
- Is her experience with medical experimentation presented positively or negatively?
- Which part of the epitaph do you think is most important to the people who wrote it?

Then look through *For the Good of Mankind?* again. As a group, choose another person who was a subject of medical experimentation. What do you think this person's family and friends would want to say about their loved one? Would they mention the medical experimentation? With your group, compose an epitaph for this person, writing from the point of view of his or her loved ones.

For the Good of Mankind? The Shameful History of Human Medical Experimentation
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