

ELPL Lit Kits



Hidden Figures by Margot Lee Shetterly

Starting in World War II and moving through to the Cold War, the civil rights movement, and the space race, *Hidden Figures* follows the interwoven accounts of Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, Katherine Johnson, and Christine Darden, four African American women who participated in some of NASA's greatest successes. It chronicles their careers over nearly three decades as they faced challenges, forged alliances, and used their intellect to change their own lives, and their country's future.

Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways does the race for space parallel the civil rights movement? What kinds of freedoms are being explored in each?
2. In Chapter 23 we learn that some people thought that spending money on space exploration was wasteful when there were so many other problems in the United States. Do you think the U.S. achieved a balance between innovation in space exploration and advancing the civil rights of all its citizens during this time period? Would you have done things differently?
3. Would you consider NACA and NASA socially progressive institutions for their time? Why or why not?
4. In advocating for herself to work on the Mercury capsule launch, Katherine says to her bosses, "Tell me where you want the man to land, and I'll tell you where to send him up." How are the women in *Hidden Figures* able to express confidence in their work and abilities? In what ways is that confidence validated by their coworkers? Why is this emotional experience such an important part of their story?