

Hidden Figures Book and Movie Discussion Guide

Title: *Hidden Figures: The Untold Story of the African American Women Who Helped Win the Space Race*

Author: Margot Lee Shetterly

Publisher: William Collins

The book includes discussion questions at the end. A book club or discussion group could consult the questions to foster discussion. Here are my questions regarding the book, which differ from that of the authors.

Book Discussion Questions

1. Did you watch the movie before reading the book? Was that a good idea or not?
2. Were you expecting the book to be so detailed and factual?
3. What do you know about where the author lived and why she could research and conduct interviews to write the book?
4. How was Katherine Johnson's story about segregated bathrooms in the book? If you have seen the movie, how did it differ from the film?
5. The book included facts about how much people were paid for different jobs. What did you notice about laundry workers' and teachers' pay?
6. Describe the black schools and teacher duties, as mentioned in the story. What was so surprising about the white high school, Hampton High, when Mary finally was able to take a class there? Why was she shocked?
7. How did Katherine deal with racism at work? What was Double V?
8. Tell about the living conditions of Dorothy Vaughan's family before and after their move. What did the children think of the move?
9. Who are some astronauts mentioned in the book? What was significant about John Glenn?
10. How did employment at NACA help change opportunities for blacks? How did the female experience differ from the male at work, from the first days through advancing employment years?

The movie is a fictionalized version of the nonfiction book and is about 74% accurate.

Movie Questions

1. The opening scene looks like there may be trouble for the three women when their car broke down in the middle of nowhere. How did the situation resolve? What did you learn about Dorothy Johnson Vaughan to help foreshadow her promotion at work?
2. NASA was divided into the West and East work areas. In what ways were they segregated?
3. A library book became the catalyst for worker empowerment. How did this one book contribute to the computer revolution? How was the book obtained? How far did it reach?
4. Explain the attitudes of the men who were engineers towards other workers. How did these attitudes develop during the story?
5. Math was empowering to the main characters. Why? How? Do you think it is still so important?
6. They also showed the home lives of the main characters. How did this help humanize the story against a backdrop of technology and precision?
7. The movie was set in 1961-62 when civil rights activists were working and demonstrating. How did the film reflect the reasons why changes were needed in society at large?
8. The movie was about 74% factual. They did not need a court order for one person to attend high school (after receiving a Bachelor's Degree). What were other elements of the movie were exaggerated for dramatic effect?
9. The IBM computer was necessary at that time. Explain how it helped with integration at work.
10. Discuss some of your favorite scenes or people in the movie. Tell why you especially liked those.



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