



Hidden Figures: The American Dream and The Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race

By Margot Lee Shetterly

The #1 New York Times bestseller

The phenomenal true story of the black female mathematicians at NASA whose calculations helped fuel some of America's greatest achievements in space.

"Restoring the truth about individuals who were at once black, women and astounding mathematicians, in a world that was constructed to stymie them at every step, is no easy task. Shetterly does it with the depth and detail of a skilled historian and the narrative aplomb of a masterful storyteller."

(Bookreporter.com)

As part of your summer reading assignment, you will keep a response journal as you read. This journal will be collected and assessed when you return to school. Please answer the following questions. If a question is marked "required" you must answer it. If a question is marked "optional" you can answer it to help in your understanding of the book or if you have a strong reaction to certain passages in the novel. If a question directs you to "complete a response journal" please refer to the Response Journal Guide. You are strongly encouraged to complete multiple response journals even when they are not listed as required.

There are four major themes that are discussed in this book. They are Racism and Inequality, Community, Hard Work and Opportunity, and Scientific Progress vs. Political Progress. You will be asked in your response journal to think about these themes.

Questions and Response Journal Topics

Chapters 1-6

1. (Required) Explain Dorothy's reaction to seeing the picture of "eleven well-dressed Negro women" in light of the political climate of the 1940's? Why does she respond the way she does?
2. (Required) How does Dorothy's apprentice work as a mathematician make a difference in the war effort?
3. (Required) In your response journal, write about one of the following and their connection to an overarching theme in the book: NACA, Murray vs. Pearson, or Jim Crow Laws.
4. (Optional) Complete additional response journals for this section of the text.

Chapters 7-12

1. (Required) What is the initial problem with Cascade Aerodynamics and what stops the concerns?
2. (Required) What is the historical importance of Executive Order 9981? Why is it still important today?
3. (Required) Community has many shapes and forms. Under segregation, there were laws that restricted "community" yet community developed. Discuss how and why this happened.
4. (Optional) Complete additional response journals for this section of the text.

Chapters 13-18

1. (Required) Why is Dorothy Vaughn's research so important even today?
2. (Required) What is Katherine Johnson's impact on society today?
3. (Required) Shatterly shows how one of the most forward-thinking technological organizations in the world found itself unable to excel to its peak performance because of social and political problems. She writes about Katherine Johnson, "The broader implication of her role as a black woman in a still-segregated country, helping to light the fuse that would propel that country to achieve one of its greatest ambitions, was a topic that would occupy her mind for the rest of her life." Why was this the case and has there been progress?
4. (Optional) Complete additional response journals for this section of the text.

Chapters 19-23

1. (Required) Who was the “Lost Generation” and how were they lost? What impact did their “loss” have on the state of Virginia?
2. (Required) How do astronauts like John Glenn feel about computers? Why do they feel this way?
3. (Required) Hard work, opportunity, and luck all play a part in the success of the heroes of this story. How did they create their own luck and what could they not control?
4. (Optional) Complete additional response journals for this section of the text.

End of Book Response Journal

(Required) Select one of the major themes and describe how the author develops this theme throughout the book:

- Racism and Inequality - The women in *Hidden Figures* highlight the inherent contradictions in the Jim Crow laws that kept the NACA segregated and how racism impacted not only the oppressed but the people in power as well.
- Community - Although the women in *Hidden Figures* accomplished amazing feats, none of them would have been able to do so without the support of their communities.
- Scientific Progress vs. Political Progress - Through the first half of the twentieth century, technology advanced more quickly than ever, especially in aerospace and computing, but the United States lagged behind the rest of the world when it came to gender equality and civil rights.
- Hard Work and Opportunity - These women fought for acceptance and for equal opportunity by taking advantage of chance and meeting it with preparedness and persistence.

RESPONSE JOURNAL GUIDE

What is a response journal?

A response journal is simply a place for you to write down any *reactions* you're having to a text. Reactions can encompass a lot of things: strong emotions, confusion, frustration, insights into your life and the world around you, etc.

This is a forum for you to express yourself. To have your opinion. To wrestle with ideas. Be yourself, express yourself.

What should I write in a response journal?

Response journals **should not be a summary**. In other words, merely writing down what's happening in a story isn't *responding to it*. Response takes more than that. It takes *independent thought* and *reaction* about what you're reading.

Here are some questions to consider while reading a text:

Why is the author showing me this? What's his point? What does he or she want me to learn by reading this?

How is this scene/character important to the novel? How would the story change without it?

What's my opinion about a character and his or her actions in a story? What does a character's thoughts and actions reveal about them? Why is the author showing me this?

How do I feel right now about what's happening? What's making me feel like this?

What is important in the story? Why?

Is the setting important? Why? What does it show?

How does the novel relate to me and my life? Is the novel showing me things that can be compared or contrasted to the world I live in? How? Why would the author do this?

What do I find to be most important about this book? Why? Explain.

What is confusing to me? Why? Try to answer the question yourself.

What is difficult for me? Why? Answer the question.

Write down any passages from the book you find important and explain why you wrote it down and why it's important.

Are there any lines or passages that strike you as important? Why?

When should I write?

There are no set rules here. Write when you want to say something. Write when you have a strong reaction to something in the text. Or write when you reach a natural break in the book, such as the end of a chapter, page or paragraph.