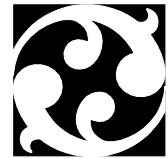




# CAMELOT BOOK CLUB



Volume XIII Issue 4

Lake Cypress Springs, Texas

April 2010

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## THE IMMORTAL LIFE OF HENRIETTA LACKS

by Rebecca Skloot

“Equal parts history, psychological drama, expose’ and character study, Author Skloot’s gripping debut is a deeply affecting tour de force that effortlessly bridges the gap between science and the mainstream.

“Her subject is the multilayered drama behind one of the most important...advances of modern medicine. Captivated by the story of Henrietta Lacks, a poor African-American woman whose cervical cancer cells (dubbed HeLa) were the first immortalized cells grown in culture and became ubiquitous in laboratories around the world, Skloot set out to learn more about the person whose unwitting “donation” of the cells transformed biomedical research in the last century. Her research... found her navigating (and to some extent, mediating) more than 50 years of rage over the white scientific Establishment’s cavalier mistreatment and exploitation of the poor, especially African Americans... The author offers a clear-eyed perspective, highlighting the brutal irony of a family whose matriarch was a pivotal figure in everything from the development of Jonas Salk’s polio vaccine to AIDS research to cancer drugs, yet cannot afford the very medical care their mother’s cells helped facilitate, with predictable consequences.”

Author Skloot weaves her scientific research in with amusing and sometimes harrowing chronicle of her interaction with Lack’s surviving (and initially hostile and uncooperative) family members. She wins them over in the end, and her interactions with them are an fascinating part of this captivating story.

(Your Scribe’s note: The above synopsis is adapted from online readers’ comments.)

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### CAMELOT COMMENTS on the book

- ✓ I enjoyed the scientific parts of the book. The family was so ignorant and uneducated. I hate to hear the excuse that they were poor.
- ✓ Loved the book - could not put it down. Fascinating facts, for instance, that the children couldn’t go out to play after dark because “John Hopkins” might get them, to do research on their bodies. All so interesting.
- ✓ Saw on the web site that a couple of her children are going on tour with the author. Loved the book, especially the scientific parts.
- ✓ Enjoyed the book. At times I thought I wouldn’t make it through. Glad I learned about the HeLa. Sorry about Elsie - so sad.
- ✓ Liked the book -- enjoyed the drama within Henrietta’s family more than the scientific parts.

**NEXT MEETING**

**When?** Friday, May 21, 2010, 1:30p.m.

**Where?** At Anne Simms' house

**Why?** To have fun, and to discuss  
*Olive Kitteridge* by Elizabeth Strout

A "novel" of short stories about a retired school-teacher.

**Future Meeting Note:** The June meeting will be at Gwen Nelson's house.

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**MEETING NOTES**

We met at Dottie Miller's beautiful and welcoming house. Before the book discussion, we had lots of conversation about a new plan to choose future book selections. The idea was presented that we could designate a category for each month, for example: fiction; classic; historical; mystery; romance; biography; children's classics; catastrophic; travel/food. Then, the hostess for the month could select a book within that category that she would like to read. No definite decisions were made, but it might be a good way to keep our horizons expanded. Most agreed that January and July should still be "Reader's Choice".

After we talked about the April book, Dottie served a wonderful dessert of ice cream, strawberries, and crunchy pine nuts, with a cookie on the side. The meeting couldn't have been nicer.

**A Chuckle for Your Day**

The Sunday School teacher was describing how Lot's wife looked back and turned into a pillar of salt, when little Jason interrupted, "My Mommy looked back once while she was driving and she turned into a telephone pole!"

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CAMELOT BOOK CLUB IS GREAT

