

## Discussion Questions: Hidden Figures (February)

1. What is the significance of the title? Would you have given the book a different title? If so, what would you choose?
2. Hidden Figures uncovers the story of the women whose work at NACA and NASA helped shape and define U.S. space exploration. Taken as a whole, why is their story significant to our cultural, social, and scientific history?
3. Describe Dorothy Vaughan: what is she like? What do you learn of her background? • What kinds of employment opportunities were available to African American women at this time? • Why is the opportunity for a job at Langley so unique to Dorothy?
4. Describe Katherine Goble: where is she from? What is she like? In what ways are she and Dorothy Vaughan similar? What are the circumstances leading to Katherine's enrollment at West Virginia University? What was her time at West Virginia like?
5. 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?
6. In what ways does the race for space parallel the civil rights movement? What kinds of freedoms are being explored in each?
7. Would you consider NACA and MASA socially progressive institutions for their time? Why or why not?
8. What surprised you most about the book? What scene(s) resonated most with you personally in either a positive or negative way? Why?
9. How did the end of the war and V-J Day change working conditions in the U.S.? What did it mean for women, in particular?
10. 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?
11. Where did Katherine watch the moon landing from? Why is the location and people she was with significant? Were you surprised to learn that's where she was? What kind of accomplishment was it for Katherine and the workers of Langley for the Eagle to land safely during the Apollo mission on the surface of the moon?

*Questions taken from A Teacher's Guide to Hidden Figures.*