

Teacher Narrative for Lesson 1:

Introduction to the Unit, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*

Time: 3 hours

Materials for Students

1. Personal Narrative Template, "About Yourself" (provided)
2. Medical Research Scenario (provided): advertisement, pro-con organizer
3. Unit Journal

Other Materials

1. Book: *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*
2. Slide Show: Background Vocabulary (provided)
3. Videos of Rebecca Skloot explaining how and why she got interested in the story.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vow1ePzugo>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnUp0xQlfK8>

Internet access needed, OR download the videos ahead of time to watch in class

Orientation (60 minutes)

1. Tell students where you were born and a little about your family background. Reflect on how some of those circumstances combined with some of the choices you made along the way, resulted in who and where you are today. (If that type of sharing isn't comfortable for you, tell the story of someone else.)
2. Explain that, by the end of the unit, students are going to write a narrative (story) for a character who lived through Jim Crow and Great Migrations. In order to begin working on how to write that type of narrative, students will write a similar narrative about themselves and their lives. Teachers should give as much context/examples/background about Jim Crow and the Great Migrations as they feel is necessary for students at this point.

Writing & Scenarios (90 minutes)

Writing a Personal Narrative

Set Up:

Teachers may find it helpful to allow students to take the template home overnight, or longer, before beginning the narrative writing.

Action:

1. Have students fill out the Personal Narrative Template (**About Yourself**)
 - a. Emphasize that students can choose to NOT answer any of the prompts, either because they don't know the information, or are uncomfortable sharing.
 - b. Tell students if there is information they can only find out by talking to other family members, it is fine take an extra day or two.
2. Students write a first draft of their personal narrative.

Medical Research Scenario

Set Up:

Hand out the **mock advertisement**. Ask students to read the ad and/or read it out loud while they follow along.

The pdf of the ad included in the resources has this 2-up with a border, resembling a newspaper ad. Here is the text of the advertisement:

Holyoke Center for Medical Research

Volunteers needed for 4 week [diabetes/heart disease] research project. Study participants will receive \$50 and a free health screening. Doctors will collect a blood sample each Wednesday. A free lunch will be provided at the Medical Center cafe on the blood draw days. Volunteers must be between the ages of 18 and 50. If interested contact:

Dr. Emily Marcoux
Holyoke Center for Medical Research
1000 Main St. Suite 3000B
Holyoke MA 01040
413-552-0000

Action: Discussion Prep and Class Discussion

Directed Response Questions

- I. Would you participate in this study? (*A Pro-Con Organizer is included with the materials to help students think through their answers to this question.*)
 - A. If you would participate, list the reasons why you would participate. Can you also list reasons why someone else might choose not to participate?
 - B. If you would NOT participate, list reasons why you would not participate. Can you also list reasons why someone else might choose to participate?

Consider using a Discussion Protocol with the following exercise. Here is one, but there are many others.

Rotating Trios:

- 1) Students form trios, with the groups arranged in a large circle or square formation.
- 2) Give the class a question and suggest that each person take a turn answering.
- 3) After a suitable time period, ask the trios to assign a 0, 1, or 2 to each of its members. Then direct the #1s to rotate one trio clockwise, the #2s to rotate two trios clockwise, and the #0s to remain in the same place; the result will be completely new trios.
- 4) Now introduce a new, slightly more difficult question.
- 5) Rotate trios as many times as it takes to complete the discussion. Then bring the whole group back together and debrief.

- II. **Scenario:** Pretend that you chose to participate in the research. Five years later you see a story on the news that the blood from this research project was used to make a fantastic new drug for treating diabetes. Thousands of people are living better lives because of this new wonder drug. The company that makes the drug has made millions of dollars from it. You learn that it was in fact your blood that was used in making the wonder drug.
- A. How do you feel about the fact that something that came out of your blood is helping thousands of people live better lives?
 - B. How do you feel about the fact that you were never told that the blood from the research would be given to other researchers and to drug development companies?
 - C. How do you feel about the fact that the Drug Company has made millions of dollars from something that was in your blood and you were never told about this, or benefited from this?

Note to tell students at the end of the exercise:

This is a pretend exercise that has to do with the book we will be reading. The rules for medical research have changed a lot since the time of the book, but there are still many questions about different types of medical research. We will be exploring some of them in this unit.

Have students make a journal entry related to this scenario. (45 minutes)

Guiding questions:

1. Explain the Medical Research Scenario you were given. What are the details?
2. What are some reasons people chose to participate?
3. What are some reasons people chose NOT to participate?
4. What new information was added at the end of the scenario?
5. Did that information change your feelings? Did it change anybody else's feelings if it didn't change yours?

Overview of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*

Set Up: Hand out copies of the book, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*.

Action:

1. Introduce the structure of the book
 - a. Year that the chapter takes on top of first page of chapter.
 - b. Chapters bounce around, not a linear narrative for chapter time or subject
2. Introduce the Author and her reasons for writing the book (**videos**)
3. Show the **slide show: General Vocabulary: Jim Crow and the Great Migrations**.