



ILLINOIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM  
& EDUCATION CENTER

## *Hidden Figures*

By: Margot Lee Shetterly

For grades 5-6

### **Overview:**

Students can hear the story of [\*Hidden Figures: The True Story of Four Black Women and the Space Race\*](#) by Margot Lee Shetterly read aloud on YouTube (approximately 14 minutes), and complete the following activities to further investigate the ideas of perseverance and teamwork.

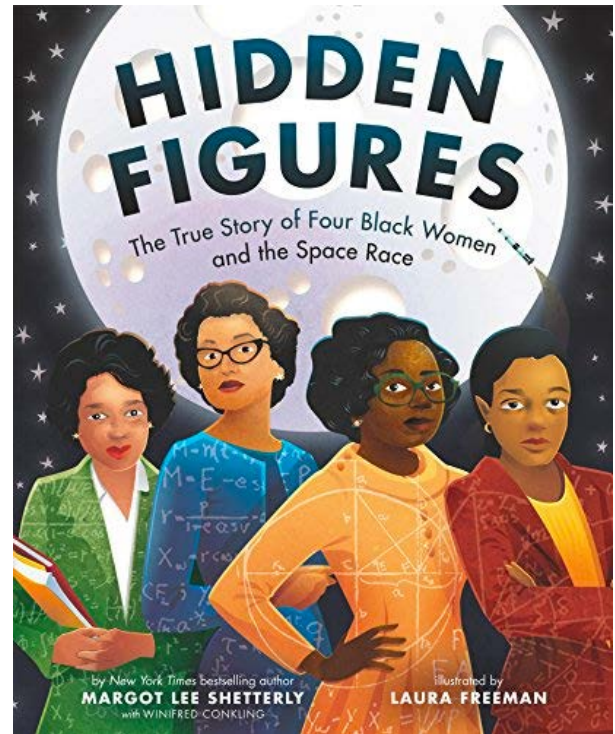
### **Synopsis:**

Blending together the Civil Rights Movement and the Space Race, *Hidden Figures* tells the story of four African American women and their crucial contribution to NASA and the United States. This fascinating story is beautifully illustrated and tells this chapter of American history in an exciting and inspiring way. Shetterly expertly puts these women's achievements within a historical context of segregation, the women's rights movement, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Space Race. Despite the challenges these women faced, they persisted, worked hard, and put a man on the moon. Showing the power of individuals to combat racism and sexism through strength and endurance, *Hidden Figures* is a reminder to students of the power of perseverance.

## **Classroom Activities**

### **Questions for Discussion:**

These questions can either be used as a group discussion if you are meeting with your class synchronously or you can choose one or more questions for students to answer in a short written or video response if you are meeting non-synchronously.



1. The beginning of the book describes how black people and white people were not allowed to do the same things, use the same spaces, or have the same rights. This inequality in basic human rights was because of the color of their skin. The four female main characters faced discrimination based on their skin color even though they were very smart and good at math. How were Katherine, Dorothy, Mary, or Christine able to persevere despite this discrimination? What is the significance of their perseverance?
2. Name an obstacle that Katherine, Dorothy, Mary, and Christine faced. Support your claim with an example from the book.
3. An adjective is a word that describes something (such as tall, smart, nice, artistic, etc.). What is an adjective you would use to describe Katherine, Dorothy, Mary, and Christine?
4. Why do you think this book is titled *Hidden Figures*?

### **African American Role Models:**

Have students think about other heroes, heroines, and role models who are African American and have made a difference in our world, like the four women described in the book. What did they do that made a difference? Why were their actions brave? (*Alternately, you can provide students with examples that they can then research on their own.*)

Have students draw a picture of their role model that showcases what their achievement to history was. Students should write a summary to accompany their drawing to describe what their role model did and why they chose them. Their summaries should address the following questions:

1. Who were they? Provide a brief biography.
2. In what field did they work to make a difference? (i.e. science, literature, sports, art, etc.)
3. What did they do to make a difference?
4. What obstacles and challenges did they face?
5. What is their legacy?
6. Why did you choose them for this project?

### **Letter Writing:**

Have students choose one of the heroines of the book. Each of their full names are shown at the end of the YouTube video. Students should then write their chosen heroine a letter describing how they think her bravery and perseverance contributed to and changed the world.

Questions to ask students to consider when writing their letters:

1. What would you want to say to her if you met her?
2. What questions do you have for her?
3. Did you find her accomplishments inspirational? Why or why not?