

AP Seminar Summer Reading 2026

Dear Rising Junior,

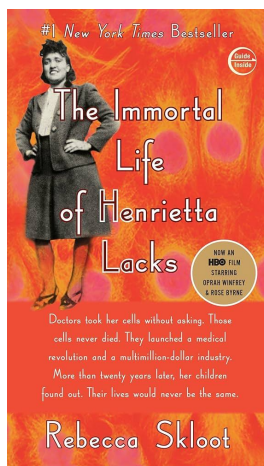
Welcome to AP Seminar! We are excited that you have chosen to take this course and begin a year focused on inquiry, research, argumentation, and communication. AP Seminar is built around big questions, meaningful discussion, and student-driven thinking. You will learn how to analyze sources, evaluate perspectives, develop arguments, and present ideas with confidence.

Because AP Seminar also fulfills an English requirement at Assumption High School, we will use literature and nonfiction texts as starting points for deeper conversations about society, ethics, culture, and power. Strong reading habits and thoughtful preparation will help you succeed from the very beginning of the year.

For your summer reading assignment, we have selected a book that connects closely to many of the themes we will explore in class. Over the summer, your task is to read carefully and annotate thoughtfully. During the first week of school, you will write an in-class essay using your book and annotations, so the work you do now will directly support your success later.

If questions come up over the summer, please feel free to contact us by school email. Have a wonderful summer, and we look forward to working with you in the fall!

Sincerely,
Dr. Murphy & Mrs. Stevenson



The Book: *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot

From the publisher:

Her name was Henrietta Lacks, but scientists know her as HeLa. She was a poor Black tobacco farmer whose cells—taken without her knowledge in 1951—became one of the most important tools in medicine, vital for developing the polio vaccine, cloning, gene mapping, and more. Henrietta’s cells have been bought and sold by the billions, yet she remains virtually unknown, and her family cannot afford health insurance. This bestselling book tells a riveting story of the collision between ethics, race, medicine, and scientific discovery.

The Assignment

Read *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* in its entirety over the summer and annotate as you read. Your annotations should focus especially on the themes of **power** and **ethics**.

As you read, you should:

Highlight Passages

Mark important quotations, scenes, or moments connected to power (abuse of power, lack of power, etc.) and ethics (moral decisions, ethical dilemmas, etc.).

Write Margin Notes

In the margins (or on sticky notes), record:

- **Questions** you have about the text (confusions, curiosities, reactions, things you want to discuss) .
- **Connections** to: other books or films, historical events, current events or news stories, your own experiences, issues in society today.
- **Brief reactions or insights** (surprise, frustration, patterns you notice, important ideas)

Your annotations do not need to be lengthy, but they should show genuine thinking and engagement with the text.

Aim for approximately:

- **1-3 meaningful highlighted passages per chapter**
- **1-3 written annotations per chapter**
(Some chapters may inspire more.)

Please bring your annotated copy of the book to class on the **first day of school**.

Final Advice

Do not rush through the book at the end of summer. Read gradually, think deeply, and interact with the text as you go. This assignment is less about “getting it done” and more about beginning the habits of mind that AP Seminar requires.