Henrietta Lacks death gave birth to a path towards significant discoveries and left a legacy that undoubtedly expanded the scientific field immensely. When given the opportunity to be a part of History Day, I wanted to choose a topic and category that not many others had portrayed to represent the themes of this year. I chose Henrietta Lacks because she has made a great impact to the scientific community in a way that is unique to this year’s history day. Henrietta Lacks left a legacy that greatly impacted science but specifically the medical field.

To begin researching my topic, I used the online library called Ebsco to find my sources. I then visited the KU library where I searched for books and newspapers relating to Henrietta Lacks and/or Dr. Gey. I found a book by a woman who had gotten extremely close to the Lacks family. This book was very helpful when it came to her family life. I searched through hundreds of articles and newspapers for topics such as HeLa, Henrietta Lacks or John Hopkins Hospital. I also emailed various people about an interview with the Author Rebecca Skloot, but I unfortunately received no replies.

Choosing the individual website category was not a hard decision for me. Design and pictures were something that has stood out for me in almost anything that I have done, whether it is a project for math or for art. I thought that by making a website that I could portray my thoughts and express how much of an impact Henrietta Lacks left with greater clarity than I could by making an exhibit. I used certain photos to show how life was at that certain time period, and used the pages of the website to create a sort of timeline through the life of Mrs. Lacks.

Henrietta Lacks was a beloved mother of five when she was diagnosed with severe cervical cancer. She went through months of radiation only for it to claim her life eight months later. Because of her death, thousands of lives have been saved through medical discoveries using HeLa cells. Her doctor, Dr. Gey, took a sample of her cancerous cells, which in a petri dish, grew at a remarkable rate. They rapidly divided over time, causing hundred of scientists around the world to go into an uproar. HeLa cells, named for Henrietta Lacks, were used to make the first polio vaccine, they have been sent into space, tested to see the effects of radiation and even used in most vaccines we still use today. Henrietta Lacks will forever leave a legacy in the world today.