

Katherine Johnson

Critical Thinking & Discussion Questions

Topic: Personal Achievement

K - 2

Katherine Johnson studied hard in school. Why is school important?

Which tasks are easy for you? Which ones take more concentration?

Cleaning your bedroom

Doing your homework

Playing with toys

Reading a book

Being kind

Describe a time when you worked hard on something. How did you feel afterward?

Think of someone you appreciate. What would you like to say to them? How did Katherine Johnson know that she was appreciated?

Katherine Johnson became famous after a book and a movie talked about her life. Share a book or a movie that taught you about a person in history.

Grades 3 – 8

Katherine Johnson loved math and was good at it. How did Katherine's father help her so that she could one day work at NASA? What gifts, talents, or skills do you enjoy?

Johnson set her career goals aside to be a full-time mom. How would you define self-sacrifice? What are the benefits of self-sacrifice?

Can a person have more than one career in their lifetime? What different types of jobs would you enjoy?

Name different ways that Johnson was celebrated in the last years of her life. Why did it take so long for her success to be recognized?

What role does self-discipline play in reaching a goal? Give ways the following jobs involve self-discipline.

Athletes

Teachers

Doctors

Business Owners

Topic: The Fight Against Discrimination

K-2

In Virginia, Black people and white people had to use different bathrooms. Name something that happened to you that was unfair.

What do judges do for people?

In the past, Blacks and women were not allowed to vote. Why is it important that everyone votes?

Katherine Johnson worked with people that did not like her because of the color of her skin. How did she prove herself to them?

Grades 3 - 8

At one time Supreme Court judges believed that the concept “separate but equal” could work in schools and community facilities. What did Black Americans do when they realized that the goal of “separate but equal” did not happen?

For over a century, courts have ruled to put a stop to discrimination. What other court decisions or laws have helped Blacks and women be treated with respect?

Katherine Johnson used “Whites-only” restrooms even though Virginia had segregation laws. What perspective did her father give that persuaded her to disobey this law? Have you ever been denied access to a public facility?

Give recent examples of discrimination against women.

Name a cause that you want to fight for despite the challenges that you may face.

Topic: Science and Technology

K-2

Katherine Johnson loved math. What is your favorite subject in school? What do you like about this subject?

Name different jobs that interest you.

Why is science and math important?

How do satellites help us every day?

Grades 3 - 8

Look up the acronym STEM. What do you study in school that would be considered STEM?

What jobs can you get with a STEM-focused education?

The Soviet satellite, Sputnik 1, was the first satellite to be placed in Earth’s orbit. How do satellites help us today?

What types of technology do people use every day? This technology was not around when Katherine Johnson was young. What did children like her do with their time?

Research what kinds of jobs people do in these engineering fields:

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| Design engineering | Civil engineering |
| Mechanical engineering | Computer engineering |
| Electrical engineering | Software engineering |

Topic: Media Influence

K-2

If a book were written about you, what would you want for its title?

Why are old pictures and newspapers important when we learn about history?

Grades 3 - 8

Would you consider writing a book one day or going into filmmaking? What are the benefits of reading a book about a topic? What are the benefits of watching a movie about that same topic?

How do various types of media help us learn about the past?

Topic: Pursuing Mentorship

Here is a list of Bob Woodson's 10 Principles:

Competence

Integrity

Transparency

Resilience

Witness

Innovation

Inspiration

Agency

Access

Grace

Which of the Woodson Principles do you see displayed in Katherine Johnson's life?

What is a mentor? Who was Katherine Johnson's mentor? How did he challenge her?

What would you like to do skillfully one day? When you grow up, would you want to mentor someone?