

Name : _____ Date : _____

Katherine Johnson, The Human Computer

In an era before powerful digital computers, NASA relied on "human computers"—extraordinary mathematicians who calculated complex light paths by hand. One of the most brilliant was Katherine Johnson.

Born in 1918, Katherine showed an early talent for math.

Despite facing the dual challenges of racial segregation and gender discrimination,

she joined the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA), which later became NASA.

Her work was so accurate that when astronaut John Glenn was preparing for his first orbital flight in 1962, he didn't fully trust the new electronic computers. He famously requested,

"Get the girl to check the numbers. If she says they're good, then I'm ready to go."

Katherine's calculations were vital to the success of the Mercury and Apollo missions, including the 1969 moon landing. She proved that with persistence and excellence, one can break through the highest barriers.

Vocabulary Match: Katherine Johnson | Match the word from the story to its correct meaning.

Word	Definition
1. Suffrage	A. To challenge or go against an established rule or tradition.
2. Advocacy	B. The first person to do something, opening the way for others.
3. Perseverance	C. The right to vote in political elections.
4. Trailblazer	D. Public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy.
5. Defy	E. Continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties.
6. Abolitionist	F. A person who wants to stop or end a specific law or practice (historically, slavery).
7. Legislation	G. A person who is forced to leave their country in order to escape war or persecution.
8. Refugee	H. Laws, considered collectively.
9. Underestimated	I. High respect; great esteem.
10. Honor	J. To be valued at less than one's actual worth or importance.