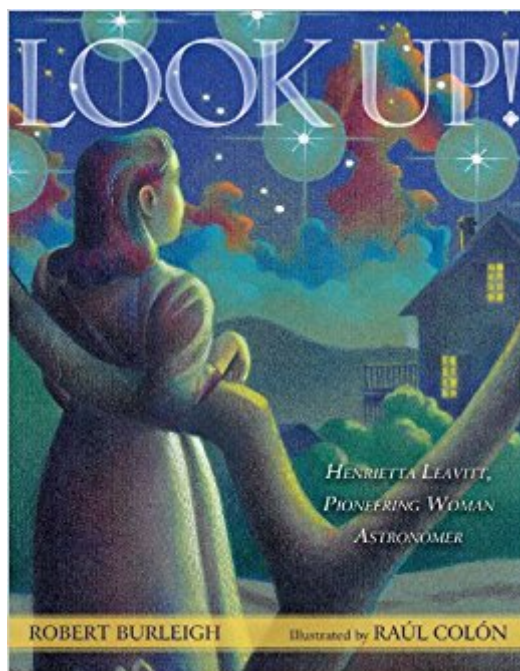


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Look Up!: Henrietta Leavitt, Pioneering Woman Astronomer



Synopsis

>Henrietta Swan Leavitt was born on July 4, 1868, and she changed the course of astronomy when she was just twenty-five years old. Henrietta spent years measuring star positions and sizes from photographs taken by the telescope at the Harvard College Observatory, where she worked. After Henrietta observed that certain stars had a fixed pattern to their changes, her discovery made it possible for astronomers to measure greater and greater distances—leading to our present understanding of the vast size of the universe. An astronomer of her time called Henrietta Leavitt “one of the most important women ever to touch astronomy, and another close associate said she had the “best mind at the Harvard Observatory. Henrietta Leavitt’s story will inspire young women and aspiring scientists of all kinds and includes additional information about the solar system and astronomy.

Book Information

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Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

Customer Reviews

When Henrietta Leavitt graduated from Radcliffe College in 1892, women were not seen as potential scientists. Still, she accepted a rather tedious job measuring the positions and sizes of stars in images photographed using the Harvard College Observatory telescope. Besides measuring and note-taking, she analyzed the records on certain stars that appeared to blink on and

off. Her discovery that the time between blinks indicated both the star's brightness and its distance from Earth led to the realization that the universe was much larger than previously thought. Focusing on the life of the mind, the text is contemplative and the illustrations are understated. In childhood, Leavitt is shown gazing at the night sky; as an adult, her most active endeavor is a sedate walk. The writing celebrates her achievement, though, and the lovely artwork, set outdoors at night or indoors by day, includes yellow, tan, and white elements that are luminous within the dimly lit scenes. A worthy picture book with informative back matter that will help children understand Leavitt's challenging times as well as her achievement. Grades 2-4, --Carolyn Phelan

Burleigh (George Bellows: Painter with a Punch!) investigates a woman astronomer who made a significant discovery in the 1900s when most women in her field "were human computers." Their job was to record. And measure. And calculate. The women were expected to work, not think. Henrietta Leavitt didn't comply. Working at the Harvard College Observatory, she closely observed photographs of stars and uncovered a way to measure their true brightness, paving the way for others to measure even greater distances to the stars. Burleigh's narrative is simultaneously succinct, descriptive, and appealing: "When she closed her eyes, she could still see the star dots, dancing across the inside of her eyelids." Working in his familiar warm, glowing style, Colafin (Annie and Helen) uses colored pencils and watercolors to create feathery-textured illustrations. Some images of Leavitt at work are rendered in muted beiges and greens, which make the night sky scenes shine all the brighter with their vivid royal blues and brilliant points of white light. An afterword about Leavitt and her discovery, glossary, bibliography, and other resources round out this attractive picture-book biography. Ages 4-8. (Publishers Weekly) Burleigh introduces Henrietta Leavitt, a nineteenth-century woman determined to study astronomy at a time when "almost all astronomy teachers and students were men." Although she graduated from college and secured a job in an observatory, Leavitt was confined to working with a group of other women doing calculations of star positions in photographs taken by male colleagues. Careful observations, however, led Leavitt to discover minute changes in the apparent brightness of certain stars over time, which in turn led to methods of determining how far a star is from Earth. This is a useful overview of a lesser-known scientific contributor, and Burleigh as usual writes with smooth clarity. ... A collection of end matter includes quotes about the stars, brief notes about Leavitt's life and discoveries and about other early female astronomers, a glossary, and a compact list of

websites and titles for more exploration. (Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books) When Henrietta Leavitt graduated from Radcliffe College in 1892, women were not seen as potential scientists. Still, she accepted a rather tedious job measuring the positions and sizes of stars in images photographed using the Harvard College Observatory telescope. Besides measuring and note-taking, she analyzed the records on certain stars that appeared to blink on and off. Her discovery that the time between blinks indicated both the star's brightness and its distance from Earth led to the realization that the universe was much larger than previously thought. Focusing on the life of the mind, the text is contemplative and the illustrations are understated. In childhood, Leavitt is shown gazing at the night sky; as an adult, her most active endeavor is a sedate walk. Still, the writing celebrates her achievement, and the lovely artwork, set outdoors at night or indoors by day, includes yellow, tan, and white elements that are luminous within the dimly lit scenes. A worthy picture book with informative back matter that will help children understand Leavitt's challenging times as well as her achievement. (Booklist)

The book was very informative.

I very much like the story about Henrietta Leavitt and her love of the stars. I was not so keen on the art work which appeared dark to me. I would however recommend this book which is inspirational to any young girl or young man.

Such a nice book about a pioneering female astronomer. It is a great book to show young girls previous achievements by females in science, and to encourage them.

This was a gift and very well received by the youngster I got it for....particularly enjoyed the illustrations! Any books for young people that are inspiring for higher learning and curiosity are appreciated.

My daughter is 5 years old and didn't want to sit and read it. I think she'll like it when she's a bit older.

Great book...got my daughter thinking about the stars and astronomy, and she loves that it is about a real girl.

This book is so wonderfully illustrated! I love browsing the images and talking to my 8 year old about them and how they relate to the story. She is even adding details to the story based on what she knows about science and astronomy and women's fight to work alongside men. It is a very short book given the content, so she was definitely at the top of the age range for the way the material is delivered. But my 3 and 6 year old children enjoyed it too as she read it aloud to them. There is a play based on the life of Henrietta Leavitt too, A Silent Sky. This book is a great introduction to her life before taking your child to that play. (This is how we used the book.)

Henrietta Swan Leavitt was one of the pioneering women of astronomy. This book is an excellent example of how education, perseverance and woman are able to accomplish their heart's desire. Henrietta graduated from Radcliffe College and went on to work at the observatory at Harvard University. However, women were only used for paperwork and hardly allowed to touch the observatory's instruments. This story explains how she made a chart to measure the distances of stars; a real breakthrough in the science of astronomy. The illustrations are lovely; the drawings capture Henrietta's likeness, although the star constellations are a bit murky. The text also mentions that her pay was 30 cents an hour. I wish when authors included this information, they would relate it to what it compared to in that time period - average yearly salary or what did a loaf of bread cost? There are 3 pages at the end, in more 'adult' form giving quotes, more on Henrietta, some other women astronomers, glossary and internet sources. Altogether this is a wonderful book suited for both girls and boys to read from 2nd or 3rd grade up. Younger ones would still enjoy looking and having the words read to them, the amount of text on each page will not cause them to lose their interest.

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