

hidden figures movie questions and answers

Hidden Figures is a film that has captivated audiences with its inspiring true story of three African-American women mathematicians who played critical roles at NASA during the early years of the U.S. space program. The movie not only highlights their contributions but also sheds light on the racial and gender discrimination they faced. This article aims to address some common questions about the film, its characters, themes, and historical context, providing insightful answers that enhance the understanding of this remarkable story.

Overview of Hidden Figures

Released in 2016 and directed by Theodore Melfi, "Hidden Figures" is based on the book of the same name by Margot Lee Shetterly. It tells the story of Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson, who worked at NASA during the 1960s. The film showcases their critical contributions to the success of John Glenn's orbital flight in 1962, as well as the challenges they faced in a segregated workplace.

Main Characters and Their Contributions

Katherine Johnson

Katherine Johnson, portrayed by Taraji P. Henson, was a brilliant mathematician whose calculations of orbital mechanics were essential to the success of the first American in space. Her ability to perform complex calculations by hand played a significant role when it came to ensuring the safety and success of missions.

Dorothy Vaughan

Dorothy Vaughan, played by Octavia Spencer, was a mathematician and the first African-American woman to supervise a group of staff at NASA. She became an expert in computer programming and was instrumental in transitioning the team from manual calculations to automated processes, significantly improving efficiency.

Mary Jackson

Mary Jackson, portrayed by Janelle Monáe, was an engineer who fought for her right to attend graduate school to gain the necessary qualifications to be an engineer at NASA. Her determination and advocacy for women, especially women of color, paved the way for future generations in engineering fields.

Key Themes Explored in the Film

The film "Hidden Figures" explores several important themes:

- **Racial Discrimination:** The movie portrays the systemic racial segregation that existed in the workplace and society at large during the 1960s.
- **Gender Inequality:** The film highlights the barriers women faced in a male-dominated field, emphasizing the challenges of being both a woman and a person of color.
- **Perseverance and Resilience:** The characters embody the spirit of perseverance as they overcome numerous obstacles to achieve their goals.
- **Friendship and Support:** The bond between the three women illustrates the importance of friendship and support in navigating personal and professional challenges.

Questions and Answers about Hidden Figures

1. What inspired the creation of Hidden Figures?

The film was inspired by Margot Lee Shetterly's book, which chronicles the true stories of African-American women mathematicians who worked at NASA. The book brought to light the overlooked contributions of these women, inspiring the filmmakers to adapt it into a feature film.

2. How accurate is the portrayal of the characters in the film?

While the film takes some creative liberties for dramatic purposes, it remains largely accurate in its portrayal of Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson. The core elements of their contributions and experiences at NASA are faithfully represented, including their struggles

against discrimination and their groundbreaking achievements.

3. What were some of the challenges faced by the women at NASA?

The women faced numerous challenges, including:

1. **Racial Segregation:** They were often relegated to separate facilities and faced overt discrimination.
2. **Gender Bias:** Their professional capabilities were frequently underestimated due to their gender.
3. **Limited Access to Education:** They had to fight for opportunities to further their education and advance their careers.
4. **Workplace Inequality:** They often received less recognition and fewer promotions compared to their male counterparts.

4. What role did Katherine Johnson play in John Glenn's flight?

Katherine Johnson was responsible for calculating the trajectory for John Glenn's historic orbital flight in 1962. When the electronic computer failed, Glenn specifically requested that Johnson verify the calculations by hand, underscoring her expertise and the trust placed in her abilities.

5. How did Dorothy Vaughan contribute to NASA's success?

Dorothy Vaughan was a pioneer in computer programming. She recognized the shift towards electronic computing and took it upon herself to learn and teach her team how to program the newly introduced IBM computers, ensuring that they remained relevant and integral to NASA's operations.

6. What impact did Mary Jackson have on future generations?

Mary Jackson became an advocate for women and minorities in engineering. After achieving her own goals, she worked to encourage and mentor young women to pursue careers in STEM fields. Her legacy continues to inspire future generations of engineers and scientists.

Critical Reception and Awards

"Hidden Figures" received critical acclaim for its storytelling, performances, and historical significance. It was nominated for several Academy Awards, including Best Picture, and won the Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture. The film was praised not only for its entertainment value but also for its educational impact in raising awareness about the contributions of women and minorities in science and technology.

Conclusion

"Hidden Figures" is more than just a film; it is a celebration of the resilience, intelligence, and determination of three remarkable women who played pivotal roles in American history. By addressing questions surrounding the film, its characters, and the societal issues it portrays, we gain a deeper appreciation for the challenges faced by Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson. Their stories serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of diversity and inclusion in all fields, particularly in STEM, and highlight the impact that individuals can have in changing the world. The film encourages viewers to reflect on how far we've come and the work that still lies ahead in achieving equality and recognition for all.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main theme of the movie 'Hidden Figures'?

The main theme of 'Hidden Figures' is the struggle for equality and recognition faced by African American women in the field of mathematics and engineering during the 1960s, particularly in the context of the Space Race.

Who are the three main characters in 'Hidden Figures'?

The three main characters are Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson, who were pivotal in NASA's early space missions.

What challenges do the characters face in 'Hidden Figures'?

The characters face racial and gender discrimination, including segregation, limited career advancement opportunities, and the need to prove their capabilities in a predominantly white, male environment.

How does 'Hidden Figures' portray the role of women in STEM?

'Hidden Figures' highlights the significant contributions of women in STEM fields, showing how their intellect, perseverance, and skills were crucial to the success of NASA's space missions.

What real-life event does the movie revolve around?

The movie revolves around the real-life events leading up to John Glenn's historic orbit of Earth in 1962, showcasing the contributions of the three main characters to this mission.

How does the film address issues of race and gender?

The film addresses issues of race and gender by showcasing the systemic barriers that the characters faced, such as segregated facilities and biases in the workplace, while also celebrating their achievements and resilience.

What impact did 'Hidden Figures' have on public awareness of women's contributions to history?

'Hidden Figures' significantly raised public awareness of the overlooked contributions of African American women in STEM and inspired discussions about diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

What recognition did 'Hidden Figures' receive during awards season?

'Hidden Figures' received several nominations and awards during the 2016-2017 awards season, including an Academy Award nomination for Best Picture and wins at the Screen Actors Guild Awards.

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