

“HIDDEN FIGURES”

A reaction paper by Eiman Noel Pasadilla (STUB 3300)

1. Who or what is the antagonist in this story? What defeats the antagonist? Explain whether or not you believe that this shows a process that works in reality.

I believe that the antagonist in this film is the system that the people of these times live under, which is segregation in 1960s America. Its defeat is brought about by the willingness of our protagonists to stand up for themselves and demand the right for equal treatment and opportunity. This was shown with Katherine's outburst at the entire team for her unjust treatment, even going as far as being denied critical information that hindered her progress with calculations. I believe that this is a process that works in reality because it has worked! The fight for civil rights ended segregation in America as a whole, and has significantly improved race relations since.

2. What or who are the "Hidden Figures" referred to in the title to this movie?

The "Hidden Figures" refer to the unsung works by "minority" mathematicians and scientists working in NASA who haven't been brought to the limelight because of the circumstances of segregation during this era of American history. It is because they are seen as "inferior" to the white man, then they don't need nor deserve opportunity and recognition, especially with women of color. For the majority of people at the time, both white and black, it was "just how things worked".

3. What role does the scene with the policeman and the three protagonists play in the story? What does this tell you about the position of the black women in Virginia society in the late 1950s?

At first, there was tension in the air as there was a real possibility of the women being detained for even the slightest suspicion, even for just being "black" according to one of the characters. However, once the policeman knew that all three women were working for NASA in support of the "boys" going to space, his attitude warmed up to them, and even offered them police escort. During the time of the civil rights movement, tensions within the black and white population in America were quite high, and segregation still existed.

4. Coffee serves as a symbol in this movie. What does it symbolize?

Coffee symbolized segregation. When Katherine first entered her assigned office, she treated with animosity by the rest of the team members, even going as far as to get her her own Coffee machine, which didn't work, of course. However at the end of the movie, even Paul, the one who treated her with the most disdain at the beginning, casually gave her coffee after work, signifying that she was accepted and recognized for her outstanding work regardless of her race and gender.