

Name _____

Date _____



Katherine Johnson

Today we're going to talk about Katherine Johnson...in just a minute.

Katherine Johnson was born in 1918, which means she grew up during a time when women and Black people didn't have the same rights or resources as white men. As a Black woman, Johnson faced difficult circumstances, but her intelligence and love of learning helped her succeed. She started high school when she was 10, and she graduated college at 18 with degrees in math and French. After graduation, she worked as a math teacher and started a family.

When she was 34, Johnson heard about a job at what would become NASA. They were hiring women to be "computers"—people who did the complicated math needed for space travel. Johnson got the job, and her calculations sent the first American into space. Later, she figured out the trajectories that got the first man on the moon.

At this time, the US was still segregated. So while Johnson was key to these historic firsts and to the ongoing exploration of space, she was paid less than her male colleagues and still had to use a separate bathroom and cafeteria for Black people.

For years, Johnson's grit and legacy were largely unknown, but in 2016, a biopic called *Hidden Figures* brought her story to light.

If you could ask Katherine Johnson one question, what would it be?