

## Impact Statement

Ilee Branstetter, Grade 7.

***Henrietta Swan Leavitt: Reaching for the Stars***, 2021.

Digital art, 5.5 x 7 Inches.

South Middle School, Joplin, MO

Unsung Hero: Henrietta Swan Leavitt

I chose Henrietta Swan Leavitt as my topic because I am very interested in space; as a result, I decided to look into people who made large discoveries in cosmic technology. While looking for those people, I came across Leavitt and decided she was who I wanted to share with people. Especially since she was plagiarized to the point where people didn't know of her until recently.

Researching Henrietta was a very interesting endeavor. It really put into perspective the way that people treated women differently in Leavitt's time. The most interesting part was hearing about the health issues she had during the time she was researching. Not only was Leavitt severely deaf, but she also had cancer which led to her death. During her life, not only was Henrietta being paid less than men, but men were also taking what she discovered and using it without credit. This caused all of her discoveries not to be attached to her name. One of these men who took credit for her ideas was the person who hired her, Edward Charles Pickering, who hired women in a time where not many women worked outside of the house. Despite that advanced thinking, he still didn't treat them as equal to men. Due to the fact that Leavitt was consistently not credited for her work and was often copied by others, she is unsung in most ways. However, a new abundance of biographies seems to be reversing that and bringing her to light.

The very special importance of knowing the distance of stars from Earth makes Henrietta's discovery even more important in the eyes of astronomy and the understanding of how stars work. For example, knowing the distance from a star to the earth helps astronomers understand the color and brightness of stars. Leavitt's discovery uncovered the many mysteries of stars and our universe. Even the widely known Hubble used this measurement for his discovery of calculating the distance of galaxies.

I decided to draw Henrietta in the manner that I did because I knew that she loved space enough to put her there. To make sure that it didn't look like a somber moment where Leavitt is dying in space, I put a helmet on her head. I decided to add many stars in the background to pay homage to the fact that she came up with a way to calculate the distance between stars and the earth.

From this project I learned that women are very powerful and have been showing that they are capable far earlier than I thought they had. In regard to art, I learned how to color art in a realism even better than I knew how to before. Also, since I made digital art using a new-to-me program, it was an opportunity to learn how to use that program better to grow my skill.

To share this project with the community and others I entered the art into the weekly news video my school does. They have an art feature, and everyone in the school sees it. I will also display

my art in our school library for classes to see. I am going to have my parents and teacher post it on social media in order to share Leavitt's accomplishments and bring attention to her.