

Discussion Guide

THE

CALCULATING STARS

MARY ROBINETTE KOWAL

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The information and discussion questions that follow are intended to enhance your reading of *The Calculating Stars*. Please feel free to adapt these materials to suit your needs and interests.

1. The movie (and book) *Hidden Figures* was about the African-American women who did mathematical calculations and made invaluable and unrecognized contributions to NASA. Have you seen the film? How does that story relate to Elma Wexler's story in *The Calculating Stars*?
2. How did Elma's upbringing as a Southern lady conflict with her upbringing as a Jew? Do you think that made her more willing to examine the expectations that others had of her?
3. In the book, after the meteor destroys the east coast, Elma learns that no minority communities are being evacuated. What do you think it would happen if such a meteor hit the Earth today?

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4. Elma has very serious problems with anxiety. What are some of the reasons it is so difficult for her?
5. Would you want to be an astronaut? Why or why not? Is there anything in your life that you want as much as Elma wants to fly?

