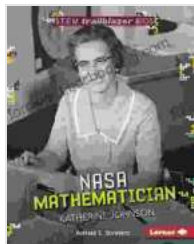


# Katherine Johnson: NASA Mathematician and STEM Trailblazer



## NASA Mathematician Katherine Johnson (STEM Trailblazer Bios) by Heather E. Schwartz

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 8676 KB

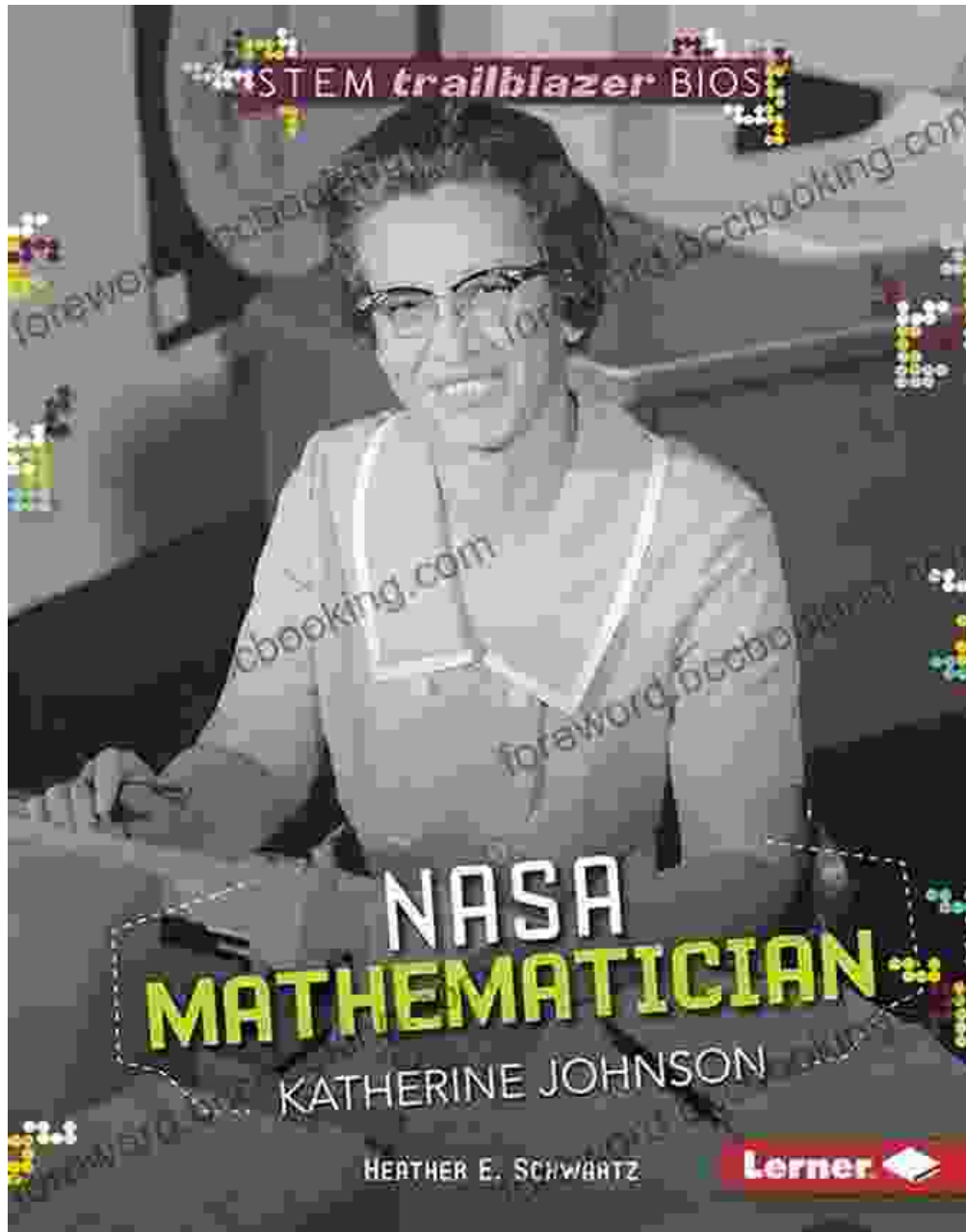
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Katherine Johnson was a pioneering mathematician whose contributions to NASA's space program were instrumental in the success of some of the most groundbreaking missions in history. From calculating the trajectory of Alan Shepard's Freedom 7 mission, the first American in space, to determining the path of the Apollo 11 moon landing, Johnson's

mathematical prowess was essential to the advancement of space exploration.

## **Early Life and Education**

Katherine Coleman Goble was born on August 26, 1918, in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. From a young age, she displayed a remarkable aptitude for mathematics. She skipped several grades in school and graduated from high school at the age of 14.

Johnson went on to attend West Virginia State College, where she earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics and French. She was the only woman in her mathematics class and excelled in her studies.

## **Career at NASA**

After graduating from college, Johnson worked as a teacher for several years. In 1953, she joined the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA), which later became NASA. She was assigned to the Flight Research Division, where she worked on calculations for supersonic flight.

Johnson's mathematical abilities quickly became apparent, and she was soon promoted to the Space Task Group, which was responsible for the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo missions. She played a crucial role in calculating the trajectories of these missions, ensuring the safety and success of the astronauts.

## **Landmark Achievements**

One of Johnson's most significant contributions was her work on the Mercury-Atlas 6 mission, which launched America's first astronaut, Alan Shepard, into space. She calculated the trajectory of the spacecraft and

determined the exact moment the retrorockets should be fired to return Shepard safely to Earth.

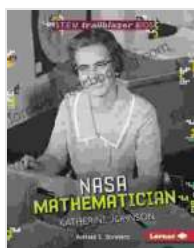
Johnson's calculations were also essential for the success of the Apollo 11 moon landing. She was responsible for determining the trajectory of the lunar module and calculating the time of the moon landing.

## Legacy

Katherine Johnson's contributions to NASA and the field of mathematics have been widely recognized. In 2015, she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor. In 2016, she was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

Johnson's story has also been told in the popular book and film *Hidden Figures*, which highlights the contributions of African American women to NASA's space program. Her legacy continues to inspire young people, particularly women and minorities, to pursue careers in STEM fields.

Katherine Johnson was a remarkable mathematician and a trailblazing figure in the field of STEM. Her mathematical prowess and dedication to her work played a vital role in the success of NASA's early space program. Her legacy continues to inspire generations of students and scientists to achieve their dreams and make a difference in the world.



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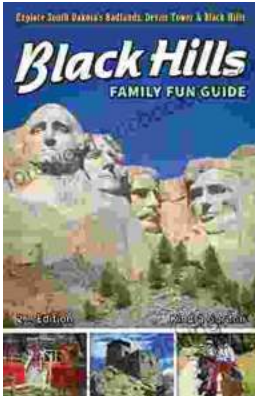
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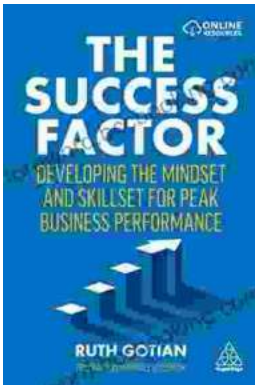
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