

## Katherine Johnson - African American History Month

**Katherine Coleman Goble Johnson** (August 26, 1918 – February 24, 2020) was an African American physicist and mathematician.

Katherine Johnson was 1 of the first 3 black people allowed to study at West Virginia University.

She was known for her work on the United States' aeronautics and space programs where she worked with the early application of digital electronic computers at [NASA](#).

She was also known for accuracy in computerized [celestial navigation](#). She made it possible for many space flights to happen through the [Space Shuttle program](#). Her calculations were critical to the success of these missions.

Johnson also did calculations for plans for [a mission to Mars](#). Katherine Goble Johnson wrote 26 research reports. She was the first woman to attend an editorial meeting at NASA.

In 2015, Johnson received the [Presidential Medal of Freedom](#). In 2019, Johnson was awarded the [Congressional Gold Medal](#).

Katherine Johnson was born as Creola Katherine Coleman on August 26, 1918, in [White Sulphur Springs](#), West Virginia, to Joylette and Joshua McKinley Coleman. She was the youngest of four children. Her mother was a teacher and her father was a lumberman, farmer, and handyman, and worked at the Greenbrier Hotel.

Johnson showed strong mathematical abilities from an early age. Because [Greenbrier County](#) did not offer public schooling for African-American students past the eighth grade, the Colemans arranged for their children to attend high school in [Institute](#), West Virginia. Johnson was enrolled when she was ten years old.

After graduating from high school at 14, Johnson enrolled at West Virginia State, a historically black college. As a student, she took every math course offered by the college. She graduated [summa cum laude](#) ("with highest honor") in 1937, with degrees in mathematics and French, at age 18.

She took on a teaching job at a black public school in [Marion](#), Virginia.



### True/False

1. Mrs. Johnson did calculations for plans for a mission to Mercury. **True or False?**
2. Katherine was awarded the **Presidential Medal of Freedom**. **True or False?**
3. Katherine was born in Virginia. **True or False?**
4. Katherine graduated at the age of 14. **True or False?**
5. Katherine graduated with degrees in math and French. **True or False?**

### Comprehension Questions

(Write complete sentences. Start sentences with the words in parentheses.)

1. What did Katherine's mother do? (She was...)  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How old was Katherine when she entered High School? (She was...)  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What was the first Medal she received? (She received...)  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What does the Latin phrase "**summa cum laude**" mean? (It means...)  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What university did Katherine graduate from? (She graduated...)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Source: [https://kids.kiddle.co/Katherine\\_Johnson](https://kids.kiddle.co/Katherine_Johnson)