



Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909

By Michelle Markel

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From acclaimed author Michelle Markel and Caldecott Honor artist Melissa Sweet comes this true story of Clara Lemlich, a young Ukrainian immigrant who led the largest strike of women workers in U.S. history. This picture book biography includes a bibliography and an author's note on the garment industry. It follows the plight of immigrants in America in the early 1900s, tackling topics like activism and the U.S. garment industry, with handstitching and fabric incorporated throughout the art.

When Clara arrived in America, she couldn't speak English. She didn't know that young women had to go to work, that they traded an education for long hours of labor, that she was expected to grow up fast.

But that didn't stop Clara. She went to night school, spent hours studying English, and helped support her family by sewing in a shirtwaist factory.

Clara never quit, and she never accepted that girls should be treated poorly and paid little. Fed up with the mistreatment of her fellow laborers, Clara led the largest walkout of women workers the country had seen.

From her short time in America, Clara learned that everyone deserved a fair chance. That you had to stand together and fight for what you wanted. And, most importantly, that you could do anything you put your mind to.

Supports the Common Core State Standards.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

K-Gr 3-This picture-book biography of Clara Lemlich, a spitfire who fought hard for better working conditions, is an engaging, informative introduction to her activism as well as to the deplorable state of the U.S. garment industry in the early 1900s. Ukrainian-born Lemlich came to the United States with her parents to escape the Kishinev pogrom of 1903, only to be thrust into another appalling nightmare: the American shirtwaist factories. She began on a small scale to encourage her coworkers to strike, but at a union meeting, when even men wouldn't call for a walkout, she rose and shouted to the large gathering that the time for a strike was now, inspiring tens of thousands of women to leave their stations in the factories. Markel's style is clean and clear, making Lemlich's story accessible to a young audience. Readers are treated to solid information with a buoyant message about standing up for what is right. Sweet has created an outstanding backdrop for Markel's text with a vibrant collage of watercolor, gouache, blank dress-pattern paper, bookkeeping pages, stitches, and fabric pieces. This spirited account concludes with additional material on the garment industry and a solid bibliography. A first purchase.-Alyson Low, Fayetteville Public Library, AR(c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

From Booklist

Starred Review In the winter of 1909, a brave girl named Clara Lemlich, only five feet tall, picketed for workers' rights. She arrived in America along with hundreds of other immigrants from eastern Europe, hardly speaking any English. But instead of her father being hired, it's Clara the factories want, and off she goes to make women's clothing in a garment factory from dawn till dusk. The conditions are appalling: "If you prick your finger and bleed on the cloth, you're fined. If it happens a second time, you're fired," and more. While the men at the factory don't think girls are strong enough to strike, Clara proves them wrong, eventually leading the "largest walkout of women workers in U.S. history." Markel's informative text buzzes with details of the oppressive conditions and neatly plays up Clara's can-do spirit, but she perhaps tries to cover too much territory, and as a result, omits some crucial explanations (e.g., why can't Clara's father get hired?). However, Robert F. Sibert Medalist Sweet (Balloons over Broadway, 2011) creates punchy, vibrant collages that make up for any shortcomings. The zingy images masterfully (and appropriately) incorporate fabric and stitches as well as old images of checks and time cards. One particularly moving picture is seen from above as row upon row of workers toil away. A detailed note about the garment industry and a selected bibliography conclude. This book has fighting spirit in spades—you go, Clara! Grades K-3. --Ann Kelley

Review

"The zingy images masterfully (and appropriately) incorporate fabric and stitches as well as old images of checks and time cards ... This book has fighting spirit in spades—you go, Clara!" (Booklist (starred review))

"Readers are treated to solid information with a buoyant message about standing up for what is right. Sweet has created an outstanding backdrop for Markel's text with a vibrant collage of watercolor, gouache, blank dress-pattern paper, bookkeeping pages, stitches, and fabric pieces." (School Library Journal (starred review))

"Sweet incorporates images of assorted fabrics and stitch patterns into her tender illustrations, brightening the lives of workers whose reality was bleak." (Publishers Weekly (starred review))

“In her simple but powerful text Markel shows how multiple arrests, serious physical attacks, and endless misogyny failed to deter this remarkable woman as she set off on her lifelong path as a union activist.” (The Horn Book)

“Markel ably brings to life the plight of immigrant garment workers and Clara’s courageous advocacy.” (Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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John Jones:

This Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909 book is absolutely not ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you obtain by reading this book will be information inside this book incredible fresh, you will get information which is getting deeper an individual read a lot of information you will get. This Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909 without we know teach the one who looking at it become critical in considering and analyzing. Don't possibly be worry Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909 can bring when you are and not make your case space or bookshelves' come to be full because you can have it within your lovely laptop even phone. This Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909 having very good arrangement in word and layout, so you will not truly feel uninterested in reading.

Francis King:

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