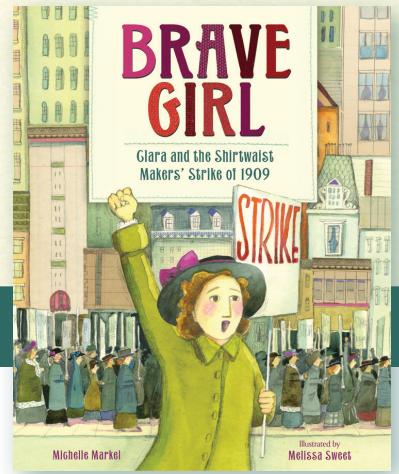


BRAVE GIRL

Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909

By Michelle Markel Illustrated by Melissa Sweet

Teaching Guide



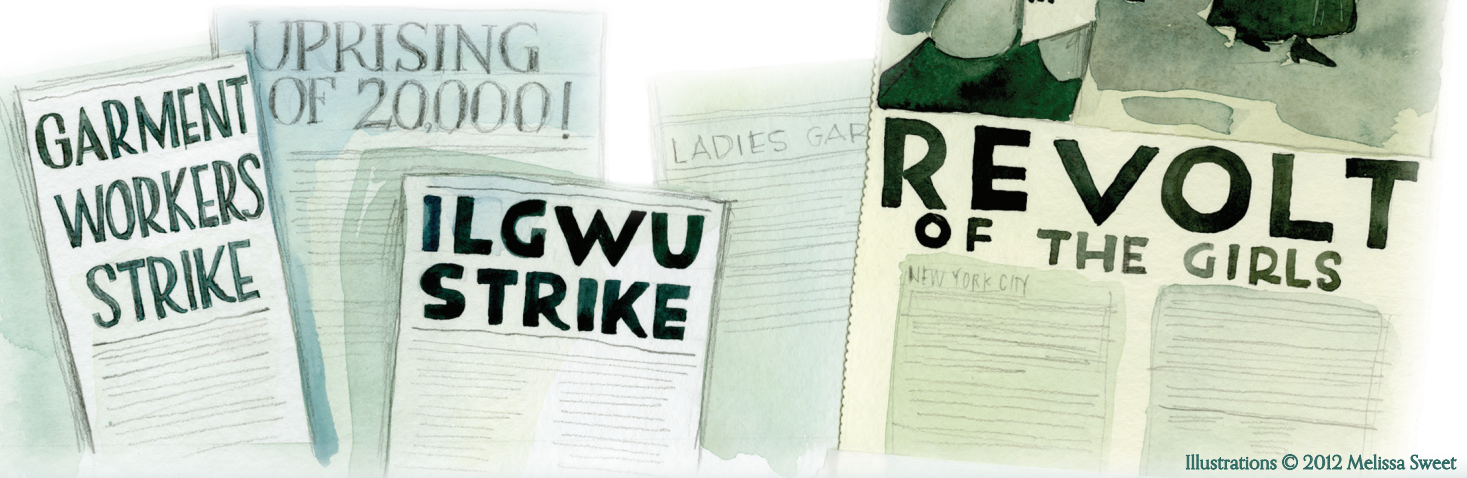
About the Book

When Clara Lemlich arrived in America, she couldn't speak English. She didn't know that poor 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 did not stop Clara: She went to night school, spent hours studying English, and helped support her family by sewing in a factory. Clara never quit. And she never accepted that girls should be treated poorly and paid little. So Clara fought back. Fed up with the mistreatment of her fellow laborers, Clara led the largest walkout of women workers in the country's history. Clara had learned a lot from her short time in America. She learned that everyone deserved a fair chance. That you had to stand together and fight for what you wanted. And, most important, that you could do anything you put your mind to.

Before Reading

Launch a class discussion about immigration.

Ask students: "What is an immigrant? Do you know where your family came from? Do you think life was easy for immigrants when they came to this country? Why or why not?"



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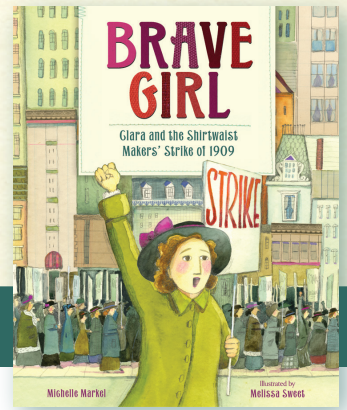
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Discussion Prompts

- “This girl’s got grit, and she’s going to prove it.”
What does that mean?
- What job does Clara get? Describe the conditions in her workplace. List specific details from the story.
- Look carefully at the illustrations. What details do you notice that indicate this story occurred over one hundred years ago?
- What were some of the rules in the factory? Do you agree with them? Why or why not?
- Describe a typical day for Clara. How is it similar to or different from your typical day?
- Read the following excerpt to the class: “Clara smolders with anger, not just for herself, but for all the factory girls, working like slaves. This was not the America she’d imagined.” What does that mean? Why does she feel this way?
- What did the men at the factory think about the girls who worked there? How did Clara and the girls change the men’s perspectives?
- What is a union? What is a strike? Why are these both important for Clara and her fellow workers?
- What happened to Clara each time she led a strike? Did she give up? Would you?
- The small strikes did not change conditions for the girls. Why not? What finally made things change?
- Read the final lines of the story aloud: “Proving that in America/wrongs can be righted/warriors can wear skirts and blouses/and the bravest hearts/may beat in girls/only five feet tall.” What does this mean? How might this apply to your life?

Common Core State Reading Standards for Literature: RL 2.1, RL 3.1, RL 4.1, RL 5.1, RL 2.2, RL 3.2, RL 4.2, RL 5.2, RL 2.3, RL 3.3, RL 4.3, RL 5.3, RL 2.6, RL 3.6, RL 4.6, RL 5.6, RL 2.7, RL 3.7, RL 5.7, RL 2.10, RL 3.10, RL 4.10, RL 5.10, RL 2.11, RL 3.11, RL 4.11, RL 5.11

Common Core State Speaking and Listening Standards: SL 2.1, SL 3.1, SL 4.1, SL 5.1, SL 2.2, SL 3.2, SL 4.2, SL 5.2, SL 2.4, SL 3.4, SL 4.4, SL 5.4, SL 2.6, SL 3.6

Common Core State Language Standards: L 2.1, L 3.1, L 4.1, L 5.1, L 2.4, L 3.4, L 4.4, L 5.4, L 2.6, L 3.6, L 4.6, L 5.6



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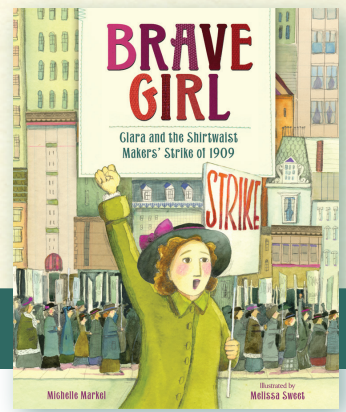
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Extension Activities

1. **A TREE GROWS.** Ask students to bring in the names of their siblings, parents, and grandparents. (Depending on the age of your students, they can also include aunts, uncles, cousins, and great-grandparents in this project.) Help students create a family tree that denotes the relationships between the three (or four) generations. You might want to provide the students with a template on which they record their family members' names. You can also ask students to bring in photographs of their family members to embellish the family tree.

Common Core State Standards: RL 2.11, W 2.8, W 3.8, W 4.8, L 2.2, L 3.2, L 4.2, L 5.2

2. **WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?** Ask students to interview a grandparent or an older relative. They should ask the following questions:

- In what country were you born?
- If you were not born in the United States, when did you come here?
- Where did you grow up? What was life like when you were growing up?
- What jobs have you had in the United States?

With adult assistance, students can also use the Internet and genealogy sites such as ancestry.com to find immigration information about their family. Then have students use all the information they have gathered and write a report on their family history to share with the class.

Common Core State Standards: RL 2.7, W 3.8, W 4.8, W 5.8, SL 2.1, SL 3.1, SL 4.1, SL 5.1, SL 2.2, SL 2.3, SL 3.3, SL 4.3, SL 5.3, SL 2.4, SL 3.4, SL 4.4, SL 2.6, SL 3.6, L 2.1, L 3.1, L 4.1, L 5.1, L 2.2, L 3.2, L 4.2, L 5.2, L 2.3, L 3.3, L 4.3, L 5.3

3. **IT'S NOT FAIR!** Clara spoke out against the unfair treatment of the factory workers. Ask students to focus on something in the world that they believe is unfair. Then ask them to write a speech in which they state their concern and suggest ways to resolve the injustice. Have students rehearse their speeches and prepare to present them to the class. Older students might also prepare a visual presentation to accompany their speech. Encourage students to take action (e.g. writing letters, calling a local congressional representative) toward resolving an injustice.

Common Core State Standards: RL 2.11, W 2.1, 3.1, 4.1, 5.1, W 3.4, 4.4, 5.4, W 2.5, W 3.5, W 4.5, W 5.5, W 2.8, W 2.11, SL 2.1, SL 3.1, SL 4.1, SL 5.1, SL 2.3, SL 3.3, SL 4.3, SL 5.3, SL 2.4, SL 3.4, SL 4.4, SL 5.4, SL 3.5, SL 4.5, SL 5.5, SL 2.6, SL 3.6, SL 4.6, SL 5.6, L 2.1, L 3.1, L 4.1, L 5.1, L 2.3, L 3.3, L 4.3, L 5.3, L 3.6, L 4.6, L 5.6

4. **DO YOUR JOB.** Have students use books and Internet sources to research what jobs were available to those who immigrated to America. Ask students to choose one of these jobs and make a detailed drawing of the setting in which immigrants worked. Jobs might include fishermen, shoe shiners, fruit sellers, factory workers, mine workers, construction workers, shoemakers, and farmers.

Common Core State Standards: RL 2.7, RI 2.3, RI 3.3, RI 4.3, RI 5.3, RI 2.5, RI 3.5, RI 2.10, RI 3.10, RI 4.10, RI 5.10, W 2.7, W 3.7, W 4.7, W 5.7

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Susan Casey

About the Author

MICHELLE MARKEL is a former freelance journalist whose essays have appeared in several newspapers, including the *Wall Street Journal* and the

Los Angeles Times. After her two daughters were born, she started writing for young people. She has written a variety of picture books, including, most recently, *Tyrannosaurus Math* and *The Fantastic Jungles of Henri Rousseau*. Michelle is also a founding member of the Children's Authors Network. She and her husband, an anthropologist, live in West Hills, California, with their two sweet cats. You can visit her online at www.michellemarkel.com.



Annie Higbee

About the Illustrator

MELISSA SWEET has illustrated many award-winning books for children, including *A River of Words: The Story of William Carlos Williams* by Jen

Bryant, a 2009 Caldecott Honor Book, an NCTE Orbis Pictus Recommended Book, and a *New York Times* Best Illustrated Children's Book. She also wrote and illustrated the Robert F. Sibert Medal-winning book *Balloons over Broadway: The True Story of the Puppeteer of Macy's Parade*, *Tupelo Rides the Rails*, and *Carmine: A Little More Red*, a *New York Times* Best Illustrated Book for 2005. Her collages and paintings have appeared in the *New York Times* and *Martha Stewart Living*. You can visit her online at www.melissasweet.net.



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