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Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Maker's Strike of 1909 by Michelle Markel

About *Brave Girl*:

As a young immigrant girl, Clara Lemlich lands in New York City “dirt poor, just five feet tall, and hardly speaks a word of English.” Her father is unable to find work, but Clara does as



a seamstress in a garment factory. Full of grit and determination, Clara recognizes the injustices of the garment industry on the workers and organizes the girls to strike in the winter of 1909. Thousands of young girls line the streets of New York in protest of the working conditions. Readers of this young heroine will be moved by the power of all of the girls banding together to create social change.

About the author:

Michelle Markel penned stories and poems for student publications throughout secondary school and college (USC and UCLA, in pursuit of a BA and MA in French literature). Choosing to explore a career in writing, she obtained a second BA in Journalism at California State University, Northridge. This gave her the opportunity to intern at *The Los Angeles Times*.

Later, as a freelance journalist, Michelle's stories and opinion pieces were published in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and other newspapers and magazines. Michelle is also a founding member of the Children's Authors Network and teaches classes in writing for young people for UCLA Extension's Writer's Program. Source: michellemarkel.com/bio.

Starred review of *Brave Girl*: School Library Journal, Kirkus A Junior Library Guild selection

Tips for *Brave Girl*:

- 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?”
- 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 write a detailed drawing of the setting in which immigrants worked.
- 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.

Additional resources:

- Encourage students to take action (e.g. writing letters, calling a local congressional representative) toward resolving an injustice.
- Following a reading of the author's note on the garment industry, located at the end of the book, support students to question why the police brutality ceased when wealthy women joined the picket line. What issues of power and privilege does this reveal? In what ways can these issues still be seen today?