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# Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909 by Michelle Markel

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Author: Markel, Michelle

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

Illustrator: Sweet, Melissa

Year of Publication: 2013

Publisher: Balzer + Bray

ISBN: 9780061804427

Number of Pages: 32

Rating: Excellent

Reading/Interest Level: Primary; Intermediate

Keywords: History; Strike; Union

Review:

Clara Lemlich is one of many immigrant workers in New York City's garment industry in the early 1900s. The garment workers follow strict rules and work in unsafe factories with only two toilets for three hundred girls. While many people talk about forming a union, no one acts until Clara shouts that they should go on a general strike. Clara and the other strikers survive all kinds of challenges (including arrest and violent attacks from thugs hired by the garment companies) to unionize and demand safety and good wages.

Sweet's mixed media illustrations brighten up the staid clothes of the era with bold colors and fragments of paper, cloth, and stitching that add eye-catching texture. The text is in present tense which, while less common in children's literature, adds a dynamic feel to the historical events described. Markel is not explicit, but she does not hide union busters' violence and the difficulties factory workers faced. Her style is clear and direct. A two-page addition after the story discusses other women in the garment workers' movement and related events, like the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of 1910. The book ends with a selected bibliography that includes primary as well as secondary sources. *Brave Clara* is an excellent biographical and historical selection that is accessible and relevant.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

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