

***Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls* is full of stories about extraordinary women. If you've had enough of fairy tale princesses, here you'll find a hundred female role models to inspire you. And they're all real-life women.**

We all know how fairy tales go. A beautiful girl waits for a prince to come and rescue her and then she marries him, becomes a princess and lives happily ever after. But what if the girl was clever, creative, brave or strong instead of beautiful? What if she wanted to be an astronaut, a politician, a pirate or a spy instead of a princess? And what if she didn't need a prince to make it happen? That's the idea behind the book *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls*, a book of fairy tales with a difference: all the stories are true.

The book tells the stories of one hundred inspiring women from 1500 BC in the time of Ancient Egypt to the modern day. And each one comes with original art by sixty different female artists. The magic of the book lies in the way it is written. It's not just boring biographies but is told in the style of fairy tales. Some of the stories begin 'Once upon a time' just like a traditional fairy tale. They paint a picture of the life, dreams and achievements of each of the women and girls like in this story about sailor Jessica Watson. It begins 'Once upon a time, there was a girl called Jessica who was afraid of water.' We learn how Jessica sailed solo around the world at age 16. 'All on her own, Jessica sailed on. She fought against waves as tall as buildings in New York, she woke up to the most beautiful sunrises, spotted blue whales, and watched shooting stars above her boat.'

You probably haven't heard of most of the women but, by the time you finish reading, you'll be wondering why. In some cases, it's because people tried to erase them from history. Like Hatshepsut, one of the most successful pharaohs of Egypt who brought peace and wealth to Egypt and ruled for a long time – about 25 years. But after her death, some of her statues and official records were removed by men who came after her. In other cases, it's because a man's name became more famous. For example, Charles Babbage is called the 'father of computers' but it was a woman – and friend of his – Ada Lovelace who wrote the first computer program.

For many of the others, there is no obvious explanation for why we haven't learned about these women before. Society has often chosen to reward and celebrate the achievements of men more than women. If you close your eyes and imagine an inventor, an orchestra conductor and a warrior, the picture that comes into your mind is probably of men. If you read the book, you can start to replace those images with women of all colours and ages. Women who fought for their rights, women who broke rules, women who refused to fit into the roles society gave them.

You'll learn about a girl who only learned to read and write at age fourteen but became the first female president of her country. You'll read about a poet who published her first book at age 75, a ballet dancer who danced with her leg broken in six places and a woman from Kenya who planted 40 million trees with her friends.

If there's any criticism of the book, it's that its title makes it seem like a book for girls. It's a great idea to celebrate and inspire young girls to show them how powerful they can be, but the stories are just as interesting for boys to read. And it's equally important that boys imagine women in the roles of scientist, Formula One race car driver and president.

Not all the women included are 'good girls'. Margaret Thatcher, for example, Britain's first female prime minister, was a very controversial, often hated, leader. The book gives one example of why people liked her and one example of why people didn't. But Margaret Thatcher did a lot of controversial things and the book doesn't make it clear that, for many people, she wasn't a hero. Another woman, Jingū, Empress of Japan in about AD 169, decided to invade Korea because of a dream and the writers don't make any comment about this either. Pirates too might seem unusual role models. They are, after all, violent criminals. Although it's good to see girls in a variety of roles, including politicians, pirates and invaders, it would be interesting to have a moral judgement sometimes. If these characters had a bad ending to their story or got what they deserved, it would show that just because they're female, it doesn't mean they're always good people.

There are now two *Rebel Girls* books, after the first book sold a million copies in 36 different languages. The authors, Elena Favilli and Francesca Cavallo, raised the money to write and print the first book from crowdfunding on Kickstarter in 2016. With the help of 13,454 people from 75 countries, they raised \$1 million – the most money ever raised for an original book on Kickstarter. Readers wanted more, so, in 2017, the authors raised another \$866,000 to produce a second book with another hundred women's stories.

In theory, *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls* is the perfect book to sit on the coffee table for you to read a bit here and a bit there. But if you're the kind of person who watches a whole series of a TV show in one weekend, you'll probably do the same thing with this book.

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