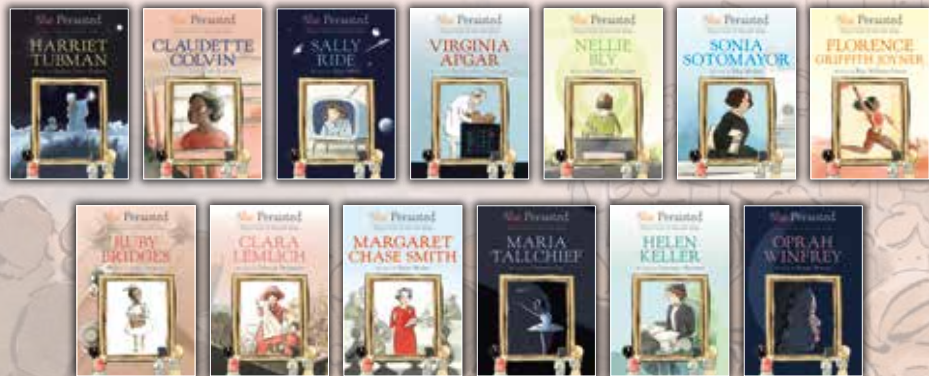


“I am one of those who suffers from the abuses described here, and I move that **we go on a general strike.**”

Clara Lemlich immigrated to New York to escape danger in Ukraine, where she was born. She started working in clothing factories on the Lower East Side, only to realize that workers were being treated unfairly. So she stood up for the rights of workers, especially girls and women—and she won, changing the way factory workers were treated in America forever!

Read about all these women who **PERSISTED!**



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CLARA LEMLICH
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— INSPIRED BY —

She Persisted

by Chelsea Clinton & Alexandra Boiger

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CLARA LEMLICH

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Written by
Deborah Heiligman

Interior illustrations by
Gillian Flint



PHILOMEL

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∞ For ∞
Clara's grandchildren and
all who fight for justice

She Persisted

She Persisted: HARRIET TUBMAN

She Persisted: CLAUDETTE COLVIN

She Persisted: SALLY RIDE

She Persisted: VIRGINIA APGAR

She Persisted: NELLIE BLY

She Persisted: SONIA SOTOMAYOR

She Persisted: FLORENCE GRIFFITH JOYNER

She Persisted: RUBY BRIDGES

She Persisted: CLARA LEMLICH

She Persisted: MARGARET CHASE SMITH

She Persisted: MARIA TALLCHIEF

She Persisted: HELEN KELLER

She Persisted: OPRAH WINFREY

DEAR READER,

As Sally Ride and Marian Wright Edelman both powerfully said, “You can’t be what you can’t see.” When Sally Ride said that, she meant that it was hard to dream of being an astronaut, like she was, or a doctor or an athlete or anything at all if you didn’t see someone like you who already had lived that dream. She especially was talking about seeing women in jobs that historically were held by men.

I wrote the first *She Persisted* and the books that came after it because I wanted young girls—and children of all genders—to see women who worked hard to live their dreams. And I wanted all of us to see examples of persistence in the face of different challenges to help inspire us in our own lives.

I’m so thrilled now to partner with a sisterhood of writers to bring longer, more in-depth versions of these stories of women’s persistence and achievement to readers. I hope you enjoy these chapter books as much as I do and find them inspiring and empowering.

And remember: If anyone ever tells you no, if anyone ever says your voice isn’t important or your dreams are too big, remember these women. They persisted and so should you.

Warmly,

Chelsea Clinton



CLARA
LEMLICH

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Burning to Read

Clara Lemlich had a fire inside her—a fire for justice, for fairness, for equality. When she saw something wrong, she spoke up. Clara’s voice was beautiful and strong, smart and loud. Clara’s voice and actions changed the world.

Because of where and when she was born, this was not easy. She *needed* that fire!

Clara Lemlich was born in 1886 to a religious Jewish family in Gorodok, a small village in

Ukraine, which was then part of Russia. In that time and place, girls were supposed to behave and keep quiet. They were not considered equal to boys. And Jewish people were not considered equal to non-Jewish people. In fact, Jews were in constant danger of being killed in attacks called pogroms. Russian leaders supported these pogroms.



Fortunately, for most of Clara's childhood, her family was unharmed. Clara had an older sister, Ella, and four brothers. Her parents owned a small grocery store. Clara's father was a scholar. He studied Jewish books all day. Her mother took care of the children and the house, cooked the meals, and ran the store.

Clara and Ella helped their mother with her work while their four brothers went to school. Clara really wanted to go to school! But only boys went to the yeshiva, the Jewish school. So she asked to go to the village school, where she could learn Russian and other subjects. But the village school refused to let her attend because she was Jewish.

At home, Clara's family spoke and read only Yiddish. Her parents allowed no Russian books,

in protest against the Russian rulers. Clara understood, but the books she wanted to read were in Russian. She was *burning* to read novels and history, books about the great world outside their little village. She figured out a way.

Clara made friends easily, and had many—Jewish and non-Jewish. She learned folk songs from her non-Jewish friends, and made a deal with some of her older Jewish friends who knew Russian. She taught them the songs, and they taught her how to read Russian. And they gave her books. Clara knew her parents didn't approve, so she hid the books and read in secret.

She read late at night when everyone else was asleep. She read when she was supposed to be doing chores. Once when she was at the stream washing clothes, she got so caught up reading, she



forgot to go home. Her mother wondered why the laundry took her so long!

Clara read and read and read.

Then one day, her father found her stash of books hidden under a pan in the kitchen. He threw them into the fire!

All of Clara's books, burned to ash.

But that didn't stop Clara for long. She knew she couldn't change her father's mind, but she persisted! She did what she *could* do—she earned money to buy more books. She secretly sewed buttonholes in tailor shops. (Her parents didn't want her to work yet.)

She hid her new books in the attic of their house. That's where she did most of her reading, often on Saturday afternoons, while the rest of the family was napping.

One Saturday, her next-door neighbor happened to look through the window and see her perched on a wooden beam, reading a book.

She begged him not to tell her parents.

Not only did the neighbor not tell, he gave her more to read! And not just books, either, but pamphlets about different kinds of government, and essays about ways to live. Clara read how people could make a difference in the world.

When she grew up, Clara would be one of those people. But first she needed more money for more books.