



## Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls

### Book review

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.

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