



TEEN TRAILBLAZERS

30 FEARLESS GIRLS

WHO CHANGED THE WORLD
BEFORE THEY WERE 20



JENNIFER CALVERT

ILLUSTRATED BY VESNA ASANOVIC



“I’VE BEEN ABSOLUTELY TERRIFIED
EVERY MOMENT OF MY LIFE
AND I’VE NEVER LET IT KEEP ME
FROM DOING A SINGLE THING
THAT I WANTED TO DO.”

—GEORGIA O’KEEFE

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CASTLE POINT BOOKS
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**“I ALONE CANNOT CHANGE THE WORLD,
BUT I CAN CAST A STONE ACROSS THE
WATER TO CREATE MANY RIPPLES.”**

—MOTHER TERESA

**“WE DO NOT NEED MAGIC TO CHANGE THE
WORLD, WE CARRY ALL THE POWER WE
NEED INSIDE OURSELVES ALREADY: WE
HAVE THE POWER TO IMAGINE BETTER.”**

—J. K. ROWLING



**“BE NOT AFRAID OF GREATNESS.
SOME ARE BORN GREAT, SOME
ACHIEVE GREATNESS, AND OTHERS
HAVE GREATNESS THRUST UPON THEM.”**

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *TWELFTH NIGHT*



INTRODUCTION

Changing the world sounds like a big, scary endeavor meant for the leaders of countries and political movements. But real change is simple. It happens slowly, a little bit at a time. Change is not an enormous snowball charging furiously down the hill—it’s the snowflakes that drift softly onto the mountain. The snowball is nothing without them, and they are nothing without each other.

Even the smallest actions can add up to incredible change. Claudette Colvin (page 79) refused to give up her seat on a bus. Her act of courage inspired the actions of others, and soon the snowball was moving toward the end of the segregated bus system. Emma Watson (page 95) auditioned for a movie and brought to life a beloved book character. Then she realized she could use her fame to help women all over the world, and the snowball started moving toward equality.

But change can happen only when someone imagines that things can be different than they are. Not everyone has the vision to strike out on a new path, or the strength to oppose the people who say it can’t or shouldn’t be done. Those who do are called *trailblazers*. They set the snowball in motion. And the world needs more of them.

We’re lucky today: most women have the freedom and confidence to move in any direction we like. We also have those who came before us as role models. They paved the way. But the girls

in this book were often the first of their kind, with no one to look up to but themselves. Mary Shelley (page 39) published the first science fiction novel in history, Mary Pickford (page 59) created the movie star, and Nellie Bly (page 55) pioneered investigative journalism—all in an era when women were told to sit down and be quiet. Society didn’t expect much from these girls, so they had to expect more from themselves. Although we’ve come a long way, there’s still progress to be made and paths for new teen trailblazers to forge.

The amazing young women in this book were different from each other in every way—place, time, and social standing. Some had the benefit of supportive parents, or the gift of talent. Others just believed in something greater than themselves. Some set out to change the world, others did it almost by accident. But every one of them was smart, creative, resilient, brave, hopeful, and kind. And every one of them had to overcome obstacles like poverty, sexism, racism, war, and the inescapable specter of fear.

These teenage trailblazers are proof that anyone and everyone can change the world. The stories contained here are just the beginning. When you find someone or something that speaks to you, do what these brilliant girls did, and set out to learn more. Then take one small step in the direction you want the snowball to move. Start today. Start before you’re ready. Just start.



CLEOPATRA

THE LAST ACTIVE PHARAOH OF EGYPT

BORN: 69 BC • DIED: 30 BC

- Became queen of Egypt when she was 18 years old
- Brought peace and prosperity to Egypt during her 22-year reign
- Was a brilliant political mind and take-charge leader

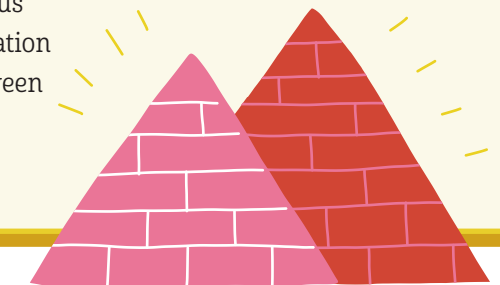
“FOR HER BEAUTY, AS WE ARE TOLD, WAS IN ITSELF NOT ALTOGETHER INCOMPARABLE, NOR SUCH AS TO STRIKE THOSE WHO SAW HER; BUT CONVERSE WITH HER HAD AN IRRESISTIBLE CHARM.”

—PLUTARCH, *LIFE OF ANTONY*

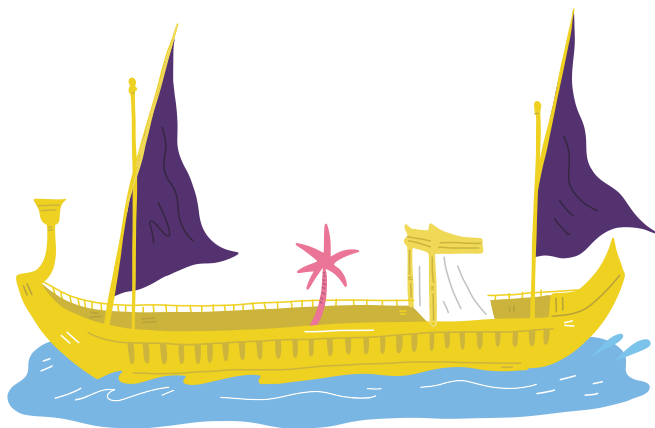
Cleopatra made history for her ruthless political tactics, sensational love life, and bold ambition. But these qualities were never without their qualifier: her gender. Those history-making attributes were most commonly assigned to men. They were applauded in men. In a woman, they were considered shocking and unbecoming. Women could be powerful, of course, but society felt (and still feels, in some circles) that their power should be quiet and understated. Cleopatra was neither quiet nor understated.

EGYPT: THE SOAP OPERA

For all of its murder, intrigue, and romance, Cleopatra's reign over Egypt could put *Game of Thrones* to shame. But that's how the Romans rolled. (Egypt was part of Rome, off and on.) Family members marrying each other to keep bloodlines pure wasn't uncommon. Nor was murdering those same family members over money or power. What was a little treasonous assassination plot between friends?



Cleopatra was just 18 years old when her father died and she became queen of Egypt. She had 100 years of royal ancestry to live up to, and three ambitious siblings to contend with. One of those siblings, her younger brother, ran her out of the country just three years into her rule. She fled to Syria and began raising up an army against him.



EGYPT UNDER CLEOPATRA

Cleopatra's first priority was always that Egypt flourish under her family's rule. That was her guiding principle in ousting her brother, in captivating Caesar and Antony, and in governing day to day. Although she had a cunning political mind, she was a kind and empathetic queen. When flooding from the Nile ruined food crops, she opened her stores of grain to all of Egypt. Although Greek by birth, she learned and spoke the Egyptian language of her people. For 22 years, she maintained Egypt's independence from Rome and bolstered its economy. Her love affairs are fascinating, but her legacy as a leader and businesswoman is incredible.



At the time, Rome was becoming increasingly combustible thanks to a country-splitting spat between leaders Julius Caesar and Pompey. Pompey sought refuge in Egypt, where Cleopatra's little brother didn't think twice before having him killed. But this is where Cleopatra and her brother differed: she gave careful thought to every action.

Cleopatra saw an opportunity in Caesar, whose large army would ensure her return to the throne. Legend has it that she wrapped herself in an Oriental rug she gave as a gift to the Roman emperor. (This allowed her to meet him without raising any suspicions or getting herself killed.) Sure enough, Caesar fell madly in love with the bewitching Egyptian and promptly returned her to power.

Cleopatra's shrewd marketing skills secured her power, money, and men more than once. When Caesar was assassinated (Rome was

predictable in its unpredictability), the new ruler of Rome requested her presence. Not only did she keep him waiting, but when she did arrive, it was on a gilded boat with purple sails, and oars rowing to music. The woman knew how to make an entrance! And her plan paid off—Marc Antony was enchanted.

Cleopatra made one miscalculation, though. She fell as deeply for Antony as he had for her. While most men were intimidated by her intellect, Marc Antony was her admirer and her equal. He won her affection by adding scrolls to her treasured library, where they spent evenings eating extravagant meals and reading together. They were the Romeo and Juliet of their time, and their love story ended just as tragically.

Rome was still embroiled in conflict, with the heir to the empire, Octavian, plotting against Antony and Cleopatra. They engaged in a war they couldn't win, weakening Cleopatra's beloved country. In the midst of the chaos, Antony heard a rumor that Cleopatra had died, and he fell on his own sword rather than live without her. Cleopatra buried her love, settled things with Octavian, put on her best clothing and makeup, and committed suicide. She was buried with Antony, as was the legacy of her family line.

Learn from Cleopatra's legacy: Don't be afraid to show people how smart you are, to use your intellect, to be different from other girls, to be better than the boys. Some people might be intimidated. Some might lash out. But the ones who matter will get you. Just focus on being the best you that you can be.



HISTORY IS WRITTEN BY THE WINNERS

You might be asking yourself why Cleopatra is always portrayed as a conniving seductress. There's a good reason for that: Octavian rewrote history. He wanted to make it clear that he was the rightful ruler, and he thought it looked better if his enemy were a foreigner who used her feminine wiles, rather than his own countryman. But it's important to remember the truth—that Cleopatra was an incredibly intelligent and insightful leader who made her country a better place to live.





JOAN OF ARC

WAR HEROINE AND SAINT

BORN: 1412 • **DIED:** 1431

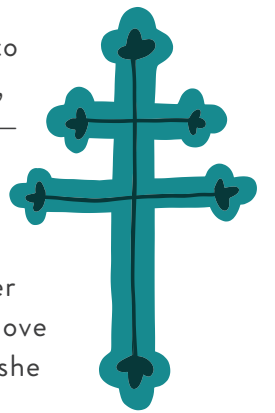
- Followed her visions to lead men in battle during the Hundred Years' War
- Executed for witchcraft and dressing like a man
- Canonized by the Roman Catholic Church 500 years after her death

“ONE LIFE IS ALL WE HAVE AND WE LIVE IT AS WE BELIEVE IN LIVING IT. ‘BUT TO SACRIFICE WHAT YOU ARE AND TO LIVE WITHOUT BELIEF, THAT IS A FATE MORE TERRIBLE THAN DYING.” –JOAN OF ARC

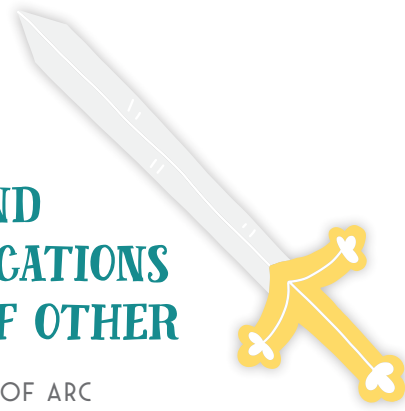
The Middle Ages weren't easy on anyone—no indoor plumbing, endless layers of uncomfortable clothing, and a society dominated by men trying to kill each other. So when a teenage girl told a French prince that God had assigned her to help him win a war that had been raging for decades, you can bet that he was a little skeptical. But Joan of Arc would lead armies into battle, stand by the king's side at his coronation, and give up her life for a purpose she believed in, all before she turned 20. It took the Catholic Church half a millennium to recognize and appreciate Joan's unwavering faith, but this remarkable young girl is

known today as the church's Patron Saint of France.

Joan was born to tenant farmers in the rural French village of Domrémy. For a girl born to a poor family in the 1400s, education wasn't a priority—Joan never learned to read or write. Instead, her father taught her how to tend to the animals, and her mother taught her how to love the Catholic Church. And she did both extremely well.



“I WAS ADMONISHED TO ADOPT FEMININE CLOTHES; I REFUSED, AND STILL REFUSE. AS FOR OTHER AVOCATIONS OF WOMEN, THERE ARE PLENTY OF OTHER WOMEN TO PERFORM THEM.” —JOAN OF ARC



By the time she was 13 years old, Joan was devout. So when she began to receive what she believed were messages from God accompanied by a bright light, she didn't question her own sanity. She listened. Over time, the messages became clearer and more specific: St. Michael and St. Catherine told Joan that she would be the savior of France and needed to seek out Charles VII (son of the last French king).

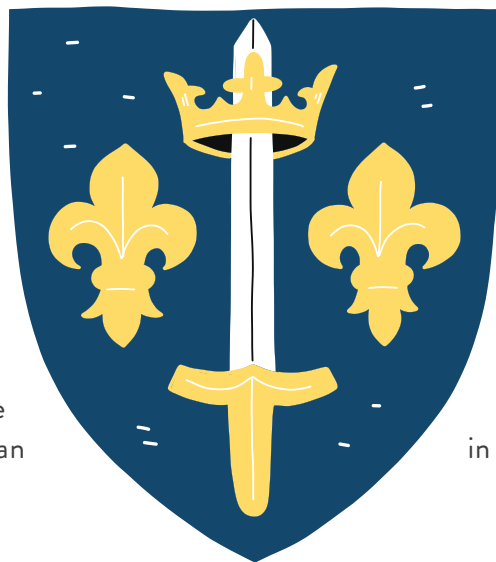
Joan was born into the middle of the Hundred Years' War between England and France, which (as you can tell by the name) had been going on for quite a while. At this point, England was winning, had invaded much of France—including Joan's village—and had claimed sovereignty over the country. But the people of France sensed an

opportunity: King Henry V of England and King Charles VI of France died within months of each other, leaving an opening for Charles VII to reclaim the crown.

Enter: Joan and her divine guidance. In 1428, Joan's visions told her to seek out army commander Robert de Baudricourt in Vaucouleurs and convince him of her mission. He initially rejected the notion, but people rallied behind her, citing a popular prophecy that said a maiden would come to save France. So, the commander gave Joan

a horse and sent her to Charles with some soldier escorts.

Joan cut off her long hair and dressed as a man to protect her mission and her virtue on her long journey to the palace. (A woman traveling among soldiers in a dress was likely to be



harassed.) Once there, she convinced Charles of her intention to see him crowned king, as ordained by God. Charles may not have believed Joan, but he had nothing to lose by letting her proceed with her quest. He gave the 17-year-old peasant girl a suit of armor and a white horse and sent her into battle.

It's hard to imagine having the kind of unwavering faith Joan showed in following her visions into battle, but it certainly helped her see her quest through. No one could explain how a young girl with no military experience was able to lead French soldiers to victory time after time. She had courage and intellect, but Joan also gave her people what they needed most: hope. As the French forced the English to retreat, Charles cautiously followed in her wake to Reims, where he was crowned King Charles VII of France.

In the end, though, Charles let his bruised ego get the better of him. Joan had been captured in battle, sold to the English, and then handed over to the church, which tried her for crimes of witchcraft, heresy (going against the church), and dressing like a man. (Oddly enough, they were most upset by the cross-dressing, which they deemed a sin against nature.) Charles was still unsure of the divine origins of Joan's mission, but he was certain that this young girl was a more powerful force than he was. He left

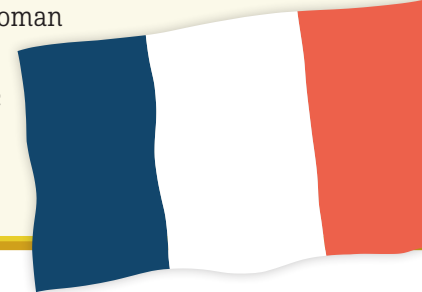
her to fend for herself to ensure he'd keep the throne she procured for him.

The trials lasted a full year. At first they were public—an attempt to embarrass Charles through his girl soldier. But when Joan was the picture of grace under pressure, often annoying her questioners with clever replies, they began interrogating her in private. She was firm in her belief in God and His plan for her. Unable to prove anything except that she dressed as a man, the tribunal sentenced her to burn at the stake. She was 19 years old.

Although Joan's story doesn't have a happy ending, her legacy of bravery and faith live on in France to this day. Her courage gave the French people the hope and renewed strength they needed to take back their country. Joan died before the war ended, but France owes its victory to her.

JOAN'S REDEMPTION

In 1456, three years after the war's end, Charles held a new trial and declared Joan innocent of all charges. Nearly 500 years later, in 1920, the Roman Catholic Church canonized her—she became the patron saint of France.





POCAHONTAS

AMBASSADOR AND PEACEKEEPER

BORN: 1595 • DIED: 1617

- The favorite daughter of chief Powhatan
- Convinced her father to have mercy on the starving Jamestown settlers
- Converted to Christianity and married Englishman John Rolfe

"[POCAHONTAS WAS] THE INSTRUMENT TO PRESERVE THIS COLONY FROM DEATH, FAMINE, AND UTTER CONFUSION." —JOHN SMITH

Everyone knows the story of Pocahontas, right? Saved a man named John Smith from beheading, fell in love, adopted a pet raccoon. No, wait, that was a cartoon. The real story is much simpler than Disney's captivating tale of bravery, adventure, and romance. Pocahontas claimed her place in history not with courage, but with compassion.

Pocahontas was the favorite daughter of chief Powhatan, who ruled over thousands of people. (The fact that she was prized over his 26 other children hints at how exceptional she was.) When English settlers arrived in Powhatan's territory, cold and starving, their fate fell into the hands of the 12-year-old girl and her powerful

WHAT'S IN A NAME

Every once in a while, a childhood nickname sticks (whether we like it or not). That's what happened to Pocahontas. History has been calling her by her nickname—which means "playful little girl"—for 400 years. Those close to her also called her Matoaka, meaning "bright stream between the hills," but her birth name was Amonute. By the time she died, she had adopted an English name: Rebecca. While we don't know much about Pocahontas, we can guess by her nicknames that she was a bright, happy person.



father. The chief's first thoughts were not welcoming, but Pocahontas convinced him to give the newcomers a chance.



HAVING A GREEN THUMB PAYS OFF

As a Native American girl, Pocahontas would have been taught early on how to plant, harvest, and cook food, how to collect water, and how to tend fires. The English settlers had been relying on food they brought with them, rather than growing their own. That was shortsighted, considering that when their supplies ran out, they had no idea what to do. Without the charity of Pocahontas and her tribe, the settlers would have starved. Lesson learned: it can't hurt to know how to grow a tomato!



You probably know what comes next—the famous scene where young Pocahontas throws herself over John Smith at the moment of his execution. But historians believe that Smith was never in danger. The “execution” was likely a Powhatan ritual to symbolize his death as an Englishman and rebirth as a member of the tribe.

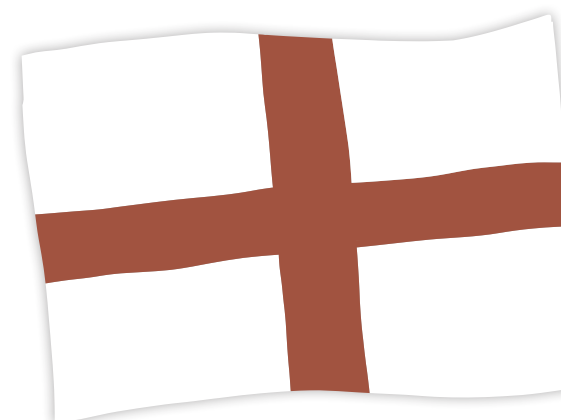
No one clued Smith in, though. In a letter to Queen Anne, he wrote, “... at the minute of my execution, [Pocahontas] hazarded the beating out of her own brains to save mine; and not only that, but so prevailed with her father, that I was safely conducted to Jamestown.” After that, Pocahontas routinely visited Jamestown with food for the settlers. Because these first settlers had no idea how to grow their own food, her kindness saved them from starvation.

All went relatively well between the tribe and the settlers until John Smith was injured and returned to England for treatment. Food was harder to come by, due to a drought, and relations between the two groups quickly fell apart. Captain Samuel Argall decided to use the chief's favorite daughter as leverage. He kidnapped her and held her for ransom, but the chief failed to satisfy his demands. Pocahontas was forced to stay among the English.

Almost always content, Pocahontas eventually grew to like being with the settlers—especially one in particular. Widower John Rolfe felt the same way about her. In 1614, Pocahontas converted to Christianity, took the name Rebecca, and married Rolfe. Less than a year later, they welcomed son Thomas Rolfe, and a new era of peace began between the English and the Native Americans.

“IT IS POCAHONTAS TO WHOM MY HEARTY AND BEST THOUGHTS ARE, AND HAVE BEEN A LONG TIME SO ENTANGLED, AND ENTHRALLED IN SO INTRICATE A LABYRINTH THAT I [COULD NOT] UNWIND MYSELF THEREOUT.”

—JOHN ROLFE, IN A LETTER CONFESSING HIS LOVE FOR POCAHONTAS



The Virginia Company soon realized that the Rolfe family was exactly the symbol of success they needed to recruit people and money for their settlement. They packed the Rolfes onto a ship bound for London, where they were introduced to King James I and Queen Anne as ambassadors from Jamestown. Pocahontas easily endeared herself to the people of England. Unfortunately, she didn't survive the trip home, and peace between the English

and the Native Americans didn't last. Her legacy of kindness, though, has lived on for 400 years.

Truthfully, Pocahontas had to be courageous as often as she was compassionate. New things could prove dangerous—even life-threatening—in her world. For her to welcome new people and places as happily as she did, she needed to be at least a little bit brave. Her easy contentment and fearless compassion saved lives. Pocahontas shows us that you don't have to break records, lead armies, or write bestsellers to make your mark on the world. Being kind can be enough.





EMMA GONZÁLEZ

GUN CONTROL ACTIVIST

BORN: 2000

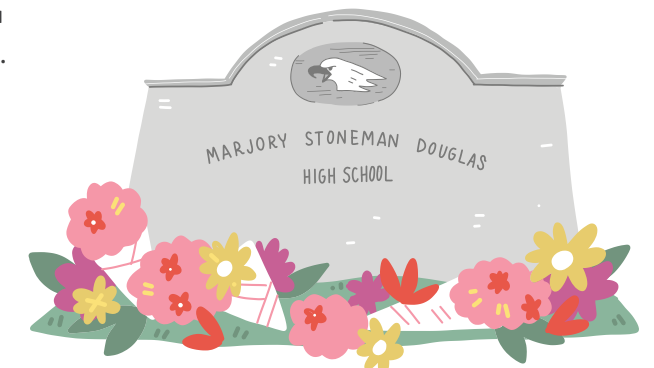
- Survived the 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High that killed 17
- Advocates for common-sense gun control and school safety
- Leading the way for her generation's involvement in politics

“WE ARE SPEAKING UP FOR THOSE WHO DON'T HAVE ANYONE LISTENING TO THEM, FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T TALK ABOUT IT JUST YET, AND FOR THOSE WHO WILL NEVER SPEAK AGAIN.” —EMMA GONZÁLEZ

Whether you're a straight-A student or someone who regularly sleeps through science class, you probably have your fair share of school-related stress. Maybe you worry about what to wear, or whether you'll pass that math test. Maybe you're facing more serious problems, like bullying. But 18-year-old Emma González has made it her mission to ensure that students like you never have to worry about school shootings.

Between binge-watching Netflix and thinking about college, the bright and tenacious high school senior made a habit of standing up for what she believed in. When she decided her

long, curly hair was too heavy for the Florida heat, she used a PowerPoint presentation to convince her parents to let her cut it all off. When Egypt began arresting its gay and transgender citizens, Emma advocated for them in her school paper as both a bisexual person and president of her high school's Gay-Straight Alliance club.



WHAT IS GUN CONTROL?

When people like Emma say they want “gun control,” they mean they want a government body to keep track of and regulate guns, similar to the way the Motor Vehicle Commission tracks and regulates cars. They also want to ban some military-style guns (like the ones most often used in school shootings) so that they can’t be purchased for personal use. Many countries—including Canada, Australia, and Germany—already have gun control laws, and shooting deaths in those countries have decreased dramatically as a result.

But Emma first made national headlines in the wake of the horrific Parkland, Florida, shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. When an angry young man took the lives of 17 of her classmates and teachers, she chose to stand up for them and be their voice. Emma made her mission clear: “It should not be easier to purchase a gun than it is to obtain a driver’s license, and military-grade weapons should not be accessible in civilian settings.” She and fellow survivors have done news interviews and taken to social media to shine a light on the personal cost of America’s gun laws, and to demand change.

The gun control debate has been raging for years, and it gets especially heated as more mass shootings take place. Many Americans believe that owning guns is their

constitutional right, and that any move to regulate them is a step closer to disarming even law-abiding gun owners. At this point, however, two-thirds of all Americans—including a slight majority of gun owners—want stricter gun laws. But few people choose to get involved in politics and fight for what they want. Creating change is slow and difficult work, and the adults have dropped the ball.

That’s why Emma’s call to action is so powerful—she’s inspiring her generation to pick up the ball and run with it toward a better future. She and her Stoneman Douglas classmates are channeling their shock and grief into creating a nationwide movement. During a fiery speech just days after the shooting, Emma said, “We are going to be the kids you read about in the textbooks. Not because we are going to be another statistic about mass shooting in America, but because we are going to be the last mass shooting.... We are going to change the law.” And they’re already making more progress than many adults who have tried before them. She and her fellow activists even made the cover of *Time* magazine on April 2, 2018, for sparking the #NeverAgain movement.

They are working hard to remind Americans that senators and congressmen are chosen *representatives* for the people in their



MARCH FOR OUR LIVES

districts. (In other words, they work for *you*.) They are meeting with their representatives, demanding change, and encouraging young people around the country to do the same. They are driving home the importance of registering to vote and of voting in every election to help create that change.

They are also organizing marches across the country. The March for Our Lives on March 24, 2018, saw hundreds of thousands of people come together to demand that school safety become a priority in Washington, DC. During the rally, Emma read the names of each of the 17 Parkland shooting victims. She then stood in silence, staring fiercely into the massive crowd with tears rolling down her cheeks, for the remainder of 6 minutes and 20 seconds—the amount of time it took for the shooter to take the lives of the people she named.

The urge to fill a silence can become overwhelming in 10 seconds, let alone in more than 4 minutes. But Emma didn’t break. She finished her speech by saying, “Fight for your lives before it is someone else’s job” and walked off the stage. News outlets across the country called her speech powerful and brave, and one analyst called it “the loudest silence in the history of U.S. social protest.” Without

saying a word, Emma made the whole country feel her pain and her passion.

Active shooter drills are now as common as fire drills in schools across the country, but Emma wants to make them a thing of the past. She isn’t sitting around, waiting for permission to make a difference. She’s leading. She’s helping people register to vote. She’s organizing events and protests. She’s proving that leaders can come from anywhere, including a Florida high school. Emma has seen the consequence of gun violence first hand and she is doing something about it.

LEADERS OF TOMORROW

First, Emma and her friends faced gunfire. Then they faced the loss of their classmates and teachers. Now, they are facing adults all over the country who dismiss them as too young and too emotional to know what they’re talking about. Emma says that “Adults like us when we have strong test scores, but they hate us when we have strong opinions.” But she’s not backing down. She and her classmates have armed themselves with knowledge and their 1st Amendment rights, and they are leading the way in the fight against gun violence. The mission statement for their march reads, “Change is coming. And it starts now, inspired by and led by the kids who are our hope for the future. Their young voices will be heard.” These brave, intelligent, and articulate teens are not letting their age stand in their way.



MAYA PENN

ENTREPRENEUR AND ENVIRONMENTALIST

BORN: 2000

- Created a line of eco-friendly clothing and accessories before she turned 13
- Donates a percentage of her profits to local charities
- Has given 3 TED Talks and received commendations, awards, and a publishing deal

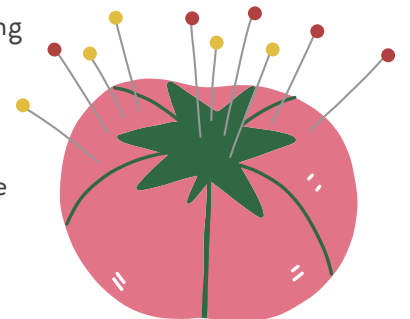
“WOMEN AND GIRLS MUST EMPOWER EACH OTHER, SPEAK LIFE INTO EACH OTHER, AND LIFT EACH OTHER UP SO THAT THEY MAY LIFT UP HUMANITY.” —MAYA PENN

Have you ever gotten in trouble for asking too many questions? Curiosity can bother some people, but it can also lead to amazing things. Alice followed hers to Wonderland and had the adventure of a lifetime. In our own world, 18-year-old Georgia native Maya Penn followed her curiosity and changed the way we do business.

Maya's first love was animation. She's been drawing since the moment she could hold a crayon in her hand. When she watched a TV program about animators (people who create cartoons), she knew that's what she wanted to

do with her life. But her second love, fashion, crept in when she was eight years old and took hold of her. She began making and selling headbands out of scraps of fabric she found around the house, and her business took off. By the age of 14, she was already earning more money annually than the average adult.

Soon after starting her business, she incorporated her third love: the environment. She says, “We live in



a big, diverse, and beautiful world, and that makes me even more passionate to save it.” While doing research, she learned that many fabric dyes can be harmful to both humans and the planet. She decided then to use only eco-friendly materials (recycled fabrics or fabrics that are manufactured in an eco-conscious way). She also decided that a portion of her profits should give back to the world from which we take so much, so she donates 10 percent to local charities.



Like Tavi Gevinson (see page 99), Maya is bravely multipassionate. Instead of focusing on just one business avenue, she named her company the all-encompassing “Maya’s Ideas.” Right now, her website (which she coded and designed herself) offers eco-friendly clothing and accessories. But she’s giving herself room to explore and grow in whatever direction she chooses. In fact, she’s so passionate about following her curiosity that she gave a TED Talk on the subject (one of three, so far) that’s been viewed more than 1.5 million times! (TED talks are inspiring lectures that are shared online under the slogan, “ideas worth spreading.”)

While this might seem like a perfectly logical concept—especially for a 17-year-old—we’ve only recently come to accept multipassionate people like Tavi and Maya. Conventional wisdom used to tell us that you had to pick one path and stick to it for the rest of your life. You were a doctor, or a teacher, or a veterinarian, and any pursuits outside of your chosen career were called *hobbies*. Changing jobs used to be considered flaky, and changing careers was almost unheard of.

The old business model was also focused on profits over principles. But Maya, like many business owners these days, thinks you can have both. She also thinks it’s important to try, saying, “I may be one person, but

“BE CREATIVE, BE CURIOUS, AND WATCH AS YOUR AWESOMENESS IS UNLEASHED.” –MAYA PENN

the smallest actions can lead to the biggest change.” Businesses like hers recognize a shift in society. People are starting to choose ethical and sustainable products from charitable brands over what’s cheap and convenient.

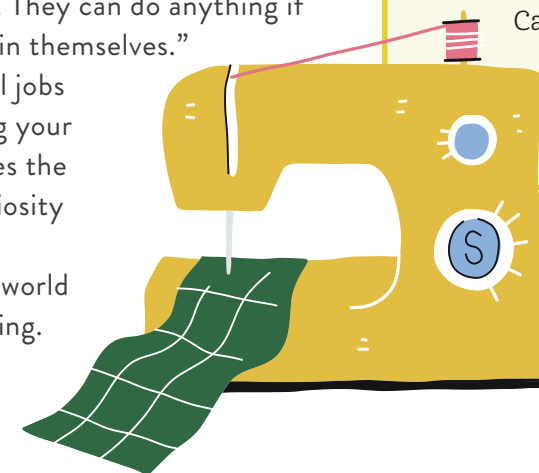
YOU GOT THIS!

People like Maya are transforming the way we think about work. By successfully pursuing all of her passions—animation, entrepreneurship, and environmentalism—she is proving that you don’t have to choose. As Maya says, “It’s important to encourage girls to follow their passion, and to be changemakers and creative thinkers. They can do anything if they just believe in themselves.” And as traditional jobs disappear, forging your own path becomes the smart move. Curiosity and flexibility are superpowers in a world that keeps changing.

A VERY SWEET 16

Maya’s innovative and entrepreneurial spirit caught the attention of some pretty important people in 2016. That year, she received a commendation from President Barack Obama for outstanding achievement in environmental stewardship and the Coretta Scott King A.N.G.E.L (Advancing Nonviolence through Generations of Exceptional Leadership) Award. In addition, Oprah Winfrey made her a member of the Supersoul 100, which is a group of “awakened leaders who are using their voices and talents to elevate humanity.” And if all of that isn’t enough, 2016 was also the year Maya published her inspiring book, *You Got This!: Unleash Your Awesomeness, Find Your Path, and Change Your World*.

Can you imagine a better way to celebrate your 16th birthday than by changing the world?



PARTNERS IN CURIOSITY

Luckily for Maya, her parents always encouraged her curiosity. When she expressed an interest in fashion, her mother taught her how to sew. When she was curious about technology, her father taught her how to take apart and rebuild a computer. Without their support, Maya may not have had the courage to act on her ideas.

If you’re passionate about something, don’t be afraid to seek out like-minded people. Ask a teacher to mentor you, or your friends to help you. Sure, you can go it alone. But everything is easier when you have a little support.



JAZZ JENNINGS

ADVOCATE FOR TRANSGENDER RIGHTS

BORN: 2000

- One of the youngest people to be formally recognized as transgender
- Fought for her right to use the girls' bathroom and play on the girls' soccer team
- Has dedicated her life to advocating for trans kids

**"BE WHO YOU ARE AND SAY WHAT YOU FEEL,
BECAUSE THOSE WHO MIND DON'T MATTER
AND THOSE WHO MATTER DON'T MIND."** –DR. SEUSS

Has anyone ever told you to "just be yourself"? It's important advice, but it's also easier said than done sometimes. Maybe you're afraid people will think you're a nerd for loving *Star Wars*. Or maybe you've stopped smiling because you're self-conscious about your braces. When those fears come up, just remember that Dr. Seuss quote. Those are the words Jazz Jennings turns to when she starts to worry about what others think.

From the moment she learned to talk, Jazz made it clear to her parents that she was different. Jazz herself knew even earlier

than that. She says, "Ever since I could form coherent thoughts, I knew I was a girl trapped inside a boy's body. There was never any confusion in my mind. The confusing part

WHAT IS GENDER DYSPHORIA?

Gender dysphoria is the scientific diagnosis given to people who are transgender. It means that they feel deeply and constantly uncomfortable with the gender they were born with. Instead, they identify with the opposite gender, often feeling like they're in the wrong body, or that who they are inside doesn't match what they look like outside. Imagine how you would feel if you woke up tomorrow in someone else's body, and only you knew the truth.



was why no one else could see what was wrong.” When she was just three years old, a psychiatrist confirmed what Jazz knew: she was transgender.

At first, the confirmation was a relief to Jazz and her parents. There was a name for what she felt. She wasn’t the only one who felt this way. Jazz’s parents were incredibly supportive and allowed her to fully transition when she turned five, so that she could have a fresh start in her new school. But Jazz still had an uphill battle ahead of her.



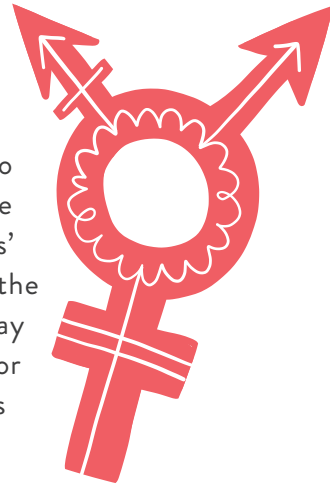
DOES IT REALLY MATTER?

Because she has had to deal with so many big, real-world issues, Jazz learned that all of the drama and gossip of middle school and high school weren’t worth her time. Her motto is, “Is it going to matter in twenty years? Yes or no?” If the answer is no, she moves on.



Many people aren’t as understanding as the Jennings about what it means to be transgender. Some think it’s a choice or a phase, that a girl like Jazz is just a boy

playing dress-up. The truly unkind ones call her a “freak.” But from a young age, Jazz learned to fight for her right to live life as her true self. At eight years old, she began a two-year-long battle to be allowed to play for the girls’ soccer team. When she was nine, she sent a video plea to President Obama to be allowed to use the girls’ bathrooms. These are the kind of simple, everyday things we often take for granted, but that trans kids have to fight for.



Jazz believes that educating the public is the best way to defend against the kind of bullying and ignorance she’s encountered. That’s why she and her family never shied away from the spotlight. Jazz gave her first of many interviews when she was six years old—to no less than famous journalist Barbara Walters! Her YouTube channel, where she shares her very normal life as a teenage girl, led to not one but two similarly themed television shows. She regularly attends and speaks at events as a champion of the LGBTQ community. She was also named one of *Time* magazine’s 25 Most Influential Teens in 2014.

Jazz has spent so much of her life helping people understand trans issues and letting them get to know her as a normal (though very smart, brave, and articulate) young woman. Why does she do it? She answers, “When I leave, I want the world to be in a better state than when I arrived. I have made it my mission to contribute to that change in any way I can.” And it seems like she finds new ways every day.

Being different can be scary. But at the end of the day, the only opinion of you that matters is your own. So, you do you! And if you help others feel included and understood whenever you can, you too will have left the world in a better state than when you arrived.

“I’M WILLING TO SACRIFICE MY PRIVACY IF IT MEANS MAKING A DIFFERENCE AND HELPING OTHER PEOPLE OUT THERE WHO MIGHT BE STRUGGLING.” –JAZZ JENNINGS



WHEN PASSION MEETS PURPOSE



Jazz, who has always loved mermaids, started handcrafting her own tails to swim with when she was eight years old. At thirteen, she decided to use her tail-making skills to raise money for the TransKids Purple Rainbow Foundation, an organization created by her family to educate the public and support transgender children. Each tail sold was handmade from premium silicone (to give the wearer a real mermaid experience) and airbrushed in beautiful colors.

Have you ever thought about combining something you love to do with a cause you believe in? You could share your love of reading with the little ones at your library’s story time. Or sell homemade cookies to raise money for the animal shelter. There are plenty of ways to make a difference and enjoy doing it!

