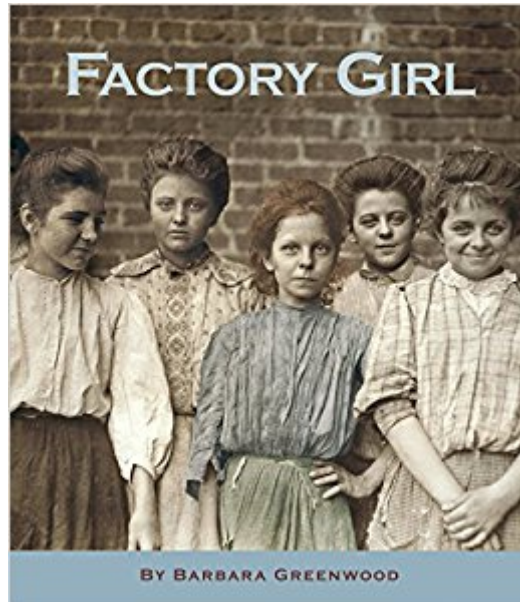




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# Factory Girl



## Synopsis

At the dingy, overcrowded Acme Garment Factory, Emily Watson stands for eleven hours a day clipping threads from blouses. Every time the boss passes, he shouts at her to snip faster. But if Emily snips too fast, she could ruin the garment and be docked pay. If she works too slowly, she will be fired. She desperately needs this job. Without the four dollars a week it brings, her family will starve. When a reporter arrives, determined to expose the terrible conditions in the factory, Emily finds herself caught between the desperate immigrant girls with whom she works and the hope of change. Then tragedy strikes, and Emily must decide where her loyalties lie. Emily's fictional experiences are interwoven with non-fiction sections describing family life in a slum, the fight to improve social conditions, the plight of working children then and now, and much more. Rarely seen archival photos accompany this story of the past as only Barbara Greenwood can tell it.

## Book Information

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Paperback: 136 pages

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Age Range: 9 - 14 years

Grade Level: 4 - 9

## Customer Reviews

Grade 4-8  
The year is 1912, and Emily Watson has every reason to hope that she will complete her 8th-grade education and enter one of the occupations newly opened to women—clerk, nurse, maybe even teacher. That is, until her father's letters abruptly stop and her family is thrown into poverty. The 12-year-old is forced to seek employment in a sweatshop,

snipping garment threads for four dollars a week. The work is brutal; she stands in place 11 hours a day, unable to speak to anyone, surrounded by filth and rats, danger, cruel bosses, and the constant din of the machines. Yet, Emily's job keeps her family from starvation. This compelling look at child labor is interspersed with excellent photographs and detailed information about this troubling time in our nation's history. Greenwood describes not only the poverty that Emily and her family experience, but also explains its causes and hints at its cure. Interspersed with excellent-quality archival photos, this title is sure to spur discussion of many contemporary movements, including immigration, women's and worker's rights, and health care reform, but be aware that it is classified as fiction. --Tracy H. Chrenka, Forest Hills Public Schools, Grand Rapids, MI Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This compelling book blends the horrific facts of child labor during the early twentieth century with the imaginary story of one underage factory girl. At 12, Emily is two years under the legal working age, but to help her desperate family, she takes a job in a sweatshop, where she suffers under horrific working conditions. At first she is scared to protest, but public pressure to improve conditions builds, thanks to union activists, social reformers (including Jane Addams), and journalists. The fiction about Emily is contrived, even intrusive. It's the history that is riveting (some drawn from testimony at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory trial), though, unfortunately, there's no documentation. However, the spacious photo-essay book design, clear prose, and unforgettable, captioned photos by Lewis Hines, Jacob Riis, and others bring close the drama of the children (especially girls) as well as the work of the reformers and activists who fought for change. Who needs the fiction? Link this to nonfiction books such as Russell Freedman's *Kids at Work* (1994). Hazel Rochman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Before the New York shirtwaist fire, factory girls were in every city and mill town of the growing US. These young women worked under dangerous and unfair conditions, responding to a male-dominated foreman and factory owner only interested in greedy profits. It was sad to realize how much hurt is evident in these women's eyes. A great read and exact historical record of dominance by one gender over another.

This was a fantastic book. It is reminiscent of the American Girl Series in that the fact-based fictional

character is an independent, progressively-minded girl of her time period, and in the way historical facts and photos are woven in with the fictional text. However, it is written in a much more sophisticated manner than the American Girl books, and provides more depth of information. We have read several of Barbara Greenwood's other books as well, and they are similarly beautifully written and illustrated.

Good book that explains the time period. Great Living history book

This was an excellent story and a good, quick read. Very interesting and historically based upon the early sweat shops.

I got this for my 8 year old granddaughter. She read it straight through without putting it down. She had never thought a book could be so real.

Pleased

In parallel narratives, this informative book provides a compelling and often disturbing look at the incidence of child labor in the United States during the early 1900s. Before unions had much power and before the country enacted federal legislation banning child labor, employers commonly hired young children as factory workers, miners, farmers, cleaners, messengers, and street vendors. Not only did children work at lower wages, they were often viewed as having more nimble fingers and feet for performing the same monotonous and sometimes dangerous tasks all day long. Employers could also intimidate children more easily so they would not complain about the poor labor standards, low pay, and hazardous environment. A fictional story of a twelve-year old sweatshop worker named Emily is interwoven with historical accounts of the atrocious working conditions that children faced and the abject poverty in which many lived. Both of these narratives highlight the plight of immigrant children who lived and worked in particularly wretched circumstances. The book also emphasizes the role of newspapers, labor organizers, churches, and reform-minded individuals in raising awareness about the plight of the poor and the injustice of child labor. Adding to the stark reality of the text is a treasure trove of archival photographs, many taken by Lewis Hines -- a former schoolteacher who famously travelled across the country taking pictures of exploited child workers. As the author notes, the United States has largely eradicated child labor, but the problem continues in some developing countries and requires continued advocacy and social reform.

"I hated this book more than anything ever before in my whole life."Comment from my son who had to read it for school ;)

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