

Marvelous Mattie



Synopsis

With her sketchbook labeled *My Inventions* and her father's toolbox, Mattie could make almost anything — toys, sleds, and a foot warmer. When she was just twelve years old, Mattie designed a metal guard to prevent shuttles from shooting off textile looms and injuring workers. As an adult, Mattie invented the machine that makes the square-bottom paper bags we still use today. However, in court, a man claimed the invention was his, stating that she "could not possibly understand the mechanical complexities." Marvelous Mattie proved him wrong, and over the course of her life earned the title of "the Lady Edison." With charming pen-and-ink and watercolor illustrations, this introduction to one of the most prolific female inventors will leave readers inspired. *Marvelous Mattie* is a 2007 Bank Street - Best Children's Book of the Year.

Book Information

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Age Range: 7 - 11 years

Grade Level: 2 - 6

Customer Reviews

Kindergarten-Grade 3 — This story of the first woman to receive a U.S. patent makes an excellent introduction to inventors and Womens History Month. Knight used tools inherited from her father to design and build her inventions. As a child, she was always sketching one of her brainstormed toys and kites for her brothers. She once designed a foot warmer for her mother.

Although it was never patented, Knight's design for a safer loom saved textile workers from injuries and death. Later as an adult, she fought in court and won the right to patent her most famous invention, a machine that would make paper bags. Mattie's story is told in a style that is not only easy to understand, but that is also a good read-aloud. The watercolor-and-ink illustrations capture the spirited inventor and support the text in style and design. Their sketchy quality works well with the pen-and-ink drawings of inventions at the bottom of the pages. While most of these are simulated, the actual drawings from the 1871 patent for the paper-bag machine are included. The text has some fictional dialogue that makes Mattie more real to young readers without compromising the facts. An author's note gives additional biographical information about this creative woman. This is not the best source for reports, but it will inspire interest in women and children as inventors. It's a good reminder that nonfiction isn't just for reports. It pairs nicely with Marlene Targ Brills *Margaret Knight: a Girl Inventor* (Millbrook, 2001).
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K-Gr. 3. McCully took on a challenge in this picture-book biography of "The Lady Edison"--little-known, nineteenth-century inventor Margaret E. Knight. Knight created the machine that makes paper grocery sacks. Her invention isn't instantly attention-grabbing stuff for young people, but McCully draws children into Knight's life by emphasizing not only her engineering triumphs but also her resolute stance against the restrictive gender roles of her time. She begins with Knight's childhood, when the young "Mattie" sketched prolifically, built inventions, and proposed safety devices for the New Hampshire textile mills where her family worked. As an adult, Mattie continued to work on her inventions until her paper-bag machine idea was stolen. A court scene between the belligerent thief and Mattie emphasizes the inherent discrimination women of the era faced: "Miss Knight could not possibly understand the mechanical complexities of the machine," the scornful thief tells the judge. Still, Mattie wins her case at the book's jubilant close. A one-page biography, which includes Knight's later accomplishments, completes the account. Watercolor scenes invoke the drama, and a banner of sketches showing various inventions runs along several pages. A short bibliography closes. Gillian Engberg
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I checked out *Escape of Oney Judge and Mirette on the High Wire* a few weeks ago from the library. Loved them so much I researched the author's other books and found this one. My four-year old

was fascinated today, wanted to read it twice and talked about inventing all day long. We had learned about inventors a few weeks ago and I had pointed out that a poster I had ordered, with thirty or so inventors, had no women! So to read this true, wonderful story about a woman inventor I think really inspired and excited my daughter. I have ordered all of this author's books and am so glad to find someone who is researching true stories of American woman heroes and writing lovely picture books about them. The illustrations are just precious, with the inventions running along the bottom of the page. FABULOUS.

You've probably never heard of Margaret E. Knight before. And yet you are intimately familiar with something she invented, a device used every day. Mattie invented a machine to make paper bags that would stand up on their own. What, you were hoping for something a little more exciting? More... worthwhile, perhaps? You want to know what the heck kinda invention is THAT? It's a USEFUL invention, is what it is, and it had the potential to make people rich... which is probably why a man tried to steal it from her before it could be patented, assuming everybody would believe him when he said a woman couldn't possibly understand the complexity of the machine. She was, in fact, the first woman awarded a US patent, and she invented several other things that the book doesn't really touch on. The book is well-enough written, and the story is a simple and fairly useful one. If nothing else, you can read it during Women's History Month and move off the treadmill of the same three or four tired old names.

gift for my granddaughter....love it

A very empowering story about a woman who accomplished something more than simply marrying a guy who became president. These are the kind of stories that young girls need to read.

What I enjoyed most about this book was the information on Margaret Knight and the things she invented, including a machine that made paper bags. The author and illustrator sets her story well: the reader can see and feel the times and the environment Knight lived in, and can perhaps feel the forces that drove this inventor to create the labor-saving and life-saving devices she created. Well worth reading for the information.

This non-fiction book sites a wonderful example of how a young girl can be successful in an arena that was dominated by men during her time. It also shows children the importance of recording work

they do and documenting failures as well as successes. As a teacher, I stressed the need for my students to record their findings, illustrate their work and write down their thoughts on what to do next. It is a great "read aloud" book for elementary science classes.

Daughter loved this book.

An elementary librarian recommended this book to me and I bought it for my elementary school as well. Stories details encourage students to think about life of a young woman during the industrial age as well as being an inventor. Multiple lessons can be off shoots from reading this book. Book could be read alone by 4-5 graders but read aloud to younger grades.

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