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Uprising: Three Young Women Caught in the Fire That Changed America

By: Margaret Peterson Haddix

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ISBN-13: 9781416911722

The fire at the Triangle Waist Company in New York City, which claimed the lives of 146 young immigrant workers, is one of the worst disasters since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, and the disaster, which brought attention to the labor movement in America, is part of the curriculum in classrooms throughout the country. Told from alternating points of view, this historical novel draws upon the experiences of three very different young women Bella, who has just emigrated from Italy and doesn't speak a word of English; Yetta, a Russian immigrant and crusader for labor rights; and Jane, the daughter of a wealthy businessman. Bella and Yetta work together at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory under terrible conditions their pay is docked for even the slightest mistake, the bosses turn the clocks back so closing time is delayed, and they are locked into the factory all day, only to be frisked before they leave at night to make sure they haven't stolen any shirtwaists. When the situation worsens, Yetta leads the factory's effort to strike, and she meets Jane on the picket line. Jane, who feels trapped by the limits of her own sheltered existence, joins a group of high-society women who have taken an interest in the strike as a way of supporting women's suffrage. Through a series of twists and turns, the three girls become fast friends and all of them are in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory on March 25, 1911, the day of the fateful fire. In a novel that puts a human face on the tragedy, Margaret Peterson Haddix has created a sweeping, forceful tale that will have readers guessing until the last page who if anyone survives.

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 Difficulté Facile

 Durée 335 heure(s)

 Catégories Mobilier, Musique & Sons, Robotique

 Coût 925 EUR (€)

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