



GIRL HEROES!

The brave girls and women you will read about here, changed the world! Because of these girls, the world is now a better place for all of us. Discover the exciting stories behind these girl heroes together with Mimmit!

MALALA YOUSAFZAI

Born in 1997, Pakistan.

Malala was born in the beautiful Swat valley, Pakistan, surrounded by high, snow-capped mountains. Her childhood was a happy one. Her father was a teacher and ran a girls' school in Malala's home village. Malala loved her school and loved learning generally.

Unfortunately, Malala's home area had been restless for some time and it was increasingly unsafe to live there. The day the Taliban took over Malala's home village, everything changed. The Taliban forbade girls to go to school. Horrible! Even the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates clearly, that all children have the right to attend school, to learn to read and write and many other things too!

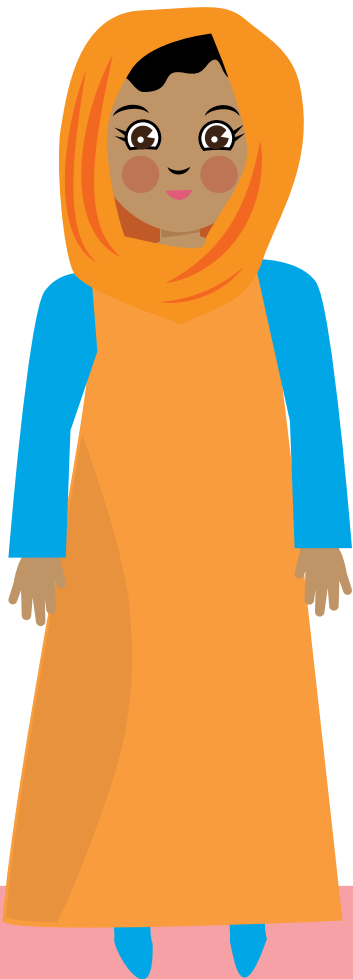
Malala was only 11 years old when she had to say goodbye to her schoolmates. But Malala, she was super brave! She opposed the Taliban and shared her thoughts on a blog. But this was dangerous.

One day Malala was on the school bus on her way to school, when a man with a gun got on the bus and asked, "Who is Malala?" and then fired at Malala.

Fortunately, Malala survived! However, she was seriously injured, and was flown to a hospital in England. After multiple surgeries, Malala was able to return to her family who, during her recovery, had moved to England for safety.

When Malala was released from hospital, she decided she would continue to fight and stand up for girls. She was determined to continue her efforts, until girls everywhere could go safely to school!

In 2014 Malala was awarded the Nobel peace prize for her work supporting girls' rights. She is the youngest recipient ever of a Nobel prize! Today, Malala continues her work as a defender of girls' rights, while also studying at university.





AMELIA EARHART

Born in 1897, n USA, died 1937.

Amelia was born in Kansas, USA. Even as a child, Amelia was exceptionally brave. She climbed trees and hunted rats. More than 100 years ago, that was not considered appropriate behavior for a girl. How DUMB!! Why can't girls do the same things boys do and vice versa? Good thing we now live in the 21st century!

At the age of 23, Amelia flew in an airplane for the first time. From then on she only had one dream: to fly! Flying lessons, however, were expensive. Determined Amelia worked 28 different jobs to pay for flying lessons and at the age of 24, she was finally able to take those lessons. Six months later, Amelia bought her own plane. She spent all her savings and borrowed money from her mother and sister to buy it.

In 1928 Amelia was invited to come on a historic flight across the Atlantic. The flight was a success, and Amelia was celebrated as a hero. However, as she was only a passenger on the flight, this irritated her. Thus, four years later in 1932, Amelia became the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic. The flight lasted almost 15 hours! Imagine, no food or even a bathroom visit for 15 hours... Then, in 1935, Amelia became the first person to fly across the Pacific Ocean, from Hawaii to California.

Amelia however, wanted to fly ever longer distances, and started planning a flight around the world! Although Amelia's flight would not be the first round-the-world flight, it would be the longest as her route would follow the equator. Amelia would simultaneously become the first woman to fly around the world.

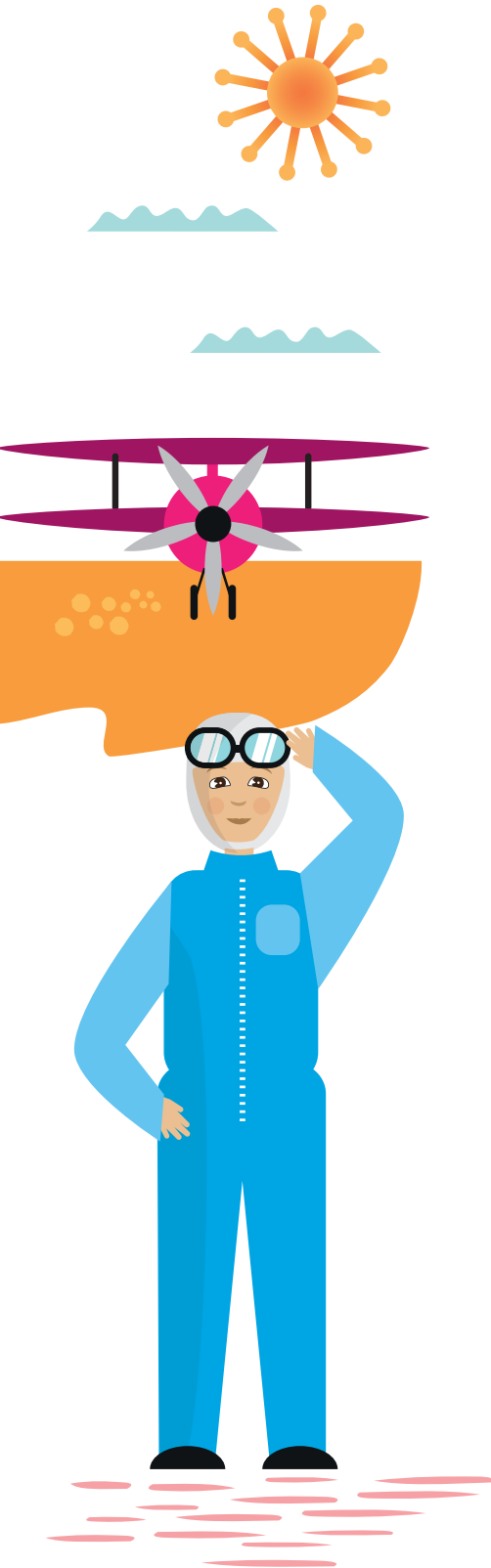
Amelia set off on June 1, 1937, together with her navigator Fred Noonan. The trip went well and at the end of June, Amelia and Fred landed in Papua New Guinea. They had already flown 35,000 kilometers and only about 11,000 kilometers over the Pacific Ocean remained for them to complete their record-breaking journey.

On the 2nd of July, Amelia and Fred took off for Howland Island, a tiny strip of land in the middle of the vast Pacific Ocean. Landing on the island would be dangerous. Sadly, something unexpected happened en route: radio contact was lost and Amelia and Fred never reached Howland Island. A huge search operation was launched, but to no avail: Amelia and her magnificent aircraft, the Lockheed Electra, had disappeared without a trace.

There are countless theories about Amelia's fate, but there is no certainty. One theory posits that Amelia's plane crashed on Nikomaroro Atoll. In 1940, bones and a few objects which are thought to have belonged to Amelia were found on the atoll. In 2018, it was confirmed that the bones most probably are Amelia's. Another theory suggests that the plane crashed into the sea.

Although Amelia's fate will never be known with absolute certainty, one thing is certain: she has encouraged and inspired countless women around the world to push themselves to new heights!

Before her last and fateful flight, Amelia wrote these words to her husband: "I am well aware of the risks, but I want to do it because I want to do it. Women must try to do things as men have tried. When they fail, their failure must be a challenge to others."





ROSA PARKS

Born 1913, USA, died 2005.

Rosa Parks was born in Alabama, USA. She spent her childhood on her grandfather's farm.

Both of her grandparents were former slaves.

From the 17th century until the 19th century, slaves were brought from Africa to work in the fields in the USA. Slaves had to work for free on their owners' farms and could be sold to another owner at any time. How horrible!

Slavery was abolished in 1865, but the oppression of dark-skinned people continued, especially in the southern parts of the USA.

People's lives were governed by unjust and stupid laws.

For example, dark-skinned and white-skinned people were not allowed to attend the same school or play checkers or dominoes together. This separation is called "racial segregation". This is silly, as all people are equal regardless of skin color or anything else.

Racial segregation also determined how people sat on buses.

Dark-skinned people sat in the back of the bus and white-skinned people in the front.

Rosa worked as a seamstress in a department store. One day as she was returning home from work by bus, Rosa went to sit in the section for dark-skinned people. The bus started to fill up with people. Finally, the driver noticed that many white people were standing in the corridor. The driver stopped the bus and moved the sign separating the seats for black people one row back so that white people could sit. Rosa now found herself sitting in the white section of the bus and the driver told Rosa to give up her seat to a white-skinned man. Rosa refused.

The driver called the police. The police arrested Rosa. Can you imagine? You could get arrested for not giving up your seat. How terribly unfair!

The same night that Rosa was arrested, other black people started planning a bus boycott. They decided they would not use the buses until the unjust law was repealed! The bus boycott lasted over a year, 381 days.

Rosa was fined for breaking the law, while more than 500 people cheered her outside the courthouse.

Eventually this stupid law was repealed, thanks to Rosa's courage to challenge it! Rosa's story teaches us that one person's courage can achieve remarkable things. For the rest of her life Rosa defended the rights and equality of dark-skinned people.





TOVE JANSSON

Born 1914, Helsinki, died 2001.

Tove was born into a family of artists. Her father was a sculptor, her mother an illustrator. Many other artists also lived in the building that was Tove's home and sometimes Tove's father organized fun parties that could last for days. Tove loved her father's parties!

It was therefore no wonder that Tove's biggest dream was to become a painter! She learned to draw almost before she could walk and Tove's mother Signe, encouraged her daughter and pushed her to work hard.

A hundred years ago it was not easy for girls to become artists, as the work of male artists was more valued. Tove however, did not allow herself to become discouraged by this; she drew and painted non-stop. Her hard work paid off and when she was only 14, her drawings were published in a newspaper. At the age of 15, Tove moved to Stockholm, Sweden, to study drawing.

When Tove graduated from the art academy in 1937, she traveled to France and Italy to paint. Her work was exhibited at several exhibitions.

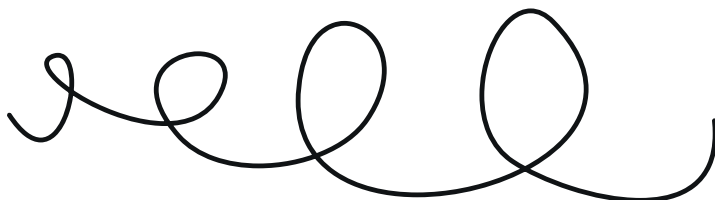
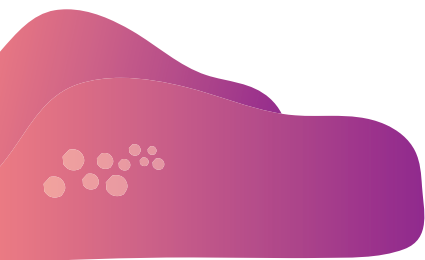
But then war broke out! During an ongoing war painting seemed useless to Tove. She became inspired about writing and in the midst of war wanted to remember the happy and safe moments of her childhood. She was adamant that her story had to start with the words "once upon a time". But the story she was about to tell was not about princes and princesses, but about Moomins living in the Moomin Valley. While in the process of creating her story, Tove had remembered the troll she had first sketched on the wall of her family's summer place and used this character as an inspiration to create her wonderful Moomin story world.

Moomin Valley was a beautiful and peaceful place where the strangest creatures lived; Moomin, Little My, Nuuskamuikkunen, Hemuli, Nipsu, cotton wool, Mörkö... but even though the valley was peaceful, its inhabitants got to join in some most exciting adventures.

The first Moomin book was published after the war, Moomin and the Great Flood. Almost no one bought the book, but Tove was not discouraged. She wrote a new Moomin book, but sadly no one bought this one either and her publisher announced that they would not publish any more Moomin books. Again Tove was undeterred, and started work on her third Moomin book, "The Magician's Hat". This book received excellent reviews in Finland and Sweden and was soon translated into English. Moomin was about to take on the world! Soon Moomins would be loved by children and adults all over the globe.

Moomin books have been translated into more than 50 languages and have also been made into animated series, movies and even an opera. Moomins are particularly popular in Japan.

After creating Moomins, Tove continued to paint, illustrate and write books. Tove's favorite place in the whole world was the small island of Klovharun, where she spent her summers in a small cabin together with her partner Tuulikki.





MICHELLE OBAMA

Born in 1964, USA.

Michelle was born into a working-class family in Chicago. Michelle's ancestors had been slaves. The family lived in the southern part of Chicago, an area where mostly working families lived.

Michelle's childhood was a happy one. Having learned to read at the age of 4, Michelle was an avid reader and liked to play Monopoly. She also played piano, which her great aunt had taught her to play.

When Michelle was in sixth grade, she was placed in a class for gifted students in a middle/high school on the other side of town. The trip to school took three hours by bus. That's a lot of sitting, so she must have been reading!

Michelle graduated from high school with top grades, yet some of her teachers tried to dissuade Michelle from applying to a top university. They warned her that, "You shouldn't aim too high". Michelle ignored this advice! She applied and was accepted to Princeton and Harvard, both among the best universities in the country.

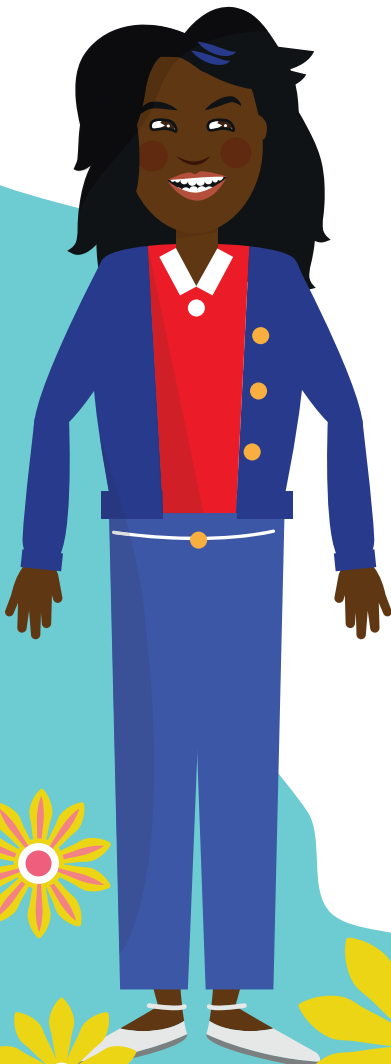
Life on campus was not always easy. Because Michelle was black, the mother of Michelle's white roommate tried to get her daughter another roommate. Have you heard of anything crazier? Skin color doesn't matter! Also many of Michelle's fellow students came from rich families, and sometimes she felt like a complete outsider. But Michelle didn't let this discourage her!

Michelle eventually graduated with a major in law and became a lawyer! After graduation, she started working in a law firm. One day, a new summer employee was hired, and Michelle was asked to guide the newcomer. The newcomer was a young man named Barack Obama. Initially Michelle refused to go on a date with Barack, but eventually agreed. Michelle and Barack fell in love and got married. They had two daughters, Malia and Sasha.

Barack wanted to influence society and improve people's lives, so he got involved in politics. After initial hesitation, Michelle encouraged him in this endeavour. Barack was first elected as a senator and then in 2009, as president of the USA. He was the first black president and Michelle the first black spouse of the president, i.e. the First Lady. The Obamas had made history!

Michelle was an admired and respected first lady. She set up an organic garden on White House grounds and campaigned to promote healthy food. Michelle is also a style icon. She often wears clothes created by young designers and in so doing has helped to shine a spotlight on young designer talents.

After four years in office, Barack was elected for another term as president. Michelle is a role model for girls and women around the world and inspires them by her own example. When you dare to trust yourself and your own abilities, nothing is impossible!





FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

Born in 1820, Grand Duchy of Tuscany (now Italy), died 1910.

Florence was born in Florence, Italy, hence her name.

She was born as her parents toured Europe on their honeymoon. The honeymoon lasted two whole years, after which the family returned to England.

Florence spent her childhood in a fine old manor house in the English countryside. She was schooled at home by a tutor.

When Florence was 20 years old, she told her parents that she wanted to study mathematics. Her mother was horrified! Eventually however, her parents gave in and Florence was allowed to study geometry and algebra. After a while, Florence became interested in nursing. Again her parents were horrified! The nursing profession was not considered suitable for a girl from a wealthy family. Florence held on to her dream and eventually her parents relented. Florence managed to get into a nursing course.

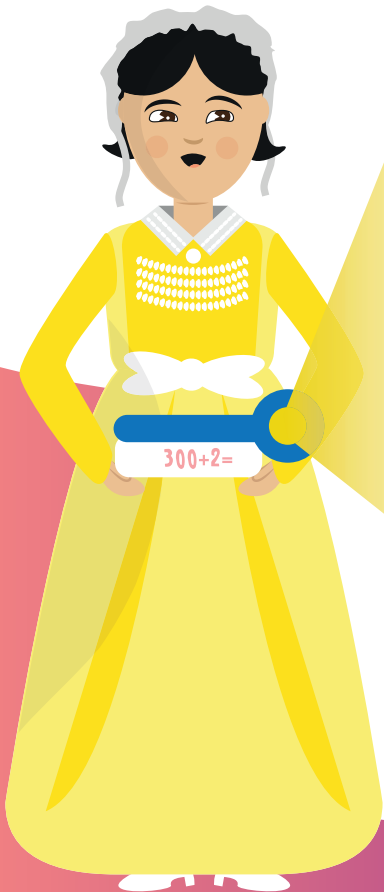
In 1854 a terrible war broke out on the Crimean peninsula. Newspapers were appalled at the poor treatment of wounded soldiers. In the meanwhile, news of Florence's phenomenal abilities as a nurse had reached the ears of the Minister of War. He asked Florence for help.

Florence gathered a group of nurses and they traveled to Turkey. Once there, she found that the hospitals were very dirty and poorly managed. A soldier was seven times more likely to die in hospital than in battle. This would not do! Hospitals should exist to cure patients!

Ignoring resistance from several doctors, Florence began to run the hospital energetically and efficiently. She also used her mathematical skills, compiling statistics. In addition to organizing the hospital, Florence also personally took care of patients and supervised the hospital at night. She walked the corridors of the hospital at night with a lamp in her hand. Florence and her roving lamp comforted patients and thus she acquired the nickname "The Lady with the Lamp". Florence and her lamp brought comfort and hope to the wounded.

Eventually Florence herself fell ill in Crimea. Although she never recovered from her illness, she continued to work and reform nursing practices for the rest of his life, bringing about significant changes and improvements.

Florence also wrote about women's rights. Florence is still the most famous nurse in history. Her ideas were way ahead of their time, and they helped improve both nursing, as well as society overall.





MARIE CURIE

Born in 1867, Poland, died 1934.

Marie was born in Warsaw into a family of teachers. Marie's childhood was a happy one and her parents took good care of the family's livelihood. Everything changed when Marie's father was fired from his teaching job. The family had to take schoolchildren to board with them. More than 20 people lived in the family's home! Diseases spread easily, and both Marie's sister and mother died.

Marie continued her education and graduated at the top of her class. But once she reached the age of 15, girls could not continue their studies. This upset Marie. She wanted to learn so very much more! The only option for Marie to pursue her studies was to move abroad. But, studying abroad cost a lot and Marie had no money.

Marie and her sister devised a plan! Marie would go to work and give most of her salary to her sister. Her sister would move to Paris to study, and then help Marie in return.

Marie became a tutor. Alongside her teaching duties she independently studied different subjects, as she wasn't quite sure yet which particular one she ultimately wished to pursue. Gradually mathematics, physics and chemistry started to emerge as the ones most attractive to young Marie so she set these as the ones she would study in Paris one day! In the meantime, time seemed endlessly long, as Marie waited for her sister to complete her medical studies...

Finally, in 1891, Marie traveled to France. She began her studies at the Sorbonne University and settled in lodgings in the Latin Quarter of Paris. Marie's apartment was so cold in the winter that she had to wear all the clothes she owned. Marie quickly got so immersed in her studies, that she didn't even remember to eat. Does that happen to you sometimes?

Marie had to work hard to catch up with her peers, especially considering she had to learn a new language as well! However diligent Marie soon graduated with a master's degree in physics, but the mathematics degree remained unfinished: Marie had run out of money. Fortunately, the university had noticed Marie's exceptional abilities and she received a scholarship.

Marie began to study magnetism. In the laboratory, she met researcher Pierre Curie and they fell in love. Marie and Pierre got married and continued research together. Soon Marie had a baby girl named Irene.

Marie continued her research energetically and started writing her dissertation. The topic became "uranium rays", i.e. radioactivity. Marie wondered what caused the radiation. Tirelessly she researched all the elements known at the time. Pierre became so enthusiastic about his wife's research that he left his own job and started helping Marie. And indeed, the research revealed something quite sensational. Marie and Pierre discovered the a new element: polonium! Later on, they would discover another new element, radium.

In 1903, in recognition of their work, Marie and Pierre received the Nobel Prize in Physics! Initially, only Pierre and Henri Becquerel were proposed as recipients of the award. How incredibly unfair! Fortunately, Pierre found out about this and informed the committee about Marie's central role. In the end, the prize was divided: Marie and Pierre received half, the other half going to Henri for his share of the research.

The prize money came in handy, and Marie and Pierre started building a new laboratory to continue their research. However, sadly Pierre died quite unexpectedly. Marie was devastated, but as ever continued her research.

In 1911, Marie received the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for the elements she discovered. Marie was the first woman to receive a Nobel Prize and, to this day is the only woman to have received the Nobel Prize twice!

Sadly, Marie could not know that the radioactive radiation she was studying was lethal. She became seriously ill from the radiation and died of anemia.

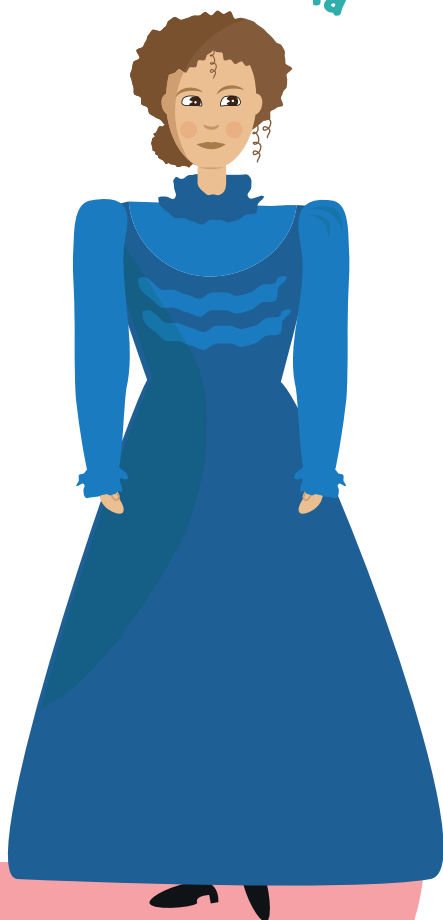
Marie's importance to science is enormous. In addition, her research contributed in so many ways also to medicine.

By the way, did you know that Marie's daughter Irene also received the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1935?



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GRETA THUNBERG was born in Sweden in 2003

“How dare you?”, asked 16-year-old Greta of world leaders at a UN climate meeting. It’s pretty amazing how that 16-year-old girl was able to under the skin of stuffy politicians. Well, at least we know that Greta does not lack courage!

Swedish Greta Thunberg is a role model to many children and youngsters around the world. Children can also change the world!

Greta was born in Stockholm into a family of artists, her mother a singer and her father an actor. Already early in her youth, Greta noticed that the earth is not doing very well. She didn’t want to eat meat anymore, didn’t want to buy unnecessary things and did not want to travel by plane anymore. Greta’s entire family gave up flying.

At a certain point, Greta had simply had enough! She started a school strike to raise awareness for climate change in August 2018. On school days Greta would sit in front of the parliament building holding a sign that said “with a sign that read “School strike for our climate!”. She appealed for a reduction of emissions. Elections came and went, but Greta continued her strike every Friday. She asked young people around the world to join her.

Young people responded to Greta’s appeal with school strikes and demonstrations held in various parts of the world. Greta’s school strike grew into a veritable global movement to stop climate change. Having witnessed Greta’s activism, how can anyone claim anymore that “the actions of one person make no difference”?

Greta has spoken about climate change at many important meetings. When other arrive at the meetings on their private jets, Greta makes sure to arrive by train or even by sailboat. To attend a UN climate meeting in New York she did just that, crossing the Atlantic on board a racing sailboat. Not even massive waves were able to stop Greta!

Greta activism and tireless work to stop climate change has been recognized through many awards. Even though Greta has returned to school, her work on behalf of our planet continues.

We hope the stories of these girls and women inspire you. Always remember to believe in yourself and in your abilities. Mimmitt are cheering for all you girls and boys!

