



Headstrong: 52 Women Who Changed Science-and the World

By Rachel Swaby

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Fifty-two inspiring and insightful profiles of history's brightest female scientists.

In 2013, the *New York Times* published an obituary for Yvonne Brill. It began: “She made a mean beef stroganoff, followed her husband from job to job, and took eight years off from work to raise three children.” It wasn’t until the second paragraph that readers discovered why the *Times* had devoted several hundred words to her life: Brill was a brilliant rocket scientist who invented a propulsion system to keep communications satellites in orbit, and had recently been awarded the National Medal of Technology and Innovation. Among the questions the obituary—and consequent outcry—prompted were, Who are the role models for today’s female scientists, and where can we find the stories that cast them in their true light?

Headstrong delivers a powerful, global, and engaging response. Covering Nobel Prize winners and major innovators, as well as lesser-known but hugely significant scientists who influence our every day, Rachel Swaby’s vibrant profiles span centuries of courageous thinkers and illustrate how each one’s ideas developed, from their first moment of scientific engagement through the research and discovery for which they’re best known. This fascinating tour reveals these 52 women at their best—while encouraging and inspiring a new generation of girls to put on their lab coats.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Swaby tells the scientists’ stories with energy and clarity. Refreshingly, spouses and children are mentioned only when relevant—and the book is recipe-free.”

—*New York Times Book Review*

“A corrective—a spur to change... Swaby’s subjects are all worthy women who deserve more publicity.”

—*Wall Street Journal*

“[A] collection of brisk, bright biographies.”

—*The Washington Post*

“Rachel Swaby’s no-nonsense and needed *Headstrong* dynamically profiles historically overlooked female visionaries in science, technology, engineering, and math.”

—*Elle*

“A woman revolutionized heart surgery. A woman created the standard test given to all newborns to determine their health. A woman was responsible for some of the earliest treatments of previously terminal cancers. We shouldn’t need to be reminded of their names, but we do. With a deft touch, Rachel Swaby has assembled an inspiring collection of some of the central figures in twentieth century science. *Headstrong* is an eye-opening, much-needed exploration of the names history would do well to remember, and Swaby is a masterful guide through their stories.”

—Maria Konnikova, Contributing *New Yorker* writer and *New York Times* bestselling author of *Mastermind: How to Think Like Sherlock Holmes*

“Rachel Swaby’s fine, smart look at women in science is a much-needed corrective to the record—a deftly balanced field guide to the overlooked (Hilde Mangold), the marginalized (Rosalind Franklin), the unexpected (Hedy Lamarr), the pioneering (Ada Lovelace), and the still-controversial (Rachel Carson). Swaby reminds us that science, like the rest of life, is a team sport played by both genders.”

—William Souder, author of *On a Farther Shore* and *Under a Wild Sky*

“*Headstrong* is a true gem. So many amazing women have had an incredible impact on STEM fields, and this book gives clear, concise, easy-to-digest histories of 52 of them—there’s no longer an excuse for not being familiar with our math and science heroines. Thank you, Rachel!”

—Danica McKellar, actress and *New York Times* bestselling author of *Math Doesn’t Suck*

“Swaby’s exuberant portrayals make this a compulsively readable title. There is no good reason why every single woman here is not a household name, and now, thankfully, Swaby is helping rectify history’s oversight.”

—*Booklist*

“Swaby celebrates barrier-breaking titans... [and] has collected an inspiration master list of women in science with accessible explanations of their work.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

"Although many of these women may not be familiar names outside their courses of study, the author's spadework should bring them to the forefront, allowing the general public to learn about the females who pushed beyond sexist attitudes to undertake and achieve success in a male-dominated arena. These short accounts should inspire girls who want to study science to follow their dreams....succinct and informative."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

"[W]omen just don't get the encouragement they need and deserve to pursue careers in science. Here's a handy book to help encourage young women to put themselves on the scitech path, with profiles of 52 women from Nobel Prize winners to major innovators and more who have made a difference in science."

—*Library Journal*

About the Author

Rachel Swaby is a freelance journalist. Her work has appeared in the *Runner's World*, *Wired*, *O, The Oprah Magazine*, New Yorker.com, *Afar*, and others. She is a senior editor at *Longshot* magazine, the editor-in-chief of *The Connective: Issue 1*, a former research editor at *Wired*, and a past presenter at *Pop-Up* magazine. She lives in Brooklyn.

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