Name: _____ Date: _____

How Did Millie Bobby Brown Become Eleven?

Reading level 11 (7th grade) · 1210 words

How did Millie Bobby Brown become Eleven? By her own account, it began in a room in Los Angeles in the summer of 2015, with a cardboard box. She told Empire magazine that she flew in from London for a screen test. The people running it handed her a box of clothes. "Do whatever you feel like with this box of clothes," they said. TVLine reported her account on November 8, 2025. This book follows the job from that room to a finished show.

Many actors first send a self-tape. That is an audition they film themselves and send to casting. A friend or teacher can read the other part. The actor starts by saying their name, which is called a slate. Reports of Brown's path describe something different. She went to an in-person test built around a box of clothes. She was asked to act as if she had never seen clothes. She said the exercise puzzled her, and that she knew nothing about Eleven, not even what the girl could do.

The answer came the next day. In her words, the show's creators, Matt and Ross Duffer, asked, "Millie, would you like to be our Eleven?" She says she "just fell on the floor." She also said her plane seat and her hotel floor were both numbered 11, and it "felt like a sign." Stranger Things reached Netflix on July 15, 2016. Netflix's recap sums up season one in a line. A strange girl appears soon after a 12-year-old boy goes missing in Hawkins, Indiana.

Once a young actor is hired, a second job begins: the rulebook. Each state writes its own rules for young performers. California's are in its code of regulations, and its labor department publishes a summary chart. Young performers need work permits. A studio teacher must be on the set for every call. The rule is one teacher for each group of ten, or twenty on weekends, holidays and school vacations. California is one example; other states have their own rules.

A studio teacher is more than a tutor. California wants a credentialed teacher whom the Labor Commissioner has certified. The teacher must pass a written exam on the labor rules and take a twelve-hour course. The rules say the teacher may refuse to let a young performer work, and may remove the performer, if conditions are a danger to health or safety. California also has rules about who else must be nearby when a young child works. The teacher's job has nothing to do with the camera.

Then comes the clock. For ages nine to under sixteen, California allows nine hours at the workplace in a day. No more than five can be work. At least three must be school when school is in session, and the teacher sees that the rest is rest and play. After the performer is dismissed, twelve hours must pass before the next day's call time. The state's chart says there are no exceptions. Each age has its own row. At sixteen to under eighteen, the day is up

to ten hours, with six of work.

Hair and make-up take time, and time is limited for a minor. Season four of Stranger Things was filmed in 2020 and 2021, in several places, so California's rows are only an example. Eleven's shaved-head look became a wig in that season. Netflix says hairstylist Sarah Hindsgaul and her team made a painstakingly designed wig. It had to fit over Brown's own long hair. The show's creators set two conditions. Hindsgaul says they agreed to try a wig only if it could be done in 30 minutes, and only if a screen test did not show that it was a wig.

Why a wig, and not a latex bald cap with hair punched in? Hindsgaul said a punch cap is very slow. There was no time for it, she said, because Brown was a minor. The wig maker set the hair in one strand at a time so the knots held. Cutting each wig down to season-one length took about eight to ten hours, all by hand, because lace gives no resistance. Tiny pieces of silk inside it simulated skin, so it looked as if you could see her scalp. The hardest part was wrapping her hair so tightly that it melted away.

Not every effect is a costume. For The Electric State, which reached Netflix on March 14, 2025, the Russo brothers directed and Brown played Michelle. Netflix describes the story as a young woman who travels across a retro-futuristic America with a mysterious robot and an eccentric drifter. The robot Cosmo was played on set by Devyn Dalton, in a motion-capture suit, while Alan Tudyk supplied the voice. Anthony Russo said such performers were "actually in the scenes with us." In those scenes, then, Brown acted opposite a real person, not an empty space.

The credits list grew. Netflix names Brown among the producers of Enola Holmes 2, and says she produces Enola Holmes 3, which came out on July 1, 2026. She was also an executive producer of Damsel, a 2024 Netflix film. In Enola Holmes 2, her character is a detective-for-hire who takes on her first official case. Producing is a different job from acting, because it helps decide what gets made. For Stranger Things, the Television Academy lists two Emmy nominations for Eleven, in 2017 and 2018, for supporting actress in a drama series. Its page shows no win.

Prizes can go to a group. On January 29, 2017, the Stranger Things cast won the Screen Actors Guild Award for best ensemble in a TV drama. They went up on stage together. In 2018, the editor of TIME called Brown the youngest designee ever on its list of 100 influential people, as of that year's list. A record like that lasts only until a later list passes it. For a young actor, being named is one thing, and winning is another. An ensemble prize also belongs to the whole cast, not to one actor, while her two Emmy nominations were for her own work as Eleven.

UNICEF said on November 20, 2018, that Brown was its youngest-ever Goodwill Ambassador. The job was to raise awareness of children's rights. She had supported UNICEF since 2016, when she hosted its 70th anniversary celebrations at the United Nations. In 2019,

UNICEF's page says, she visited its supply hub in Copenhagen. There she helped test and pack emergency supplies. UNICEF's page also says that in a 2021 World Children's Day video she asked adults to listen to young people, and that in 2025 she gave a keynote about its Power4Girls project.

The final season of Stranger Things came out in three parts. Volume 1 arrived on November 26, 2025, Volume 2 on December 25, 2025, and the finale on December 31, 2025. Eleven's story on screen ran from 2016 to the end of 2025. From a cardboard box in 2015 to a last episode in 2025, the job ran ten years. Along the way it needed a screen test, a rulebook, a wig, and a robot played by a person in a suit. Netflix lists the Duffer Brothers as the show's creators, with Shawn Levy and Dan Cohen as executive producers.

Questions

1. What was the exercise at Brown's screen test, as she described it?

A. Reading a long speech
B. Acting with a box of clothes
C. Singing a song

2. According to the book, what is a slate?

A. An actor's spoken introduction
B. A latex cap
C. A prize for the cast

3. When the book says the creators set two "conditions" for the wig, it means they

A. asked for certain things to be true
B. refused to use a wig
C. gave the wig a name

4. Why does the book use California as its example?

A. Stranger Things was shot there
B. Its rules are written down and published
C. It has the only rules

5. Why did the stylist say a punch cap was not an option?

A. It looked wrong on camera
B. It was against the law
C. It took too long, and Brown was a minor

6. Who played the robot Cosmo on set?

A. Alan Tudyk
B. Devyn Dalton
C. Anthony Russo

Words to know

slate: actor's introduction
regulations: official rules
conditions: required terms
strand: single hair
designee: person chosen

Answer key: How Did Millie Bobby Brown Become Eleven?

1. B. Acting with a box of clothes
2. A. An actor's spoken introduction
3. A. asked for certain things to be true
4. B. Its rules are written down and published
5. C. It took too long, and Brown was a minor
6. B. Devyn Dalton