**Moniba:** Malala's best friend throughout her childhood, who attends school with her and provides competition for best in the class. Moniba and Malala continue to keep in touch after Malala leaves Pakistan.

## The Mufti: An Islamic scholar who attempted to close the Kushal School because it educated girls.

## Madam Maryam

The principal at Malala's school, who is like a second mother figure to Malala and the other girls at the Kushal School.

## Malka-e-Noor

The girl who repeatedly challenges Malala for the top spot in the class.

## Safina

The neighbour girl who steals Malala's favourite toy. Malala steals from her as payback, but gets caught, thereby realizing that it is better to be honest.

## Shiza

An Islamabad native who went to study at Stanford University. She contacts the Yousafzai family after seeing the documentary about them and becomes one of their supporters, along with a role model for Malala.

**Education**

**Grassroot activism** can bring about changes: they could’ve easily gone under the radar and spot speaking to let Taliban continue its brutal regime.

**Family**: Role model; stay together in aftermath

**Religion and faith**

**Childhood and maturity**

**Honesty:** corruption, lies, secrets, distrust

**Freedom**

**"Who is Malala? I am Malala, and this is my story."**

She finally gets a chance to answer the question asked by the Taliban militant.

**I started writing my own speeches and changing the way I delivered them, from my heart rather than from a sheet of paper."**

**"The Taliban could take our pens and books, but they could not stop our minds from thinking."**

This quote is in response to the Taliban's attempt to halt girls' education and close their schools. Though Malala is devastated to hear that her school would close, she knows that the kind of learning the Taliban fears does not need to be done within the walls of a classroom. She can keep learning in all areas of her life, and will always be able to triumph over the ignorance and fear that the Taliban feeds off of.

**"On 5 May 2009 we became IDPs. Internally displaced persons. It sounded like a disease."**

In speaking out for education, Malala was never motivated by a desire for fame or fortune. She knew that she had grown up fortunate to be able to attend school and learn, while many other girls around her did not have the privilege of receiving an education. It is moments like these—observing the people around her—when she remembers what she is truly fighting for, and why it is all worth it.

**"I didn't realize then I wouldn't be going home."**

**"I am Malala. My world has changed but I have not."**

Malala ends her memoir almost the same way that she started it, answering the question that came to define her life when the Taliban asked for her in the back of the bus. She once again lays claim to her identity, and acknowledges that even though she leads an entirely different life now, she still maintains the values, principles, and goals that she has nurtured throughout her entire life.

She was returning from a day of her exams. Usmaan bhaijaan was the driver. He fired two more bullets as well, and they hit girls alongside her.

Malalai: national folk hero of Afghanistan

Buddhist ruins

Swati then Pashtun then Pakistani

Their luck changed after Malala was born, and slowly the Kushal School began to grow, enrolling more students.

Malala Yousafzai begins telling her own personal story with the event that put her on international radar: being deliberately shot by the militant Taliban group that occupied her home for many years. While many people know this about her, they do not know the circumstances that led to this moment. Malala is so much more than just the one moment that has come to define her (i.e. her shooting), and so telling her story is an important way to alert the world to the life that lies behind her struggle.

 Swat Valley, was originally an autonomous area within the larger nation, but was absorbed by Pakistan officially in 1969.

Malala's father knew the importance of education because he himself was highly educated, and he was able to instill these values in his daughter.

The Yousafzai family exemplifies the importance of parental circumstances in determining the outcomes of children.

When Malala's family moved into a new home on a new street, she had some trouble with a neighbor her age, [Safina](https://www.gradesaver.com/i-am-malala/study-guide/character-list#safina), who stole her favorite toy. As payback, Malala slowly began to steal Safina's things at her house as well, but eventually she was caught.

Coincidentally, the topic was ‘Honesty is the best policy’. She came in second to Moniba, but her father was still extremely proud of her, and Malala learned how to lose graciously.

A mufti (Islamic scholar) tried to close their school. He came to the school and insisted to the woman who owned the building that the school was shameful because it taught girls, who should be in purdah (i.e. kept out of sight of men). Schooling girls is blasphemous because the Quran does not mention any women by name. The mufti’s efforts were ultimately unsuccessful. The mufti's effort to close the Kushal School is smaller-scale foreshadowing of events to come.

Many of these groups insisted that the earthquake was a warning from God, and warned that if they did not convert to sharia (Islamic) law, more severe punishment would come.

Malala grew up hearing about the Taliban's horrible reign in Afghanistan, and eventually would have to witness its oppression herself in her home, Swat Valley.

One of Malala's school's Urdu teachers, [Nawab Ali](https://www.gradesaver.com/i-am-malala/study-guide/character-list#nawab-ali), refused to teach the girls anymore because Fazlullah forbade it. Whenever women would leave the house and go to the market, the Taliban would shout at them to go home until they did. Fazlullah also began holding a local court called a shura, which resulted in barbaric punishments like public whippings for mundane crimes. The Taliban stopped polio vaccinations, spoke against the Americans, and patrolled the streets for people who did not follow their demands. They blew up the massive twenty-three-foot-tall Jehanabad Buddha carving with dynamite.

Malala and many others felt that if Benazir Bhutto could die, then no one was safe.

Militant groups like the Taliban rely on fear to gain followers, and fear is much more effective when paired with ignorance. The Taliban sees education as a threat, because educated people—particularly educated women—are more likely to feel empowered to stand against them.

The Taliban dumped the bodies of those they killed for defying them in the square at night so everyone could see them and be warned. They killed one of Mingora's famous dancers named Shabana. People volunteered with the Taliban not because they agreed with them, but rather because they wanted the security that came with being a part of them.

Malala and her family allowed a Pakistani journalist to film a documentary on their lives, focusing particularly on Malala's school. When the documentary aired, a female Stanford University student from Islamabad named [Shiza Shahid](https://www.gradesaver.com/i-am-malala/study-guide/character-list#shiza-shahid) tracked down Malala and her family to speak to them and support them. With all of this publicity, Malala's family and friends once again feared for her and her father's safety, but no one really believed that the Taliban would ever try to kill a child.

 In May, the army began to launch Operation True Path to drive the Taliban out of Swat, and announced that all residents should leave. Malala's family wanted to stay, but eventually they knew they had to leave like everyone else.

Malala's father pointed out that there was new Talibanization, except this time it was targeted specifically at activists like them, rather than at the general public.

He had always believed the Taliban would come for him, but he realized that they had gone after Malala because they knew that if they targeted her, they would break him too. While Malala was recovering, the Taliban issued a statement claiming responsibility for her shooting. They claimed she was promoting Western ideas in Swat.

Her one regret was that she did not get to speak to her attackers before they shot her. Malala kept asking her parents to bring her school bag so she could study, believing that she would be home by November.

He also gave Malala's father a post as a Pakistani diplomat for education, so he would be able to remain in the UK. Back in Pakistan, there was a rumor going around that Malala had not been shot at all, or that her father had shot her, in order to achieve international fame and live a life of luxury abroad.

Malala ends her memoir by thanking God for everything he has done for her, and by recounting what happened to the other girls who had been shot.

## "It seemed to us that the Taliban had arrived in the night just like vampires." "For us girls that doorway was like a magical entrance to our own special world." (Prologue, pg. 8) (Simile)