

LEVELED BOOK • X

Malala the Brave



Written by
Terri Patterson

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Malala studies in Pakistan before the events that made her famous.

Introduction

Can you imagine living in a country where some children aren't allowed to attend school? Where a child's highest hope is to be able to get an education, and that hope is denied? This is the world in which a brave girl named Malala grew up.

Malala's Name

Malala was named for a courageous poet and warrior woman who lived in Afghanistan long ago. She led Afghan fighters to victory in a battle against invading British soldiers in 1880.



Malala stands with her parents and brothers, Khushal (left) and Atal.

Malala's World

Malala Yousafzai (YOO-suf-zy) was born on July 12, 1997, in Mingora, a city in Pakistan's Swat District. Her family includes two younger brothers.

Malala's father, Ziauddin (zee-OW-deen), is a champion of **human rights**, which are basic rights that everyone in the world should have. Malala's father worked to make sure every child in Pakistan could receive an education. Since 1994, he has helped to open many schools in Pakistan's Swat District that now teach over one thousand students. For many years, Malala attended one of the schools founded by her father.

Malala's father has always encouraged her to ask questions and think for herself since she was very young. He taught her to speak up for human rights, equality, and education.

Malala's mother, Tor Pekai, is a housewife who follows **Muslim** traditions by living a private life out of view of others. Malala says that she admires her mother but knows that her own path in life is different.

The Swat District is an area of northern Pakistan with high mountains and lush green valleys. Many people consider the region beautiful, and it used to attract tourists. However, not many outsiders visit the area anymore because of the **Taliban**, a political group based in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Taliban follow an extreme and **fundamentalist** version of the Islamic religion that is very different from the version followed by most Muslims. As part of their beliefs, the Taliban severely limit the rights of women.

Most residents of areas controlled by the Taliban are forced to follow strict religious rules. For example, music, movies, and television are not allowed. The rules for women and girls are especially strict. Women and girls may not work outside the home, attend school, or wear makeup or bright clothing. They are not permitted to laugh out loud. After a certain age, girls cannot be outside the home without a male relative. The Taliban use violence, including acts of **terrorism**, to enforce their laws.

Malala's family is deeply religious—just not the Taliban's version of religion. When asked about her religion, Malala is quick to point out that the Islamic religion does not oppose education for girls. In her words, "Islam says that it is not only each child's right to get [an] education, rather it is their duty and responsibility."

The Taliban started trying to take control of the Swat Valley in 2007. Pakistan's government and army were unable to stop them. The Taliban attacked police officers and blew up religious and government buildings. Their many acts of violence included destroying girls' schools in the area.

By the end of 2008, the Taliban had blown up roughly 400 schools in Swat and over 1,500 schools in total. The Taliban announced that as of January 15, 2009, girls would no longer be allowed to attend school in the areas under their control.



Local people gather outside the rubble of a girls' high school in the Swat Valley that was destroyed by the Taliban in 2009.

Throughout this period, Malala's father kept his schools open, even though it was dangerous. Over half of Malala's classmates were pulled out of school because their parents feared the Taliban. Malala stopped wearing her school uniform to avoid being targeted.

Why Is Education Important?

Education is much more than learning how to read and write. Education provides people with the tools they need to care for themselves and their families and to be active in their communities. Think about the following questions:

- What kinds of jobs can people get if they are educated? How does that compare to the jobs they can get without an education?
- How does an education help people care for their families better? Consider things like food, medical care, educational opportunities for children, and other goods and services.
- How might education and the prevention of child labor be connected?
- How does education help prevent the spread of disease?
- How might education affect the choices that people make when they vote?
- How does education promote peace in communities and countries?
- How might education affect people's attitudes about the environment?
- How else does education make a difference in people's lives?

Malala's Work

Malala's father encouraged his students to speak out against losing their right to an education. Malala and several friends gave an interview on a TV show in Pakistan in 2008. Malala then volunteered to appear on a talk show. She was nervous, but she knew she had to speak her mind. While on the talk show, she asked, "How dare the Taliban take away my basic right to education?" Malala's courage in speaking out against the Taliban impressed many people.

"One child, one teacher, one pen, and one book can change the world. Education is the only solution."

—Malala

Malala started **blogging** on the Internet for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in 2009 at age eleven. She blogged about her dreams for her life and about what it was like to live under the rule of the Taliban. She used a pseudonym, or fake name, to hide her identity and keep from being targeted for her writing. After her blog was translated into English, people around the world read it. They were shocked about the situation in Swat and the Taliban's efforts to prevent girls from attending school. Although Malala hoped to keep her identity private, her secret got out in December 2009.

As Malala continued to speak out about education as a basic human right, her fame grew. She gave many interviews on television and in print. In 2010, the *New York Times* made a movie about her life. In 2011, Desmond Tutu, a world-famous activist and religious leader from South Africa, **ominated** Malala for the International



Malala's courageous stand for the rights of girls made her famous around the world.

Children's Peace Prize. That same year, Pakistan's **prime minister** awarded her Pakistan's National Youth Peace Prize. In her own country and around the world, she was a voice of hope and **empowerment**.

As Malala spoke out more and more, she and her father were both seen as threats to the Taliban's goals. When she was fourteen, her family learned that the Taliban had called for her to die. Malala was afraid for her father's safety since he was an anti-Taliban activist. However, neither she nor her family thought at first that she was in danger because she was a child.



Malala suffered terrible wounds as a result of being attacked by the Taliban in 2012. She recovered from the attack in a hospital in England.

The Attack

Malala paid careful attention to her family's safety as well as her own. She locked doors and avoided walking home from school. Instead, she took the bus. On October 9, 2012, she rode the bus home from school with several friends. A man got on the bus and asked which girl was Malala. Even though no one answered with words, her friends looked at her, so the man knew. He pulled out a gun and fired three shots, one of which struck Malala and injured her very badly. Two other girls were hit, too, though neither one had serious injuries.

Malala nearly died after the attack. She was flown to a military hospital in a city a few hours away, where she received life-saving treatment. Malala was then transferred to a hospital in Birmingham, England. Many people made sure she received the best possible care. Malala was fortunate to recover from most of her wounds, although she will have some challenges for the rest of her life.

The Taliban took credit for the attack. They said that other girls should pay attention to what happens when a girl speaks out.

"When someone takes away your pens, you realize quite how important education is."

—Malala

While Malala was in the hospital, she received cards, gifts, and flowers from thousands of people, including world leaders and movie stars. People around the world held candlelight gatherings to show their support.

After she was far along in her recovery, Malala started attending school in Birmingham in March 2013. She and her family are staying in Birmingham, where they hope to be safe from the Taliban. Malala is not happy to be away from the Swat Valley or her friends. However, she can't go back, at least for now. The area is still too dangerous, and the Taliban are still targeting her.



Students, parents, and teachers in Karachi, Pakistan, show their support for Malala one month after she was attacked.

MALALA TIME LINE

2011: Nominated for International Children's Peace Prize; won Pakistan's National Youth Peace Prize, which was renamed in her honor

2008: Malala's first public appearance, on a talk show in Peshawar

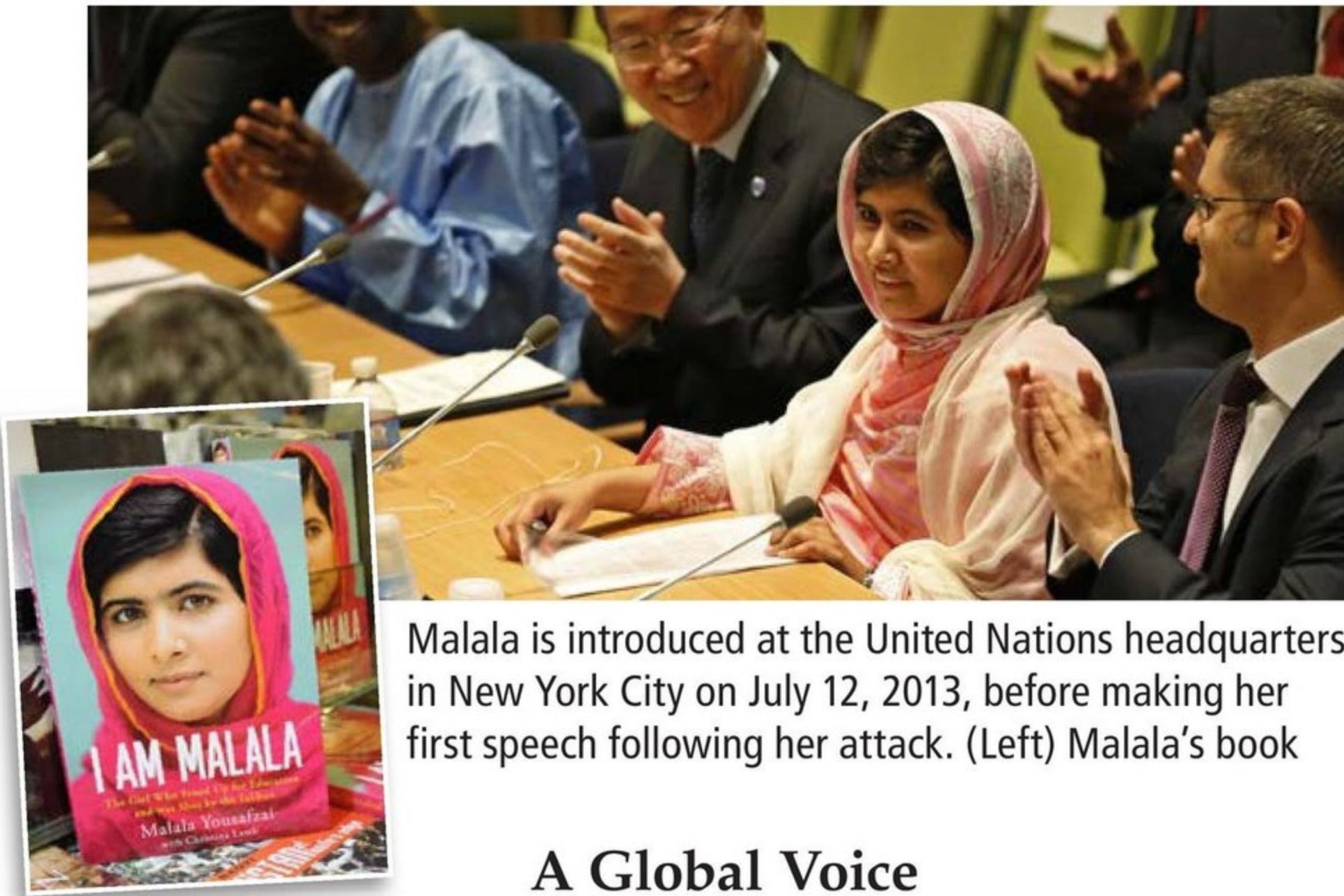
1997: Born in Mingora, Pakistan

2009: Malala's first BBC blog post is published; the Taliban order all girls' schools closed

2014: Became the youngest person ever awarded the Nobel Peace Prize

2012: Shot by Taliban; runner-up for 2012 *TIME* Person of the Year

1990 1995 2000 2005 2010 2015



Malala is introduced at the United Nations headquarters in New York City on July 12, 2013, before making her first speech following her attack. (Left) Malala's book

A Global Voice

In July 2013, Malala gave a speech at the **United Nations**, less than one year after the attack. She called for children around the world to be permitted to get an education. Later that year, Malala received Europe's top human rights award for her **dedication** to freedom of thought and human rights. She has met with President Obama, the Queen of England, and other world figures.

Focus on Girls' Education

In 2012, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon asked governments, organizations, businesses, religious leaders, and other people and groups around the globe to support education for girls. That same year, the United Nations and Pakistan established the Malala Fund for Girls' Education. President Zardari of Pakistan donated the first \$10 million.

In October 2014, Malala was chosen to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. At age seventeen, she was the youngest person ever given that honor. Malala said the award made her feel “more powerful and courageous.” She dedicated her award to “all those children who are voiceless,” saying, “My message to children around the world is: stand up for your rights.”

The Taliban tried to silence Malala, but instead they made her voice carry even more loudly. She continues to support every child’s right to an education and refuses to be silenced by fear.

Malala’s goal is to someday become Pakistan’s prime minister. Her father is now a Special Advisor on Global Education for the United Nations. Malala and her father continue to work together, guided by their vision of a peaceful world and an education for every child.



Malala meets U.S. President Barack Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama, and Malia Obama at the White House on October 11, 2013.

Glossary

activist (<i>n.</i>)	a person who works to bring about social or political change (p. 10)
blogging (<i>v.</i>)	writing about one's thoughts, opinions, or experiences on a website meant to be read by others (p. 9)
dedication (<i>n.</i>)	the willingness to work hard out of loyalty or strong support for a cause (p. 14)
empowerment (<i>n.</i>)	the act of helping someone gain power over his or her situation (p. 10)
fundamentalist (<i>adj.</i>)	marked by a strict following of a set of beliefs, often relating to religion (p. 6)
human rights (<i>n.</i>)	the rights that are considered by most societies to belong automatically to all people, including the rights to justice, freedom, and equality (p. 5)
Muslim (<i>adj.</i>)	of or relating to people who follow the religion of Islam (p. 6)
named (<i>v.</i>)	named someone for a job, award, or position (p. 10)
prime minister (<i>n.</i>)	the leader of a government in most countries that have a parliament (p. 10)
Taliban (<i>n.</i>)	a fundamentalist Islamic group based in Afghanistan and Pakistan (p. 6)
terrorism (<i>n.</i>)	the use or threat of violence to try to change a government or system (p. 6)
United Nations (<i>n.</i>)	an international organization that works to promote peace (p. 14)

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Back cover: Malala Yousafzai raises her International Children's Peace Prize above her head in the Hague, Netherlands, on September 6, 2013.

Title page: Members of the Peshawar Civil Society hold a banner in support of girls' education on Malala Day in Pakistan, November 10, 2012. The United Nations declared the holiday one month after Malala was injured by a Taliban gunman for supporting the same cause.

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