

# **I Am Malala Study Guide**

**I Am Malala by Malala Yousafzai**

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



# Contents

I Am Malala Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Summary.....	3
Part I: Prologue - Chapter 2.....	4
Part I: Chapters 3 - 4.....	8
Part I: Chapters 5 - 6.....	10
Part I: Chapters 7 - 8.....	13
Part II: Chapters 9 - 10.....	15
Part II: Chapters 11 - 12.....	17
Part II: Chapters 13 - 14.....	19
Part II: Chapter 15 - Part III: Chapter 16.....	21
Part III: Chapters 17 - 18.....	23
Part III: Chapters 19 - 20.....	25
Part IV: Chapters 21 - 22.....	27
Part V: Chapters 23 - Epilogue.....	30
Important People.....	32
Objects/Places.....	35
Themes.....	37
Styles.....	39
Quotes.....	40
Topics for Discussion.....	43



## Summary

I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up For Education and Was Shot by the Taliban is an autobiography written by Malala Yousafzai, with the help of Christina Lamb, a five-time Foreign Correspondent of the Year. Malala begins her story as a young girl who lives in Pakistan in modern times. As a teenager, Malala becomes very outspoken about the rights of girls to have an education. Her willingness to stand up for this belief makes her a target for the Taliban, a religious group that has very different ideas about the roles of women in Pakistan society. One day, on the way home from school, Malala is shot in the head. The bullet doesn't kill her but goes in near her eye. Because she leans at the moment the bullet enters her face, it travels down to her neck. She's rushed to a hospital where the care is substandard. A foreign doctor happens to be in the country at the time and she takes over Malala's treatment, later moving her to a British hospital for care and rehabilitation. While they remain in Pakistan, Malala's parents and younger brothers are also at risk but it takes time before the paperwork is in order and the government allows her family to join her in Britain. They remain there, knowing they will be targeted if they return to Pakistan. They dream of returning to their home. The Taliban claims responsibility for the attack which left Malala in serious condition and two of her classmates injured. The man who says that he shot the girls is not captured or tried for the crime.

Malala describes a happy childhood that isn't always filled with fear. She is the oldest of three children. Her father is a teacher who works hard to fulfill his dream of building a school. While some believe that girls of Pakistan should not be educated, there are many others who want the women to be educated. Most believe women should be allowed to do whatever they like, including filling professional roles such as doctors and teachers. However, there are societal dictates that greatly limit the options for females of the society. Women are not supposed to be alone when they are outside their homes. That means they have to have a male relative along when they are shopping in the local bazaar. Malala's mother abides by the majority of the rules but she does the shopping and other errands for the family because Malala's father is so often busy with his work in the schools.

The Taliban's rise to power is gradual in the region where Malala's family lives. There is an outspoken member of the Taliban who initially gains an impressive following and is given lots of money from the people. It's only later, after he has amassed a great deal of money and a huge number of people obeying him that he becomes outspoken about his fanatical beliefs.

Malala's father is also outspoken about his own beliefs. He thinks girls should be given the same educational opportunities as boys and that women should not be treated as if they are nothing more than property. He is warned that he might be targeted by the Taliban but refuses to be silenced. Malala's mother is completely uneducated, unable to read or write. She hates that she is unable to help her husband, whose job it is to educate young people, and finds a tutor to begin lessons only to have them interrupted when Malala is shot.



# Part I: Prologue - Chapter 2

## Summary

Part I: "Before the Taliban"

Part I opens with a traditional Pashto poem that says it's better for someone to be remembered as dying honorably than having been a coward.

Prologue, Chapters 1 and 2

The Prologue opens with Malala's words that her country was "created at midnight" and that she almost died "just after midday." She says a year has passed since the day she left for school for the final time. She says she was shot by a member of the Taliban and flown from Pakistan while she was unconscious. Some people believe she will never return to her homeland though she hopes this isn't true. Malala says she and her classmates spend their days studying at the Khushal School. However, there is no longer a sign declaring the building is a school. The girls attend in secret. Malala says she has only recently begun riding the bus to and from school because her mother is worried about the threats against her family. The Taliban has never targeted a little girl, and Malala worries more about her father. The bus - which is really a Toyota pickup with benches in the back - stops. A young man hoists himself up onto the tailgate and asks which of them is Malala. No one points her out, but several girls look her way. The young man, later identified as a member of the Taliban, fires a pistol at her. There are three shots. One of them strikes Malala in the face. Two other girls are shot as well. They are rushed to the hospital.

Chapter 1: "A Daughter is Born"

In this chapter, Malala describes a close bond with her father from her birth, unusual in her culture. She says her father names her for a Pashtun heroine, Malalai, who led an army to a victory. Malala's family lives in the town of Gulkada in the Swat Valley. There are many fruit trees in the area. Malala's family has grapes, persimmons, and guavas in their garden. Malala mentions that the family has first-hand knowledge of being hungry, so her mother always cooks extra food to give to the poor of the neighborhood. She uses the leftovers for the birds.

Malala says that her mother prays five times each day. She loves to dress in pretty clothes and jewelry but doesn't believe that God would approve of dancing. Malala says she loves to hear her father's voice. She is not alone. Many evenings are spent with people visiting their home to listen to Malala's father. Sometimes he tells stories of historical events, including their own ancestors of the Yousafzai tribe, the largest in the region. Malala's ancestors arrived in Swat in the Fifteenth Century but remained because the land was so beautiful.



Malala describes playing cricket on the roofs of the houses in her neighborhood and sometimes in the streets. She plays with her two younger brothers and some other children from the neighborhood. But Malala knows that when she gets a little older, expectations will change for her. She will be expected to remain inside, like all girls in her culture. She will be expected to cook and serve the men in her life, even her younger brothers. She says that it's the tradition, but her father seems anxious to change this for Malala's sake. He says that Malala will be "free as a bird." Malala says she dreams of the things she will do as a free woman but wonders if it is possible.

## Chapter 2: "My Father the Falcon"

Malala says her father has a stutter that was very pronounced when he was a young man. Malala's grandfather would shout to "spit it out" when her father, as a youngster, would stutter. Ziauddin's mother takes him to a holy man but the stutter persists. The situation is even more difficult because Ziauddin's father is a well-loved speaker. He describes the inequality in his own family. The girls don't attend school and he says they are "just waiting to be married." The boys of the family get the best food, while the girls are fed much less nutritious and tasty food.

Malala describes the regime of General Zia who has new ideas about religion and culture. Under his rule, the roles of women in society are reduced greatly. Among other things, he lessens the validity of testimony given in court by women. Judges are to give a woman's testimony only half the weight of testimony given by a man. He also enacts a law that says a woman can't have a bank account of her own without permission by a man. The women are also restricted from playing some sports. Malala also notes that the Pakistani history books are completely rewritten so that it appears the country has won wars that were actually lost. In 1979, Russia invades Afghanistan, changing the face of politics. Many support Pakistan's fight against Russia, including the United States and Saudi. Among those who help is a "Saudi millionaire called Osama bin Laden."

The Russians remain in Afghanistan for a decade. Many Muslim boys are called on to fight. Those who answer create the base for the Taliban that later rises to power. Ziauddin is intrigued by the stories of glory that awaits those who go into battle against the infidels and he hopes for awhile there will be a war that goes on long enough for him to fight and die for his country. Then Ziauddin meets Faiz Mohammad, brother of Malala's mother. He also hears a poet compare the United States and Russia as "two elephants" who are crushing the Pashtuns in their fighting.

There is always great rivalry between Ziauddin and other members of his family. He is teased unmercifully because his skin is darker than many in his family. He also wants desperately to please his father. Ziauddin's stutter is a source of irritation but he enters a speaking contest. His father is doubtful but writes him a speech - an accepted practice during this time. He practices and delivers the speech without a mistake, earning first place in the competition. His father is so impressed that he calls Ziauddin a falcon, or "shaheen." For awhile, Malala's father identifies himself as Ziauddin Shaheen but stops



when he realizes the falcon is also a very cruel bird. He takes the clan name, Yousafzai, as his surname instead.

## Analysis

Malala describes in detail the region, the culture, and the people where she lives. For example, she explains that most men of this time and place are sad when a daughter is born. Girls are not revered members of the household. Their only real roles in the family are to prepare meals and have babies. This is not the case with Malala's father who is thrilled with Malala and names her for a great heroine in the Pashtun people. The Pashtun people are made up of tribes spread out across Pakistan and Afghanistan. She says that Swat, which is her valley, was once a separate state, independent from Pakistan. However, politics and power struggles brought that to an end in 1947, though Swat remains somewhat out of the Pakistani government's jurisdiction.

In Chapter 1, Malala says that she might be a bit of a disappointment to her mother because she doesn't really care about dressing up and she doesn't pay a lot of attention to her clothes. However, Malala later talks at length about choosing the clothes she wears to specific events and offers up other details that contrast with this statement. This is one of the few instances in which her perspective seems to be somewhat in question.

Malala gives a great deal of information about the history of Swat. She explains how the land was originally divided among the male members of the Yousafzai tribe and the feuds among the families before a leader was chosen to oversee the entire region. Malala says that she, like others of her community and family, considers that she is a resident of Swat first, then a Pashtun and then a Pakistani.

There is a great deal of narrative devoted to the history and the impact of various events and leaders on Malala's country and her family. She describes her ancestry and how they came to live in Swat, then goes into the history of the Swati leaders. She touts a man named Zia who greatly limits options available to women and their role in society. The mention of bin Laden seems rather random, but Malala later talks about his capture in her country. It should be noted that Malala lives in a valley, or region, known as Swat. It would be the equivalent of an American state. She is also descended from the Pashtun tribes which are large families that are spread across some parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Pashtun tribes don't pay much attention to the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Malala's family lives on the Pakistan side of the border. She notes that she considers herself a Swati and a Pashtun before she considers herself Pakistani.

Malala says that the American CIA is in favor of the jihad, or holy war, that erupts after the Russian invasion. She says the young boys who are recruited are given American textbooks that teach math through fighting scenarios. She gives an example in which "ten Russian infidels" are attacked by a Muslim who kills five, leaving five Russian infidels. Malala's claims may be difficult for American readers to believe because it puts



America in the position of being an instigator in that war. Later, Malala says that the Pashtun people love stories of conspiracy. So, it could be that her claims are just another case of that. It's up to the reader to decide.

## **Vocabulary**

commiserated, auspicious, craggy, pious, melodious, abdicated, pariah, infidels, jihad



# Part I: Chapters 3 - 4

## Summary

### Chapter 3: "Growing Up in a School"

Malala says her mother began school at age six but stopped before the term was over. Her father and brothers urged her to go to school, but she was the only girl in the extended family to do so. She was jealous of her girl cousins who remained at home. As the only girl in a class filled with boys, she chose to stop going. She regrets it only later, after meeting Ziauddin and hearing his philosophy that education is the root of the Pakistani problems. Ziauddin is intelligent and is offered a place at Jehanzeb College. His father refuses to pay living expenses for Ziauddin, but he later meets a man named Nasir Pacha who invites Ziauddin to live with him while attending college. It's here that Ziauddin learns about a community in which women are given much more freedom than his own.

It's while Ziauddin is attending college that the dictator Zia is killed. A woman, Benazir Bhutto, is elected Prime Minister and education becomes more open. Ziauddin graduates college and gets a teacher's job, but the pay is low. His father complains that he doesn't send money home, but Ziauddin is hoping to save money for his wedding to Tor Pekai. Ziauddin hates that he is forced to reward obedience in his students above creative thought. He partners with a friend to open the Khushal School. He fights through the bureaucratic red tape; but, there is a shortage of students for the new school and there is little money. Ziauddin marries Tor Pekai, and the financial situation becomes more dire. Then flash floods hit and the area is ravaged. Tor Pekai gives birth to a stillborn daughter. In 1997, Malala is born as the family continues to struggle. As soon as the school begins to operate without a financial loss, Ziauddin begins planning the next school. Malala spends many hours in the school, wandering into classrooms and absorbing all the attitudes about education. She says she "grew up in a school."

When Malala is four, she hears the adults talking about the attack on the Twin Towers in the United States. She says she doesn't fully understand the situation and has no way of knowing that the attack would "bring war into our valley."

### Chapter 4: "The Village"

Having a celebration on the seventh day of a child's life is traditional in Malala's family's culture. However, Malala's parents can't afford the celebration on her birth, and Ziauddin's father refuses to pay because she's a girl. When Malala's little brothers are born, her grandfather offers to pay, but Ziauddin refuses because there hadn't been a celebration for Malala. Malala describes the family's trip to her grandfather's village for the Eid holiday. It takes five hours aboard a bus called the Flying Coach. There is no electricity in the village, but there is a water mill that produces electric power for some of the villagers. On a typical day, Malala wakes early to the sound of roosters. The





villagers are poor, and the visitors take many gifts when they come, including medicines and other items that can't be bought in the village at all. Malala says that the boys play cricket with a "ball" made of plastic bags. When someone becomes ill in the village, they have to travel long distances for medical care.

Malala talks about the horrible conditions faced by girls in some families. They are often used as nothing more than property. She says she complains to her father about the unfairness of this. He tells her about a group called the Taliban that has begun burning girls' schools and enforcing strict rules for women. Malala is struck by the harsh attitudes and unfairness. She is proud that the girls in Swat are not prohibited from attending school. She is glad that she lives there, but she knows that the Taliban is "right around the corner" and that they are members of the Pashtuns, just like Malala's family. Malala's father pledges to protect her freedoms and urges her to dream of her future.

## Analysis

Malala talks about a book that attacks Islam. Many people want to burn the book, but Ziauddin speaks out against that. He suggests that the Islamic people should respond with a book of their own. He says that Islam is not weak and that it can withstand the attack by a book such as this.

Malala says that her cousins in the remote village of her grandfather make fun of her for her "modern" ways. She says they seem to believe she is refined and sophisticated because she doesn't abide by the customs of the country children, such as going barefoot. But, this is another instance in which the perspective is important. Malala says they don't realize that the people from cities would look at her as countrified.

Malala describes a custom that requires a widow's family to give permission before she is allowed to marry and another custom that allows families to give away daughters in order to settle disputes. She says that a widow married without the family's permission and the two families became embroiled in a bitter fight. The elders were asked to settle the argument. They forced one family to give a very pretty young girl to the "least eligible man" of the second family. Malala says it's not fair that a girl's entire life is sacrificed because of a situation over which she has no control.

## Vocabulary

clerics, bazaar, atrocities, commotion, blasphemous, mystified, contribute, exceptionally, offensive



# Part I: Chapters 5 - 6

## Summary

### Chapter 5 : “Why I Don’t Wear Earrings and Pashtuns Don’t Say Thank You”

Malala says she is quickly recognized as the top of her class. She is also active in extracurricular activities such as music, art, drama, and sports. Then, a girl named Malka-e-Noor joins their class. Malala loses the first-place spot to her. She is sad and cries until her mother comforts her. Malala describes a young girl in the neighborhood named Safina. Safina is slightly younger than Malala and has many possessions, including toys and jewelry. Malala has only a few toys, and she cherishes a pink plastic telephone she uses to mimic her father, who is constantly talking on his phone. Malala discovers that Safina has a pink plastic phone and that her own is missing, but Safina claims to have purchased hers at the bazaar. Malala feels sure Safina stole her toy but can’t prove it. Malala says that looking back on the incident, it is possible that Safina purchased the phone as she claimed, but that she couldn’t get past the idea at the time that Safina had stolen it from Malala. Malala begins taking things from Safina and hides them in a cupboard. The stealing is soon a compulsion. She takes several items until her parents discover the hiding place. Malala recounts a time when she was younger and took some almonds from a vendor at the bazaar. She’d felt so guilty over it that she pledged never to do it again, and now she fears her father’s reaction. Malala is forced to apologize to Safina and she says it doesn’t seem fair that Safina doesn’t mention the phone. After that incident, Malala never lies or steals again. She says that she even stops wearing jewelry because it seems ridiculous to let “baubles” tempt her.

Malala says that the Pashtun people “neither forget nor forgive.” She says this is why they seldom say “thank you” for a kindness. Instead, the attitude is that the kindness should be repaid with another kindness rather than words.

Malala describes the political climate. She says Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif alternate control for a decade though each accuses the other of corruption. Then the military takes control when Malala is about two years old. Soon other countries are boycotting the Pakistanis. Over time, various men serve as deputy commissioner of the Swat Valley and none of them really care about the people.

One of Malala’s best friends is Moniba though the girls often argue. Moniba is constantly on guard, fearful her brothers will find her guilty of some infraction and make her stop attending school. There is a speech contest and Moniba wins. Malala comes in second and she says it’s an important lesson. Even though she is usually at the top of their class, she is only able to continue to reach that goal if she continues to work hard.

### Chapter 6: “Children of the Rubbish Mountain”



More children begin to attend her father's school and the family moves again. They have a television and Malala is enthralled with a show about a boy who has an enchanted pencil allowing anything he draws to come to life. Malala prays that she will have that magic pencil and vows to God that she'll keep it a secret if He will only give it to her.

Taking out the trash is a job for her brothers but one day her mother has Malala take some garbage to the rubbish dump. There is no city trash service and the garbage simply piles up in a heap. Malala sees some children rummaging through the trash and she's appalled. She wants to talk to them but is afraid to. Malala immediately goes to her father, begging him to allow the children to attend school for free. He explains that even if the children didn't have to pay for school, their rummaging through the trash heap is a means of support for their families. Their families wouldn't be able to survive without the work done by these children.

Ziauddin heads up a very organization called the Global Peace Council. They are focused on solving local issues important to the people of Swat. Malala says the Americans invade Pakistan and Afghanistan in search of bin Laden and in an effort to eradicate the Taliban. The people of the region are called on to help the Americans but the Taliban had been supported by the Afghanistan intelligence service. Malala says some people lauded bin Laden as a hero and said he was taking revenge for what Americans had done to other people. However, she says that bin Laden's supporters are ignoring the fact that the people killed in the attack on the Twin Towers were innocent, "and the Holy Quran clearly says it is wrong to kill." Malala says it seems to have little to do with the people of Swat though they later learn that bin Laden stays in Swat for almost a year.

## Analysis

Malala talks about the fact that the Swati people "never forget nor forgive." She describes a situation in which two families are in an argument over some land. One of the families attacks the men of the other, killing both of them. Malala compares that to the fact that her people very seldom say "thank-you" because they believe it's better to repay a kindness than to merely say some words that are supposed to convey that appreciation.

In chapter six, Malala talks about the fact that her people see conspiracies all the time. This isn't so different from other cultures, even in the United States, where there are people who believe governments and official agencies are hiding things. Years after the U.S. military reported the death of Osama bin Laden, some Americans question the facts. Malala says that the Pakistani people also question the facts and some believe there is more to the story than what was officially reported. This is an interesting aspect of Malala's life and gives the reader a feeling that there are probably more similarities between Americans and Pakistanis than most Americans would like to acknowledge.



As Americans looking at the situation in Pakistan, it's easy to forget that it's a large country and that fighting isn't constant in every neighborhood of the country. Malala says that the political issues facing Pakistan sometimes seem very far removed from Swat.

## Vocabulary

reciprocate, embroiled, eternal, exacted, epicenter, placated, compulsion, pampered, mediate, philanthropist, bode



# Part I: Chapters 7 - 8

## Summary

### Chapter 7: "The Mufti Who Tried to Close Our School"

A mufti is a religious leader with the power to make decisions for the community. In this case, the mufti who begins paying too much attention to Malala's father is a self-proclaimed leader. Ziauddin's school is doing well and Malala says her mother has the money to buy things for herself and even sometimes sends out for food for the family rather than preparing it herself. Malala cites the constant turmoil since the origin of Pakistan. The mufti in the Swat Valley approaches the woman who owns the property being used by Ziauddin's school, demanding that she cancel his lease. The owner refuses but alerts Malala's father to the situation. The mufti accuses Ziauddin of running a "harem" in the school building. The elders of the community become involved and Malala's father comes to a compromise, agreeing that the girls will enter through another gate so that the girls are not so openly seen by the men of the community. The elders agree though the mufti is obviously not happy with the solution.

A new military leader, General Musharraf, takes over power. He allows television channels that feature women dancing and has a pop concert broadcast. Under his rule, women begin to hold positions of power. In other parts of the country, the rules become more strict. There are some who move toward the idea of "morality police" like those established by the Taliban. Groups hold meetings to discuss how to stem the tide of change but unrest continues. Malala's father urges action but most people refuse to believe the "flames of militancy" could reach Swat.

### Chapter 8: "The Autumn of the Earthquake"

Malala describes October 8, 2005, when a quake struck, sending all the children running to their teacher. Smaller earthquakes shook the village throughout the day and they didn't know until later how much of their country had been devastated. Some eleven thousand children are orphaned and in many cases there are no family members to take the children in. Instead, some are taken in by the JuD, a group that teaches the boys the Quran. Malala says they learn that science and literature are myths, there were never dinosaurs and that man has never been to the moon. Some preach that the earthquake is a judgment and that the country will be struck by God again unless Islamic law is implemented.

## Analysis

Malala talks about a huge earthquake that devastates the region, leaving thousands homeless and orphaned. She talks about the time it takes for help to arrive. Her comments sound very much like some of those from disaster victims throughout the world. She says that there are Americans nearby and they are able to drop supplies in



to some areas; but, they are also afraid of being attacked. Malala says that some of the helicopters that arrive with supplies have their American insignias covered, hoping to avoid being attacked. Islamic groups are soon responding as well. However, some of those are thinly disguised military organizations that openly recruit young orphans into their organizations.

There is a great deal of Pakistani history included in the book. Malala tells at one point about the independence of the country, negotiated by a man named Jinnah. She quotes her father who says that Jinnah “negotiated a piece of real estate for us but not a state.” The country’s situation might have been different if Jinnah had remained in power but he died a short time after Pakistan was created and Ziauddin says the residents of the country “haven’t stopped fighting since.”

Malala also offers up history about the Muslims in general. She explains that there are two basic branches, the Sunnis and the Shias. She says the basic beliefs of the two sects are the same but that they disagree over some facts, including the religious leader after the death of PBUH in the seventh century. Apparently, PBUH named one leader as he was dying, and the Sunnis believe that was the right choice. Others believe PBUH’s relatives should have retained leadership. It’s an interesting split. It is one that greatly resembles other religious and political situations through the centuries and throughout the world.

## Vocabulary

caste, creed, militant, militias, revolted, recruited, renowned



## Part II: Chapters 9 - 10

### Summary

Part II: "The Valley of Death"

Part II begins with a quote that says music has been eliminated by the Taliban.

Chapter 9: "Radio Mullah"

Malala describes the arrival of the Taliban in her village when she is ten years old. A Taliban leader named Fazlullah begins radio broadcasts in which he offers instruction on how to obey the Quran. He soon has many followers, including Malala's mother. He calls for an end to televisions and other modern items, such as DVDs. Fazlullah is soon becoming more fanatical. He publicly humiliates people who don't obey the law as he interprets it, including women who do any work outside the home. Malala says her mother is a strong woman and that the Quran doesn't say women have to remain at home.

Another religious leader, Sufi Mohammad, "declares from jail" that no one should educate girls. Fazlullah begins calling for an end to girls' schools. Malala says there are new laws every day. Men are not allowed to shave and women are not allowed to go to the beauty parlor, meaning the people who had depended on those businesses for their livelihood were out of work. Women are not allowed to go shopping alone. Fazlullah calls for an end to polio vaccines, saying it's an "American plot to make Muslim women infertile." A few people speak out against the rules but some like it. Soon Fazlullah's followers begin killing political activists and a man in Swat is kidnapped for allegedly helping the army locate Taliban bases.

Chapter 10: "Toffees, Tennis Balls and the Buddhas of Swat"

Malala talks about the Taliban's forced changes. Music is outlawed and Buddha statues are destroyed. Malala says it seems no one is doing anything to stop the Taliban, who have now moved into the Pakistan capital city of Islamabad. The situation deteriorates but Malala says her people hold to "one ray of hope" that Benazir Bhutto will return to lead the country. She is an important role model to young girls and Malala says she is excited that Benazir is returning from a lengthy exile. But, she is attacked before she can take power. The army and Taliban clash as the Taliban sets out to enforce rules such as the length of a man's beard and those failing to observe purdah, a practice in which the women live separately from the men and completely cover themselves at all times. Then, Benazir is attacked again and this time she dies.



## Analysis

Malala talks about her personal knowledge of the Taliban's rise to power in her area. She says she was ten years old when the Taliban presence is first felt in Swat and she describes the "strange-looking men with long straggly hair and beards." She talks about their clothing and says they wear jogging shoes, plastic sandals, pants rolled up above the ankle, and camo vests. Malala has a preformed notion of what the Taliban members should look like based on the photos she's seen of Taliban members in Afghanistan, and she says these men don't look like that at all.

In chapter ten, Malala tells of a religious leader who is responsible for teaching children the Quran. The man says that the death of Benazir Bhutto was good for the country. Malala is horrified and talks with her father about it. He says that Malala has to listen to the things the man is supposed to teach her - the Quran - but that she should ignore everything else. While it's easy for outsiders to say that no one could possibly believe the Taliban teachings, it's not that far from some other religious and political fanatics across the globe throughout history. Many have risen to power on false teachings though outsiders can't imagine how anyone believes them. Malala is smart enough to question the man's comments but other youngsters probably accepted his words because of his position as a teacher.

## Vocabulary

emerged, straggly, martyrdom, ablutions, exploited, charisma, compensation, romanticism, feudal, decadent, obliterated, ransacked, anarchy





## Part II: Chapters 11 - 12

### Summary

#### Chapter 11: "The Clever Class"

Malala says that while her world is turning "dark," she lives for school. She and her classmates want to be known for their intelligence, so they ask many questions of their teachers. They draw calculus and chemical formulas on their hands with henna when they are dressing up for holidays and weddings, ignoring the traditional butterflies and flowers. Malala continues to be competitive and is sometimes accused of being favored with good grades because her father owns the school. Malala is often afraid while she's on the streets, imagining that every man she meets is a member of the Taliban. The girls stop wearing their school uniforms and hide their books as they travel to and from school.

Then, a nearby school is bombed during a prayer service for a fallen police officer. Malala and her family know many of the fifty-five people killed. Malala asks her father if he is now afraid. He says it's human nature to be afraid at night but that the fears dissipate in the daylight. He continues to say that they have to rid their country of the Taliban so they never have to be afraid. Ziauddin keeps speaking out against the Taliban and he carries a poem by Martin Niemoller. That poem refers to Nazi Germany. The writer says he didn't speak out when the communists were taken because he wasn't a communist, and he didn't speak out for the socialists nor the unionists nor the Jews nor the Catholics. The writer says that by the time the Nazis came for him, there was no one left to speak out for him. Malala says she knows the poet is correct and that they have to speak out if they expect things to change.

Malala explains that the world looks at Pakistanis as a country filled with terrorists but says they are basing that on the presence of the Taliban when the majority of Pakistanis are peace-loving people. Malala says she continues to speak out, seeking to offer information and to say that girls should have the right to go to school. Initially, several girls are usually interviewed together but later Malala is interviewed alone because her friends' brothers won't let them speak. Some don't want their sisters in public and others are afraid of retaliation. Malala says her father isn't afraid. Despite the continued work of Malala and her father, schools are destroyed on a regular basis so that some four hundred schools are demolished by the end of 2008. Then it's announced that girls will no longer be allowed to attend school at all. It's a law that is to take effect January 15. Malala says her parents never suggested she stop attending school but others believe the law will be enacted.

#### Chapter 12: "The Bloody Square"

A dancer is killed in Mingora and her body dumped in an area that becomes known as "the Bloody Square." Some people approve of the killing but Malala says some of them



were probably afraid to disagree with the Taliban action. While the Taliban is not officially recognized by the government, the Taliban and army would routinely have roadblocks within a kilometer of each other, each pretending the other didn't exist. Malala's father receives threats and some people believe he must be a Taliban spy because the Taliban haven't killed him for being outspoken.

## Analysis

Malala talks about the strengths of her friends as they face off in school competitions. Malala and her best friend Moniba are almost always competing for first place in school exams and competitions. When a new student named Malka-e-Noor arrives, the three are always in the top. Malala discovers she has to study much harder to beat Malka-e-Noor. She says that despite the competition, they are not jealous of each other and they are pleased with the accomplishments of each other. After Malala is shot and leaves Pakistan, her friends keep an empty seat at the front of the class, hoping for the day she will rejoin them.

While it may sound as if Malala's life is spent studying, she also talks about the fun they have. For example, she and her friends put on a play. There is a picture at the back of the book of Malala and some other girls on stage as they act out their roles.

The Taliban often calls people by name, citing their infractions against the teaching of the Taliban. It's a strong-arm tactic and it seems to work in many cases. Malala says that some people take out ads in the newspaper, pledging to live specific ways in an apparent effort to please the Taliban and stay out of trouble with them.

## Vocabulary

particularly, razed, rubble, looting, cholera, pious, appease, prey



## Part II: Chapters 13 - 14

### Summary

#### Chapter 13: "The Diary of Gul Makai"

Malala is asked to blog about her life. She does so under the pseudonym Gul Makai. Some of the girls at school discover it and Malala wants to tell them she's the one writing, but she abides by the BBC's advice and keeps the secret. Malala learns that the Taliban has instructed families to send the names of marriageable women so that marriages can be arranged for them. Malala keeps hoping that something will prevent the Taliban from closing all the girls' schools but the date draws nearer with no resolution.

As the final day of school opens, Malala is followed around by a camera crew from the New York Times. The documentary crew ends their segment with a shot of Malala looking back into the school on that final day. She pledges that she will continue to learn, no matter where she has to study.

#### Chapter 14: "A Funny Kind of Peace"

Pakistani officials tell Fazlullah that public opinion is turning against him because of his attitude on women's education. He agrees that schools can teach girls up to age ten. Malala is past that but she and some others pretend to be younger and continue to attend classes under Madam Maryam who refuses to stop teaching the girls. Malala doesn't write about it on her blog for fear they'll be flogged or even killed. Then a "permanent ceasefire" is announced and schools reopen for girls of all ages. Malala expects changes but the Taliban remains in power and becomes even more outrageous. They hope an official will help move things toward real peace but he does the opposite, disappointing everyone. Soon fighting arrives in Swat Valley.

### Analysis

In Chapter 13, Malala is writing a blog about her life under the Taliban rule. She is writing for the BBC and is in contact with a BBC correspondent who advises her on the blog. She's inspired by the story of Ann Frank and writes about everyday events that happen in her life. When some of her classmates talk about the blog and bring excerpts to her father, Malala wants to tell them that she's the writer. The BBC correspondent tells her she shouldn't and she heeds the advice, but she can't really understand it. Malala says that she is "just a child" and that she can't imagine that anyone would actually attack a child. She hasn't yet figured out that she has become a powerful voice and, as has been the case throughout history, people like the Taliban leaders will break all sorts of rules to silence those voices. The fact that Malala has been so outspoken will prompt a Taliban soldier to shoot her, and his intentions are clearly to kill her. Malala



talks about being scared sometimes and she obviously recognizes the Taliban as a fearsome organization, but she can't imagine that they would actually kill a little girl.

Malala talks about the movies and television shows she sometimes watches and she becomes interested in journalism after learning about it and from watching an American television show, "Ugly Betty." She later makes references to books that are popular in America, including the Twilight series.

## Vocabulary

catastrophe, edict, pungent, conspires, ambition, cavalcade, jubilant, extremists, homage, accosted, queue, behest



# Part II: Chapter 15 - Part III: Chapter 16

## Summary

Chapter 15: "Leaving the Valley"

Though Malala and her family had originally declared they wouldn't leave their home, the fighting is close and they decide they will have to leave. They wind up with relatives, and Malala attends school with a cousin. Malala's twelfth birthday comes amid chaos. No one even remembers the event.

Part III: "Three Girls, Three Bullets"

Part III opens with a verse about a wayfarer in a foreign land.

Chapter 16: "The Valley of Sorrows"

Chapter 16, the first chapter in Part III, begins as Malala's family returns home after three months away. The town is in shambles with evidence of the battles that were fought there. The Pakistani prime minister has promised that the Taliban is gone. However, any people don't believe it and stay away. That fall, school resumes. Malala says many students take up their studies in tents because the Taliban have destroyed their schools buildings. Several girls from Malala's class are invited to Islamabad where they meet women lawyers, doctors, and activists. Malala says it shows the girls they can retain their culture even if they hold professional jobs.

Near Malala's thirteenth birthday, monsoons strike. The army has cut trees on the nearby mountains and the mountainsides become mudslides while the nearby river floods the area. The school is filled with water and thousands are left homeless. Some say the flood is God's judgment. Others say the Americans caused the flood with a technology that causes huge ocean waves. While everyone is trying to recover, it becomes evident that the Taliban is still in residence and the violence returns.

## Analysis

In Chapter 16, Malala and her father return to the school and discover that the building is intact but there are food remains and graffiti all over the buildings. Inside the office, they find a note that blames the people for allowing the Taliban to rise to power in Swat. The note says that many soldiers have died trying to defeat the Taliban and that it's because the people didn't stand up to the Taliban. It's an interesting perspective but not at all realistic. The soldiers were probably angry at the situation but their jobs were to fight the Taliban. They are blaming Ziauddin for not standing up to the Taliban but he has been fighting against the Taliban rule all along.



Malala talks about the raid that resulted in the death of bin Laden. She says that many people in Pakistan live in walled compounds because of their efforts to observe purdah - the practice of keeping women and girls separate from the men. While Americans watched the news coverage and observed the walled compound as a place where bin Laden was hiding, Malala points out that the house and walls were not at all uncommon for her country. What was unusual was that there was no telephone in the house and no Internet connection. The Americans who read about Pakistan people may be surprised to discover that using the Internet is a common practice for the Pakistani people. The photos of Malala's family at the end of the story show a house almost bare of possessions. She says they prefer to sit on the floor. Americans may find it impossible to believe that the people have computers, cell phones, and internet connections available at their homes.

## Vocabulary

condolences, venturing, exodus, shimmering, minarets, prefect, pretext



## Part III: Chapters 17 - 18

### Summary

#### Chapter 17: "Praying to Be Tall"

Malala says she is shorter than most of her friends and that she prays everyday to be taller. One of Malala's classmates is married at thirteen years of age. Malala sometimes daydreams about leaving school to be married. While the Pakistanis have traditionally blamed all their problems on India, they now blame the United States. One morning, Malala hears loud voices and learns that everyone is talking about an American raid that resulted in the death of Osama bin Laden. As the details become available, there are questions and outrage. Some are angry that the Americans conducted the raid on their own, without help from or even informing the Pakistanis. Others believe the Americans had actually killed bin Laden years earlier, then pretended to find him in the compound so near the capital city in an effort to embarrass Pakistan. Malala says that Americans touted the billions in aid they'd given Pakistan to find bin Laden and that America wasn't certain Pakistan was even trying to bring the terrorist to justice.

Malala is recognized nationally and internationally for continuing to speak out for education for girls. During a national rally, she tells how she and some others secretly continued school when girls' education was banned. She wins other prizes and collects quite a lot of cash money, but sees them as minor victories and reminds herself she still has not achieved the final victory of guaranteed education for girls everywhere.

#### Chapter 18: "The Woman and the Sea"

Malala and her family are visiting relatives in Karachi in 2012 while also visiting a school named in Malala's honor. While there, they learn of a threat on the Internet against Malala. The threat claimed that Malala and another person were "spreading secularism and should be killed." They also learn the police in Swat want to talk to Ziauddin as soon as the family returns home. Malala's father suggests they stop their campaigning for a time but Malala isn't worried. Police offer guards but Malala's family refuses. They consider sending her away to boarding school but the police say she won't be safer there. All the time away from her studies means she comes in second place in that year's final exams.

### Analysis

Malala makes a reference to a prime-time television show called "Beyond the Call of Duty." The show is supposed to be about the daily lives of the soldiers who are fighting in the Swat Valley. Malala says the show was "supposed to consist of real-life stories," which seems to indicate that she doesn't fully believe that to be the case.



There are many people missing in Swat because of the fighting and soon people begin to ask Ziauddin for help locating family members. In one case, a woman is searching for her husband. Malala says that women in her culture can only remarry if their husband is dead. The fact that this woman's husband is missing means she can't remarry and probably has very limited options for making a living for herself and any children she might have.

Malala rises most mornings and measures herself, hoping that she will have grown during the night. She hates that she's shorter than most of her friends and really wishes she could get taller. She later says that she remembers the day when this was all she had to worry about, indicating that her perspective changes dramatically after she is shot.

## Vocabulary

depict, liaison, collaborated, blasphemy, mogul, imams, garlanding, commemorate, liberate, incursion, charlatan





## Part III: Chapters 19 - 20

### Summary

#### Chapter 19: "A Private Talibanization"

In April of 2012, Malala and her friends have finished their final exams for the year and are on a field trip. Later, the girls are accused of inappropriate behavior during the trip. Malala is angry because she knows that no one would have accused male teenagers of doing wrong just because they enjoyed themselves on a field trip. On Malala's fourteenth birthday, the day she's officially considered an adult in her culture, they learn that the Taliban has attacked one of Ziauddin's friends who is also outspoken about his beliefs. Malala gives in to her mother's concern. Each morning she takes a rickshaw to school, though it's only a five-minute walk. Each afternoon, she takes the bus home.

#### Chapter 20: "Who Is Malala?"

Ziauddin is sharp with Malala's mother when he sees that a picture he loves is crooked. He sees that as a bad sign. Then a teacher says she dreamed that Malala arrived at school with her leg badly burned. Malala has nightmares as well, but keeps that from her parents. Each night, she waits until everyone else is asleep before rechecking all the locks on the house and the gates. It's again time for tests at Malala's school and she spends hours in extra study time. Malala is relieved when her test on Pakistani studies is over and she remains at school with friends until the second bus leaves the school. She and her friends board the bus. Each day, Malala's younger brother Atal is supposed to ride the bus with her but he hangs off the tailgate and the driver, Usman Bhai Jan, fusses at him. On this particular day, Usman Bhai Jan insists that Atal ride inside but Atal refuses and walks home instead. The ride home begins as usual and Malala remembers seeing pictures of "wanted terrorists," including Fazlullah. About the time Malala is headed home from school, her mother is entering the school to be tutored, her first educational experience since she was six years old. Malala says she didn't see the men who stopped the bus or hear them ask for her, and she didn't register the sounds of gunfire.

### Analysis

Malala and some friends are on a field trip and they run around in the woods, pretending to be vampires like those they've seen in the Twilight movies. The next day, there is a letter circulating that the school is "a center of vulgarity and obscenity and they take the girls for picnics to different resorts." The writer goes on to say that Ziauddin is wrong to allow the girls this kind of freedom. Malala is angry over the situation, saying that boys would never have been reprimanded for playing and enjoying their time away from school. It's another example of the double standard in the country, condoned by the religious leaders. The letter makes some of the girls afraid but Ziauddin



insists they've done nothing wrong and shouldn't feel that they have. Over the course of the following year, strangers appear at odd times at Malala's home and her father says they are "from the intelligence services." It seems that the military that is supposed to be standing against the Taliban also want complete control over the residents.

Malala talks at length about the Taliban members and terrorists who are wanted but never captured. She says three years pass after Fazlullah officially hits the military's wanted lists and his picture is prominently displayed in public. It seems that someone would have spotted him and turned him in by now. However, he remains free.

## Vocabulary

propaganda, vulgarity, establishment, recuperating, judicial, hysterical, premonition, clamored, kiosk



## Part IV: Chapters 21 - 22

### Summary

Part IV: "Between Life and Death"

Part IV begins with a statement about the dangers of guns that turn "love-filled homes into broken debris."

Chapter 21: "God, I Entrust Her to You"

Malala says that Usman Bhai Jan realizes that the girls have been shot and immediately drives to the Swat Central Hospital. Many people learn that Malala and her two classmates have been shot. Her father is talking to a group of educators and he receives a cell phone call but hands the phone to his friend Ahmad Shah who whispers that someone has shot at the school bus. Malala's father is afraid but tries to reassure himself, believing that it might have been a jealous boy who fires a shot into the air to "shame his beloved." There are hundreds of people there and he feels he owes them his presence, so he finishes his speech but doesn't remain to take questions. When he arrives at the hospital, the place is flooded with media representatives and, for the first time, he knows in his heart that Malala is at the hospital. One of Malala's favorite teachers arrives as well. Her name is Maryam and she pretends to be a relative so that she can remain at Malala's side. One of the doctors treating Malala says that the bullet "passed through" Malala's forehead, missing her brain, and that she is not in danger.

There are soon plans to move Malala to a larger hospital but the military steps in and takes control. They move Malala by helicopter to Peshwar and her father and Maryam go with her. Meanwhile, Malala's mother had been with her reading tutor at the time of the attack and is told that Malala is in an accident. Malala's mother believes Malala has injured her foot but soon women from the neighborhood converge on the house, the same way they would if someone died. Malala's mother prays, pledging to trust God with Malala's care.

Malala is soon taken to the Combined Military Hospital where Colonel Junaid takes over her care and begins to search for an exit wound from the bullet. He finds it near her left shoulder blade and announces to Ziauddin that bone fragments have entered Malala's brain. Ziauddin is immediately suspicious when the doctor says they won't operate "at this stage." Ziauddin asks for a civil physician he trusts but the military refuses, saying it would not look good.

Malala's mother arrives with Malala's younger brother, Atal, who is distraught at her condition. There are soon hundreds of people gathered around the hospital and Ziauddin is angry, believing they want to be on hand when Malala dies. Colonel Junaid announces that Malala's situation is becoming more serious and he makes the decision to cut away a piece of skull to allow room for the brain to swell. There is concern of



long-lasting consequences but Malala's mother refuses to believe God would allow that to happen. The doctor removes the bullet, some clots from the brain, and performs a tracheotomy. While it's still not certain Malala will survive, the Taliban claims responsibility and says that it's because Malala was advocating secularism. Ziauddin believes they are making these statements because Malala had listed Barack O'Bama as one of the people she admires most. The shooting was ordered by Fazlullah and two Swati men had shot her near an army checkpoint as a statement that they were not afraid of the military.

Two British doctors, Dr. Javid Kayani and Dr. Fiona Reynolds, are visiting Pakistan and are asked to help with Malala's care though the military is not pleased with the idea. A Pakistani official presents Malala's father with a passport for Malala.

Chapter 22: "Journey into the Unknown"

Dr. Fiona advises officials to get Malala to a better hospital if they want her to recover because the hospital is doing none of the things Dr. Fiona requested. Dr. Fiona arrives back at the hospital and tells Ziauddin she is qualified to oversee Malala's transfer to an army hospital in Rawalpindi for better care. Malala's parents and her brothers are housed in a hostel near the hospital under heavy guard. Dr. Fiona continues to insist that Malala be moved to another country where the after-care would be better but the Pakistani government refuses to allow America to be involved. It's finally decided that Malala will be moved to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham because the staff there often treat wounded soldiers. The logistics of the transfer become a nightmare until the rulers of the United Arab Emirates provides a jet that has a hospital on board.

Malala is to be moved on October 15. Her father can go with her but her mother and brothers won't be allowed to leave the country until some paperwork is complete. Her father decides to remain, fearing for the safety of his wife and sons. Dr. Fiona is assigned Malala's guardian until her family can join her.

## Analysis

In Chapter 21, Malala's father arrives at the hospital and notes that there are many people in the parking lot, including those from the media. It's at that point that he knows for certain that Malala is there. Malala says that she and her father are "comrades in arms" because they have spent so much time together, fighting against the injustices related to education. Malala says that her father had always believed that the Taliban would target him for being so outspoken. Ziauddin has spent some nights away from home, believing that he is making his family safer by not being with them. It's interesting that he feels his family is safer when he is away and Malala doesn't explain why the Taliban would know that he wasn't in the house at any given point in time. An important aspect of this is that Malala's father believes the Taliban have targeted Malala in order to silence both of them. He indicates that if Malala is dead, she won't be able to speak out any longer and that the Taliban seem to believe that Ziauddin will also stop speaking out. It's not explained why he believes this or if it's true.



Chapter 22 begins with the comment that Ziauddin believes that Malala will die. He becomes so convinced of this that he calls Malala's uncle with instructions to begin planning her funeral. Malala's parents are alternately certain that God will save her and fearful that she's going to die. She describes the rollercoaster of emotions that would be typical for any family with a critically injured child.

## Vocabulary

deteriorate, consciousness, drastic, miser, confiscated, heinous, consensus, impediment, adamant, botched



# Part V: Chapters 23 - Epilogue

## Summary

Part V: “A Second Life”

Part V begins with a verse that reads, “I am a patriot and I love my country, And for that I would gladly sacrifice all.”

Chapter 23: “The Girl Shot in the Head, Birmingham”

Malala wakes for the first time on October 16, a full week after the attack. She is afraid and can't speak but is comforted by a Muslim chaplain. One of the first messages Malala is able to convey is her fear about paying for the hospital stay. Dr. Fiona tells her not to worry but Malala continues. Malala thinks she needs to find work so she can help pay for the treatment she's receiving and for a phone call to her parents. She believes her father is probably selling their land to come up with money.

Days pass and Malala eventually talks on the phone to her father. When she learns that her parents are soon to join her, she asks that her father bring her books or buy new ones. She fears she is falling behind in her studies and believes she will return home by November, in time for the board tests. Ten days pass before Malala's family is allowed to leave Pakistan.

Chapter 24: “They Have Snatched Her Smile”

Malala's parents are more worried when they see her for the first time because a nerve at the side of her face has been damaged, leaving one side of her face drooping. Malala and her family learn that Ataulah Khan is the man who shot her. Malala is upset when she learns that the only two people arrested for her attack are the bus driver and the school accountant who had taken the call from Usman Bhai Jan with news of the shooting. Usman Bhai Jan is held by the army, which cited the need to have him available to “identify people.”

Malala's recovery continues and she undergoes more treatment, including surgery to repair the facial nerve. Terrible headaches plague her at first and when they begin to abate she spends a lot of time reading. Ziauddin is offered a post as an “education attache so he would have a salary to live on and a diplomatic passport.” This means the family won't have to seek asylum to remain in Britain. Malala says that her family is again together, which is very important to her even though her brother, Khushal, “was as annoying as always.” Malala talks regularly to her friends in Mingora. She undergoes another surgery to repair the missing skull piece and has a cochlear implant to help with her hearing.

Epilogue: “One Child, One Teacher, One Book, One Pen”



Malala writes it from Birmingham in August of 2013. Her family moves to a house but she says she doesn't fully feel at home. Malala knows that her mother, who is accustomed to taking in anyone who is hungry and who loves company, is now very lonely. By April, Malala had been sufficiently recovered to begin school. Malala talks about the differences, including that children don't fear being shot and that people respect the police and the government. On the day Malala turns sixteen, she addresses the United Nations. It's also on that day that Malala's mother first allows herself to be photographed. Though Malala wants to go back to Pakistan, her father says she should take advantage of the education and opportunities in Birmingham. She says that she is reminded of the attack each time she looks in the mirror. She completes the epilogue by saying, "I am Malala. My world has changed but I have not."

## Analysis

In Chapter 23, Malala learns that some eight thousand cards have arrived at the Birmingham Hospital from people concerned about her. She notes that there are offers to adopt her and seems amazed that people could believe she has no parents. It's not clear to Malala even at this point that her story has traveled around the world and that people in other countries are talking about her. She hears from many famous people, including activist and actress Angelina Jolie. There are boxes upon boxes of gifts as well, including teddy bears and candy. It's only when Malala learns about all this, and the millions who have pledged to pray for her recovery, that she realizes that the Taliban has created a global phenomenon with Malala's message of girls' education at the center.

In Chapter 24, Malala says that her family comes under scrutiny after her shooting. It seems impossible that people would believe the shooting anything other than genuine, but there are rumors that Ziauddin is the shooter, planning to injure Malala so severely that the family will have to live outside Pakistan.

The life Malala describes in Birmingham seems lonely and somewhat sad. She says her mother is greatly affected because she is no longer the center of a busy home where many guests drop in. Malala describes the many conveniences, such as the washing machine and cook stove, that they wouldn't have in Swat, but the family doesn't feel at home in Birmingham and she wants to return to Swat.

## Vocabulary

lamented, symmetrical, facial, inundated, obstacles, narrate, concave, disfigured, daunting, haven



# Important People

## Dr. Fiona

Dr. Fiona is the British physician who is working as a consultant in Pakistan when Malala is shot. Dr. Fiona becomes responsible for Malala's treatment and for her transfer to the hospital in Birmingham.

## Fazlullah

Fazlullah, a Taliban leader, begins recruiting support by preaching in moderation and keeping his teachings in touch with the Quran. His rise to power includes soliciting donations of time and money from people. Most comply with his solicitations. During her recovery, Malala learns that Fazullah was the one who ordered her killed.

## Benazir Bhutto

Benazir Bhutto is a Pakistani leader. She is female and believes in rights for women. She is exiled for a long period of time. Malala holds to the hope that things in her country will be better for women once Benazir Bhutto returns. They are heartbroken when Benazir Bhutto dies.

## Moniba

Moniba is Malala's best friend. Moniba is extremely intelligent. She is always on guard, fearing that her brothers will use any small infraction to make her stop attending school. Malala notes that she and Moniba often quarrel but always make up afterward.

## Maryam

Maryam is the teacher at Malala's school who travels with Malala and Ziauddin when they leave the Mingora hospital after Malala is shot. She pretends to be Malala's relative so that she can remain with Malala until her mother arrives.

## Khushal and Atal

Khushal and Atal are Malala's younger brothers. When they are born, Malala's grandfather offers to pay for a celebration, but Malala's father refuses because the grandfather didn't agree to pay for a celebration of Malala's birth.





## Usman Bhai Jan

Usman Bhai Jan is the man who is driving the “school bus” when Malala and her two friends are shot. He teases them most days, telling jokes or performing a magic trick. On the day Malala is shot, he immediately realizes what’s happened and rushes the girls to the hospital. He is later arrested and held, but not charged in the shooting. His arrest greatly upsets Malala and her family.

## Tor Pekai

Tor Pekai is Malala’s mother. She is completely uneducated and hates that fact. She is a true partner to her husband, taking care of a great deal of family business because he is always busy with school affairs and speaking out about his educational beliefs. She has begun tutoring just before Malala is shot, evidence that she also believes that education is important, even for women.

## Ziauddin Yousafzai

Ziauddin Yousafzai is Malala’s father. He is well educated and believes that education is important. While most men are disappointed with the birth of a daughter, he is excited and chooses Malala’s name. He spends a great deal of time with Malala and there’s no doubt that there’s a strong bond between them, at least partly because of their united front in speaking out for education. However, when Malala is killed, he refuses to leave his sons behind and travel to Britain with Malala, saying that his sons are equally important and that he can’t leave them in danger. He is also different from most men of his region because he loves his wife. Their marriage was not an arranged union. He isn’t strict as other men with the women in his life. Malala’s father sacrifices greatly to realize his dream of starting a school. He begins with a very small building and a partner and continues to work through hardships and threats, providing education for all. He never makes a great deal of money because he helps with expenses for those who can’t afford to send their children to school. He also believes in unity and unites other principals to create an organization for school officials. He believes he can force the government to stop demanding bribes for normal school operations if all the school principals stand together. He continues to stand up for his beliefs, even when others warn him that he could be killed for his outspoken attitude.

## Malala Yousafzai

Malala Yousafzai is a young girl who grows up in a village in Pakistan. She is very intelligent and takes great pride in her ability to learn. Malala is typically one of the three top girls in her class, and she relishes the competition. She is challenged to study hard, even when she is spending a great deal of time away from home and school, speaking out about the rights of young girls to have the same education that’s offered to boys. Malala believes in the basic tenants of the Muslim religion. She prays daily, though she



says it's only when serious situations arise that she prays as often as her mother wants. She always covers her head but refuses to cover her face as the Taliban requires. When the rules demanded by the Taliban conflict with the Muslim laws, Malala ignores them. Malala says the Muslim law does not require that women remain uneducated. She is outspoken on this point. She gains international attention, blogging about her experiences and granting many interviews to media outlets. Sometimes the requests for interviews and appearances interfere with her study time. She hates that conflict, but she refuses to be silenced. Even when she is threatened, she continues to speak out. Malala is so determined to get an education that she continues to attend school even when there is a ban on the practice. Malala and some of her friends sneak to school, hiding their books and dressing in everyday clothes instead of their school uniforms. Eventually, Malala is shot by a member of the Taliban. They claim the attack was because she wasn't abiding by Taliban law and that it had nothing to do with speaking out for girls' education.



# Objects/Places

## Birmingham, England

Where Malala and her family live in Birmingham, England, after Malala is shot. The threats against the family prevent them from returning home to Swat in Pakistan.

## Tuesday, October 9, 2012

Malala is shot on Tuesday, October 9, 2012, as she is returning home from school.

## Toyota Truck's Bed

A Toyota truck's bed has been converted into a school bus of sorts with a canvas cover and seats that run along the back of the bed. This is where Malala is shot.

## Pink, Plastic Cell Phone

Malala believes that her pink, plastic cell phone was taken by a little girl in the neighborhood. Malala gets very angry at the girl and takes several of the girl's possessions. When Malala is caught by her parents, she is upset at having disappointed her father. As a result, she pushes aside most beautiful things from that point forward. She is determined that she won't allow those things to distract her from the important aspects of life.

## Jahid

Jahid is a religious or holy war that some Pakistanis say is supported by the American CIA.

## Khushal School

The Khushal School was established by Malala's father. Malala attends the school.

## Queen Elizabeth Hospital

Queen Elizabeth Hospital is in Birmingham, England. This is the hospital where Malala was transferred for care after being shot in Pakistan.



## **Gul Makai**

Gul Makai is the pseudonym used by Malala when she blogs about her life under the Taliban rule.

## **Mingora, Swat Valley, Pakistan**

Mingora, Swat Valley, Pakistan is a beautiful country, according to Malala. She describes “gushing waterfalls and crystal-clear lakes,” and she says there is a sign that says “Welcome to Paradise” at the entrance of the valley. Malala describes the changes that arise as a result of the military strife and the armies’ misuse of the land. When heavy rains come, a mountainside is washed away so that there is flooding and mudslides that wreck many homes and buildings. There are several villages in Swat, including Mingora. Mingora is the main city in the region of Swat, this is where the Khushal School is located and where Malala lives with her family. Malala says that her cousins who live in a more rural village believe she is sophisticated because she lives in the city but she says the town is really not that large. Over the course of Malala’s life, the town is beset by natural disaster, including flooding that takes a long time to clear away. Pakistan is the country where Malala is born and where she lives until she is shot by the Taliban at fifteen. The country torn by strife, mostly religious though there are political issues as well. There is a great deal of information about the country, its geography and its people.

## **Swat Central Hospital**

Swat Central Hospital is the first place Malala is taken for treatment after being shot on her way home from school.



# Themes

## Speaking in Favor of Education

Malala lives in a society in which women are treated as inferior beings without the right to an education. Malala is raised with the idea that education is vital to her future, and she holds to that hope even when her life is threatened because of her stand on the subject. Malala is so determined to continue her education that she sneaks to school, hiding her books and abandoning her school uniform. For a time, Malala pretends to be younger than she actually is, attending school secretly. When it appears there will be laws prohibiting school for girls altogether, Malala becomes very vocal on the subject. She is interviewed by dozens of media outlets. She says that it's vital for women to have an education. Malala points out that there is a demand for female doctors and teachers but that they want to refuse girls' opportunities for education. Ziauddin says that people must speak out for what's right. Malala says that even when the family is receiving threats, she and her father continue to speak out for what they believe to be right. While Malala continues to speak out, she repeatedly says that the Taliban wouldn't hurt her because she is just a child. She is more fearful for her father than for herself. She seems to believe that she won't be targeted by the Taliban.

## The Role of Women

Malala sets out to tell the story of her life in Pakistan. The traditional role of women in her culture is an important part of that story. Malala's father tells stories of his life as a young boy. The girls of the family were given the less desirable and less nutritious food. Ziauddin says the boys and men of the family got eggs, milk, and the best cuts of the chicken. He says he was aware of the distinction from the time he was young. While he apparently doesn't stand up against the differences as a youngster, he later makes a stand toward equality for girls and women, including education.

Malala says the birth of a daughter is not heralded as a good thing for the family because the woman's role is to serve by cooking, cleaning, and giving birth to babies. They are to be wives and mothers, and they are traditionally treated as little more than property. The birth of a boy, however, prompts a feast and celebration. Malala's parents are poor when she is born and can't afford the traditional celebration. Malala's grandfather refuses to pay for the celebration because she is a girl. When Malala's brothers are born later, the grandfather offers to pay but Ziauddin refuses, insistent on treating the children the same. Malala also talks about the requirements of women to remain separate from men and to defer to men in all aspects of life. She cites the fact that a woman is not supposed to shop at the bazaar without a male member of the household present, even if that member is a small boy. There is evidence that some families are seeking to make changes but the social stigma associated with those changes make the going slow.



## The Taliban

Malala points out that the Taliban's rise to power is relatively slow. The man named Fazlullah arrives in the valley with teachings that hold true to the Quran, and he garners a great deal of support as he begins to speak out through a radio program. His message slowly becomes one of control rather than religious teaching. However, by then the people of Swat have come to trust him. By the time the message is obvious, Fazlullah's group - the Taliban - have become an ingrained part of the life for many in the valley. Malala tells the story of a teacher who leaves his duties at the school owned by her father to work for Fazlullah on a specific day because all able-bodied men are supposed to give their time to Fazlullah's cause. Ziauddin says that the lives of the Pakistani people could change dramatically if the people would be diligent toward things that truly mattered, such as cleaning up a heavily polluted river or building schools. Malala talks about the rumors circulating about the Taliban, including that they had support from other countries and the Pakistani government. Shortly before Malala is shot, she notes that there are government military checkpoints set up just a mile or so from Taliban checkpoints and that the two groups act as if the other doesn't exist despite the government's assurances that the Taliban will be squashed.

# Styles

## Structure

The book opens with a Prologue which is a brief description of the day Malala is shot.

The book is divided into five “parts.” Part I is titled “Before the Taliban.” It includes eight chapters. In this part, Malala introduces her family and talks about many aspects of her life. It is in Part I that Malala sees children rummaging through a trash heap. She wants to find a way for them to attend school.

Part II is titled “The Valley of Death.” Chapters 9 through 15 appear in this part. Malala describes the rise of the Taliban and other aspects of her life, including the family’s decision to leave their home for a short time.

Part Three is titled, “Three Girls, Three Bullets.” Chapters 16 through 20 are in this part. In this section, Malala describes the day leading up to the moment she’s attacked. The Taliban soldier who shoots her also wounds two other girls in the back of the truck, which serves as a school bus for the children in Malala’s school.

Part IV has no title and there are only two chapters. They are titled “God, I Entrust Her to You” and “Journey into the Unknown.” In this part, Malala’s condition is serious. When her father asks if she’ll live, the answer is that only God knows.

Part V is titled “A Second Life.” It contains two chapters. In this part, Malala is transferred to the Birmingham, England hospital for continued care. Her parents arrive at the hospital and discover that Malala’s face is seriously damaged. This part also includes the Epilogue.

The book also includes maps of the country showing Malala’s home and the neighboring villages. There are about a dozen photos at the end of the book, including Malala’s family, Malala at school, Malala addressing the United Nations, Malala in the hospital, and images of Malala’s village. The village images include the truck she was riding in when she was shot.

The book also includes a glossary of terms that might not be familiar to English readers and a detailed list of “Important Events in Pakistan and Swat.”

The book ends with information about a fund established in Malala’s name, acknowledgements, and brief biographies of the authors, Malala and a journalist Christina Lamb.

## Perspective

## Tone



## Quotes

My mother was worried about me, but the Taliban had never come for a girl and I was more concerned they would target my father, as he was always speaking out against them.

-- Malala (Prologue paragraph 13)

**Importance:** Malala is introducing herself and her family to the reader. This is the first time she says that she never expected the Taliban to attack her, but she repeats that throughout the book though she admits to being threatened and sometimes being afraid. Malala also talks about her own message, that girls have a right to education. She says that she can't believe that anyone would find a threat in that.

I was a girl in a land where rifles are fired in celebration of a son, while daughters are hidden away behind a curtain, their role in life simply to prepare food and give birth to children.

-- Malala (chapter 1 paragraph 1)

**Importance:** Malala is explaining that girls are not revered in their culture and that most people felt sorry for her father. However, Malala's father is not typical of Pashtun men because he is elated with Malala's birth.

Some of our religious people saw Osama bin Laden as a hero. In the bazaar you could buy posters of him on a white horse and boxes of sweets with his picture on them.

-- Malala (chapter 6 paragraph 18)

**Importance:** Contrary to what people outside Pakistan believe, not everyone in Pakistan approved of bin Laden's actions. Malala goes on to say that some people justify the attacks on the United States by saying that Americans have mistreated other countries. Malala says those people are ignoring the fact that the victims of the Twin Towers attack were innocent people.

I was ten when the Taliban came to our valley.

-- Malala (chapter 9 paragraph 1)

**Importance:** The significance of this quote is that many American readers don't realize that the Taliban rose to power just as other empires and leaders have risen to power. The people of Malala's town have not always dealt with the religious fanaticism of the Taliban. She goes on to say that she and her friend had been reading the novels about vampires and that it seemed the Taliban's arrival was just like that of a group of vampires.

All the other girls in my class wanted to be doctors, but I decided I wanted to be an inventor and make an anti-Taliban machine which would sniff them out and destroy their guns.

-- Malala (chapter 11 paragraph 7)





**Importance:** Malala has just related stories of life at the mercy of the Taliban. She says the soldiers enforce ridiculously strict laws, such as the length of a man's beard. Malala continues to hold to her freedom, hoping that she will be able to follow her dreams as an adult. She sees the Taliban as a major obstacle to that.

If you want to resolve a dispute or come out from conflict, the very first thing is to speak the truth. If you have a headache and tell the doctor you have a stomachache, how can the doctor help?

-- Ziauddin (chapter 11 paragraph 14)

**Importance:** Ziauddin is talking to Malala, telling her that the truth is the most important aspect of peace. He is constantly challenging Fazlullah during this time, countering Fazlullah's ridiculous rules with facts from the Quran and arguing that Fazlullah is basing his rules on misinformation.

We people of Swat were first seduced by the Taliban, then killed by them and now blamed for them.

-- Ziauddin (chapter 16 paragraph 15)

**Importance:** Malala and Ziauddin have just discovered the letter left in the school office by the military. That letter blames the people of Swat for allowing the Taliban to take hold. Malala's father is smart enough to see that the Taliban rose to power slowly and the people weren't initially aware of the hidden agendas behind the group's façade.

I didn't get a chance to answer their question "Who is Malala?" or I would have explained to them why they should let us girls go to school as well as their own sisters and daughters.

-- Malala (chapter 20 paragraph 25)

**Importance:** Malala is referring to the moment before she's shot. The man who shot her asked that question. None of the girls pointed out Malala. However, someone looked at her and the gunman guessed her identity.

He cries when I push my hair to the side and he sees the scar on my head, and he cries when he wakes from an afternoon nap to hear his children's voices in the garden and realizes with relief that one of them is still mine. He knows people say it's his fault that I was shot, that he pushed me to speak up like a tennis dad trying to create a champion, as if I don't have a mind of my own.

-- Malala (Epilogue paragraph 10)

**Importance:** Malala is talking about her father and she refers to the fact that some people blame Ziauddin for the family's current situation. It's easy to see that Malala's attitude about education was instilled in her when she was very young, wandering through the school as if it were her own personal playground. Malala was raised to think for herself, and there's little doubt that she made her choices on her own. She says that her parents never told her to stop her education and she only stopped attending school



when it was closed. An important side of this is that Malala and her parents knew there was some risk. However, they firmly believed that the Taliban would not attack her because she was still a little girl.

We started going to school again, dressed in ordinary clothes and hiding our books under our shawls. It was risky, but it was the only ambition I had back then.

-- Malala (chapter 14 paragraph 5)

**Importance:** Malala says this when Fazlullah allows girls up to fourth grade to return to school after classes for girls had been banned for a period of time. Malala also explains that she is actually in fifth grade at this point; but, she and some of her classmates pretend to be younger so they can return. A teacher named Maryam agrees to teach them.

We felt like the Taliban saw us as little dolls to control, telling us what to do and how to dress. I thought if God wanted us to be like that He wouldn't have made us all different.

-- Malala (chapter 10 paragraph 4)

**Importance:** Malala is chaffing under the rules of the Taliban. By this time, she says there are so many restrictions that they are even told how to enjoy themselves. A favorite children's board game is even banned. She hears stories of the Taliban soldiers who hear children laughing and rush into a home to destroy the game board.

He believed that lack of education was the root of all Pakistan's problems. Ignorance allowed politicians to fool people and bad administrators to be re-elected.

-- Malala (chapter 3 paragraph 3)

**Importance:** Malala's father is a strong proponent of education. It's interesting that he married a woman with no formal education. Malala's mother was encouraged by her family to attend school, but she dropped out after attending just a short time because she saw her young girl cousins remaining at home to play.



# Topics for Discussion

## Birth of a Daughter

Describe how most people would have reacted at the birth of a daughter. How does Malala's father react? Why do you think he is different?

## Structure of the Book

What is the purpose of the Prologue and the Epilogue in most books? What pieces of information are presented in these sections in this book?

## Malala's Message

What is Malala's true message? What accusations does the Taliban make against her?

## Shooting of Malala

List details describing the day Malala is shot.

## Blog Diary

Who inspires Malala to write the blog about her life in Pakistan? Why do you think that she agrees to write it?

## The Rise of the Taliban

Describe briefly how the Taliban come to power in Malala's country.

## Dreams

What are the dreams of most of the girls in Malala's class for their future? What is the reality that most of them will face?

## The End

Malala says at the end of the story that she is "still Malala" but that her world has changed. What do you think she meant by this?



## Natural Disasters

What natural disasters does Malala describe in this story? Why do you think she includes the information about the natural disasters?

## Culture

Give at least three details about Malala's home and her culture.