

# Malala: Champion of Education



Growing up in Pakistan, Malala Yousafzai loved school. She won over 45 trophies for exams and competitions. But when Malala was about 10, life in her hometown of Mingora began to change. A militant group called the Taliban took control of the area. Women were banned from the market. For a short time, girls weren't even allowed to go to school. Hundreds of school buildings in the region were bombed. People were killed or beaten for disobeying or criticizing the rules.

Malala and her father, Ziauddin, spoke out in support of education. She was interviewed on TV and radio. In 2009, at age 11, she wrote an anonymous blog for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) about life under the Taliban.

Ziauddin received threats. When Malala was about 15, the Taliban announced that she should be killed! Her father suggested that they stop their work, but Malala said, "We can't stop now."

## Life-Changing Day

On October 9, 2012, Malala was riding home on her school bus when two men stepped in front of it. One jumped on and leaned into the back. "Who is Malala?" he asked.

No one answered, but a few girls looked in Malala's direction. The man fired three shots: crack! crack! crack!

Malala had surgery at a nearby hospital and later went into a coma. When she woke up a week after the shooting, she was in a hospital in England. Her head hurt terribly. Her face was swollen and bruised. She couldn't hear or see well. A bullet had grazed her temple near her left eye and went down to her left shoulder. Her friend Shazia had been shot in the collarbone and hand, and Kainat, another friend, was shot in the arm, but they were going to be okay. A doctor told Malala, "It's a miracle you're alive."

People from around the world sent 8,000 cards, letters, and gifts. Malala needed several surgeries and months of physical therapy, but she made an amazing recovery.

## Global Heroine

Malala and her family now live in England. It's not safe for them to return to Pakistan. On her 16th birthday, Malala spoke at the United Nations in New York for Malala Day. She said, "Today is the day of every woman, every boy, and every girl who has raised their voice for their rights . . . One child, one teacher, one pen, and one book can change the world."



Malala spoke at the UN to over 500 youth leaders in July 2013. She said, "We must believe in the power and the strength of our words. Our words can change the world."

At 17, she became the youngest person to ever win the Nobel Peace Prize, shared with Kailash Satyarthi of India, an activist for children's rights.

Today, violence continues in Pakistan. In December 2014, the Taliban opened fire on a school, killing 132 students and nine staff members. Malala said, "I am heartbroken . . . I, along with millions of others around the world, mourn these children, my brothers and sisters—but we will never be defeated."

When she's not in school, Malala writes books, appears in films and videos, and gives speeches. She and her father started the Malala Fund to support girls' rights. Malala wrote, "I think of the world as a family. When one of us is suffering, we must all pitch in and help . . . The Taliban have shot me. But they can only shoot a body. They cannot shoot my dreams, they cannot kill my beliefs, and they cannot stop my campaign to see every girl and every boy in school."