



MALALA YOUSAFZAI

The girl who stood up for an education for all!



When Malala was born in Mingora, Pakistan, her father was determined she would have every opportunity that a boy would have. She loved getting an education, but when a hateful regime came to power, girls were no longer allowed to go to school. Malala spoke out in public about this, which made her a target for violence. She was shot in the left side of her head and woke up in hospital in England. Finally, after long months and many surgeries, Malala recovered, and resolved to become an activist for girls' education. Now a recent Oxford graduate, Malala continues to fight for a world where all girls can learn and lead.

EARLY LIFE.

Malala Yousafzai was born in the Swat Valley region of Pakistan on July 12, 1997. She grew up in the city of Mingora with her two younger brothers. Her family practiced the religion of Islam and was part of an ethnic group known as the Pashtuns.

Malala's early childhood was one of happiness and peace. Her father was a teacher who ran several schools. Many Pakistani girls did not attend school, but this was not the case with Malala. Her father ran a school for girls where Malala attended. Malala loved learning and going to school. She dreamt of one day becoming a teacher, a doctor, or a politician. She was a bright girl. She learned three different languages including Pashto, English, and Urdu. Her father always encouraged her to learn more and taught her that she could accomplish anything.



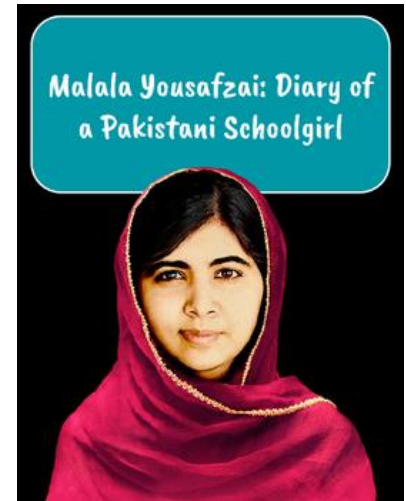
GIRLS SCHOOLS ARE SHUT DOWN.

Around the time Malala was ten years old, the Taliban began to take over the region where she lived. The Taliban were strict Muslims who demanded that all people follow Islamic Sharia law. They said that women were to stay at home. If a woman left her home, she was to wear a burqa (a garment that covers the body, head, and face) and must be accompanied by a male relative.

As the Taliban gained more control, they began to enforce new laws. Women would not be allowed to vote or have jobs. There would be no dancing, television, movies, or music. Eventually, the Taliban demanded that the girls' schools be shut down. Girls' schools that were not shut down were burned or destroyed.



About this time, Malala's father was approached by the BBC to get a female student to write about her life under Taliban rule. Despite being worried about the safety of his family, Malala's father agreed to let Malala write a blog for the BBC. The blog was called *Diary of a Pakistani Schoolgirl*. Malala wrote under the pen name "Gul Makai", a heroine from a Pashtun folktale. Malala soon became famous for writing her blog. She also began to speak in public about the treatment of the Taliban. War broke out in the Swat region as the Pakistani government began to fight back against the Taliban. Eventually, the government took back control of the area and Malala was able to return to school.



ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION OF MALALA

The Taliban were not happy with Malala. Even though the fighting had ended, and the schools were open again, there were still Taliban throughout the city. Malala was told to stop speaking out and received numerous death threats.

Sadly, on October 9th, 2012, Malala, aged fifteen, and her friends were on the school bus travelling home from school. Suddenly a masked Taliban gunman demanded to board the bus. The gunman ordered the schoolgirls to identify Malala, threatening to shoot all of the passengers on the bus. He then shot Malala in the head as well as shooting two other schoolgirls.

The bullet struck Malala on the left side of her head; the bullet travelled in to her neck. She woke up a week later in a hospital in England. Miraculously, Malala not only survived but suffered no brain damage or other significant side effects, despite enduring several surgical procedures. Astonishingly, Malala was back in a classroom in Birmingham, England six months after the attempted assassination on her life.

CONTINUING HER WORK.

It was too dangerous for Malala to return to Pakistan so she continued her education in the UK. She also continued her campaign for education rights and in 2014 - aged just 17 - Malala became the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. In 2020 she graduated from Oxford University.

Malala continues to be an activist and has received many accolades from around the world recognising her work. In 2013 Yousafzai won the United Nations Human Rights Prize, which is given out every five years. She was named one of Time magazine's most-influential people in 2013. Yousafzai also wrote a memoir with the help of another writer. The book, *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban*, was published in 2013.

Yousafzai was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013 and won the award in 2014. She was the youngest person to ever receive the Nobel Peace Prize. She shared the award with another children's rights activist.

In 2017 Yousafzai released a picture book called *Malala's Magic Pencil*. The book is an autobiography directed toward young readers. That same year she started studying at the University of Oxford in England.



FASCINATING FACTS

- She was named after a famous Afghani poet and warrior named Malalai of Maiwand.
- Malala was the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. She was in chemistry class when she found out.
- The United Nations named July 12th as "World Malala Day."
- She once said "When the whole world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful."

FIND OUT MORE

<https://www.ducksters.com/biography/womenleaders/malalayousafzai.php>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/school-radio/assemblies-ks1-ks2-malala-yousafzai/zh79g7h>

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS:

1. Where was Malala Yousafzai born?
2. What did Malala Yousafzai's father do for work?
3. What group took control of the region where Malala Yousafzai lived when she was around ten years old?
4. How did Malala Yousafzai first become famous?
5. What was Malala Yousafzai's pen name?

