



IN-DEPTH
STUDY
GUIDE

I AM MALALA

MALALA YOUSAFZAI
AND CHRISTINA LAMB

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PLOT OVERVIEW

Malala Yousafzai was born a little different. From the beginning, her father, Ziauddin, treated her differently than most fathers in Swat, Pakistan treated their daughters. He put her on the family tree, a position usually reserved for the men in the family and nicknamed her *Jani Mun*, or soulmate.

Her father worked hard to found a successful school. He met roadblocks several times, but eventually opened a school he could maintain. Ziauddin had longed to learn ever since he was a child. Though he once wanted to become a militant Muslim, he realized his error. Without much support from his family, he went away to college. There, he became a great public speaker and debater. His education pushed him to pursue public debate and advocacy. Through his desire to bring change to his country, he spoke about education, the environment, and government. He ruffled feathers, but never backed down.

The Swat Valley in Pakistan faced many challenges throughout Malala's life, including an earthquake, a takeover by the Taliban, a military operation, and flooding. Infrastructure was ruined and culture destroyed when Buddhas were blown up and people murdered. The Taliban and others threatened Malala and her family's beliefs about education and women's rights. With the increasing challenges faced by the valley came increased pressure on Malala and her father to stop advocating for education. Even Malala's extended family sees her as a "modern" girl and fears for her safety.

Malala works hard to learn. She competes with two of her classmates and tries to beat them at everything. When she is unable to be the best in the class, she is sad and vows to try harder. Eventually, she understands it is not about the grades, but about what she is learning. As she gets older, she becomes more involved with the media. She anonymously blogs for BBC about living under the Taliban. She is the star of a documentary featuring girls attending school during a Taliban ban on female education. She even becomes a spokesperson for girls' education, with media outlets looking to her for statements and interviews.

The attention on her and her family results in threats. Everyone assumes her father will become a target. His friends, also outspoken, are shot one by one. He stays away from the house sometimes to keep the family protected. However, little did the family know, Malala has become the real target, despite her youth.

On the way to school one day, Malala's bus is stopped. She is shot in the head. The flurry after the gunshots moves her from one hospital to another. She goes from Pakistan to England. There, she slowly recovers. Her family joins her. Unfortunately, they have yet to return to Pakistan for fear of another attack. The situation in Swat has gotten worse.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES AND ANALYSES

Prologue-Chapter 3

Prologue: The Day My World Changed

Malala Yousafzai begins her story by saying, “I come from a country that was created at midnight. When I almost died it was just after midday” (3). She describes her homeland and contrasts the modern conveniences of England with the less-than-modern difficulties of Swat Valley in Pakistan. On Tuesday, October 9, 2012, Malala’s life changed. She was on the way to school. The school was founded by her father before she was born.

Malala explains her father used to wake her up for school. His nickname for her is *Jani Mun*, which means “soulmate.” In her house, she keeps “gold-colored plastic cups and trophies” because only “a few times had I not come top [sic]” (6). Although the school was not too far away, her mother feared for Malala’s safety. Instead of walking, Malala took a bus. This fear stemmed from the murder of her father’s fellow campaigner Zahid Khan. Even Malala worried she might be shot, although she did not consider her worry to be the same as fear.

On the way to school one day, the bus is stopped. A man asks the driver if this is the Khushal School bus. The driver says yes. When the man asks about the children on the bus, the driver directs him to the office to get information. Another man hops onto the back of the bus and demands, “Who is Malala?” Although no one says anything, the other girls look at her. The man shoots her three times, one bullet hitting her, and the other two bullets hitting two other girls.

Part One: Before the Taliban

Chapter 1 Summary: A Daughter is Born

“I arrived at dawn as the last star blinked out. We Pashtuns see this as an auspicious sign” (13). Malala is born, but no one congratulates her father because the birth of a daughter is not celebratory in Swat. One of Malala’s father’s cousins comes to celebrate the birth. With him, the cousin brings a family tree containing only the men of the family. Her father “took the tree, drew a line like a lollipop from his name and at

the end of it he wrote, ‘Malala’” (13). The cousin is in disbelief, but Malala’s father does not care. Malala is named after a great Afghani heroine.

Malala explains that she was born in Swat, a beautiful area full of flowers and trees. Although Swat was a part of Pakistan, it retained autonomy. Before Islam came to Swat in the eleventh century, Swat residents often followed Buddhism. The religious backbone created a region of reverent followers. Malala paints a picture of her father writing poems about temples and mosques side by side.

Malala’s family has humble beginnings. Her father and one of his friends founded a school, and the family was quite poor because of the cost. However, despite the undesirable financial situation, Malala’s parents’ relationship began in an unexpected way. Although most marriages were arranged, Malala describes her parents’ marriage as a “love match” (21). Her mother’s father was not impressed and refused to accept the proposal, at first. However, Malala’s father did not give up, and eventually, the marriage was agreed upon.

Malala further describes her parents’ relationship as unusual. Her father shares his thoughts and fears with her mother, something unheard of: “Most Pashtun men never do this, as sharing problems with women is seen as weak” (22).

Malala finishes a brief history of her people. She tells of her ancestors coming to Swat after helping an emperor win back his throne. Unfortunately, the emperor was persuaded by his friends to remove the Yousafzai (Malala’s ancestors and tribe) because they were too powerful. He agreed and slaughtered hundreds of chiefs. Two escaped and found themselves in Swat, where they decided to rebuild. The Yousafzai built a reputation and cycled through leaders before finally settling on Badshah Sahib, a man who eventually brought peace to their valley.

Chapter 2 Summary: My Father the Falcon

Malala tells her father’s story, beginning with a frustrating impediment he worked to fix: his voice. “A stutter was a terrible thing for a man who so loved words and poetry” (27). Her grandfather often became frustrated with her father, telling him to get his words out. Rather than let the problem dictate his life, her father entered a public speaking contest as a teenager.

While he attended school, his sisters stayed home. “School wasn’t the only thing my aunts missed out on. In the morning when my father was given a bowl of cream with his tea, his sisters were given only tea. If there were eggs, they would only be for the boys” (29).

As a child, her father witnessed Zia ul-Haq’s rise to power. He took over Pakistan, executed an elected prime minister, and demanded support “because he was pursuing Islamic principles” (30). Further, ul-Haq’s control resulted in severe restrictions for women. After the Russians invaded Afghanistan, boys in her father’s district went off to fight. Jihad became a regular idea, perpetuated, according to her father, by the CIA—textbooks from an American university taught arithmetic through fighting.

When her father became a teenager, he dreamed of becoming a jihadist. “For a while his Muslim identity seemed more important than anything else in his life” (34). However, after Malala’s father met her mother’s family, his leanings shifted. He became interested in going to school. Despite choosing a good option for his future, his father encouraged older students to hold on to old books rather than buying new books. At the public speaking event, her father took the stage and commanded attention. He did not stutter once. Finally, her grandfather was proud of her father.

Chapter 3 Summary: Growing Up in a School

Malala begins to tell her mother’s story and continues her father’s story. Her mother’s family encouraged her to go to school. However, after leaving for school several times and seeing her cousins stay at home to play, Malala’s mother decided to stop going. She regretted her decision to quit after she met Malala’s father. Malala’s father believed “there was nothing more important than knowledge” (41). He worked hard to become a teacher despite his father’s dream of him becoming a doctor.

Her grandfather refused to fund her father’s education. Regardless, her father found a way to pay for it himself. He traveled and “It was in Spal Bandit that... [he] came across women who had great freedom and were not hidden away as in his own village” (44). When he arrived at college, Malala’s father lucked out—he was able to attend student organizations, which were once banned under General Zia. He became a good debater and speaker.

When he spoke, Malala's father went against the grain. While others complained and petitioned against Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* because of his supposed anti-Islamic writings, Malala's father suggested: "First, let's read the book and then why not respond with our own book" (46). After he graduated, he began working as an English teacher. He soon partnered with a friend and hoped to open his own school. His first school failed, "which perhaps should have made them think twice" (47).

He followed his passion and opened yet another school. He encountered difficulties when he realized government officials expected bribes. In response, Malala's father founded an organization of school principals. They spoke out against bribes and in favor of making education accessible. Soon after founding a school, Malala's mother moved in with her father. After that, Malala's mother became pregnant. The baby was stillborn, and Malala's father continued to lose money.

A flood destroyed their home and school, but Malala's father did not despair. Soon, Malala was born on July 12, 1997. Her father's partner remarked: "Malala was a lucky girl... When she was born our luck changed" (55). Her father opened another school. Malala grew and began spending time in the classrooms. Their life, however, was about to change in another way. Word came in that Muslim terrorists had flown planes into the World Trade Center in New York City.

Prologue – Chapter 3 Analysis

From the beginning of Malala's story, perseverance is an important theme. She tells her father's story, a man who persists through hardships despite harsh realities. He persists after being rejected by her mother's family, and he eventually wins her mother's hand in marriage. Similarly, although her grandfather did not support her father's college pursuits, refusing to fund his college tuition. Despite this, Malala's father persevered. Once out of school, he finds it difficult to keep a school running but refuses to give up. Perseverance, it seems, is a Yousafzai trait. Her ancestors escaped slaughter and founded a new society in Swat. After several leaders failed, a king brought peace to the valley.

Going against the grain runs in the family, too. The prologue follows Malala from her birth to the moment she is shot. One detail she mentions in the moments before her injuries is: "I was the only girl with my face not covered" (9). Malala is raised in an unusual home. Her father, Ziauddin, "is different from most Pashtun men" (13). These differences permeate his life and story. He questioned his teachers as a child,

something looked down upon in traditional Pakistani society. He believes in thinking outside the box, questioning things, and creating an individual opinion. Similarly, he shares his thoughts and fears with Malala's mother, something equally unheard of. To top it off, he adds Malala to an all-male family tree after she is born. Fighting societal trends becomes a family affair.

Chapters 4-8

Chapter 4 Summary: The Village

Malala became close with her paternal grandfather, who she calls *Baba*. During holidays, the family travels to see his village by bus. The paddy fields and lush green orchards turn to chemical-laden streams. The village sat between the White Mountain and the Black Mountain. Malala says her father thought the White Mountain was “a symbol of peace for our land, a white flag at the end of our valley” (62). She describes the village as a poor, crumbling place.

Malala also describes the differences between her and her cousins. “My cousins made fun of me for my city ways” (64). She wore shoes, read books, and had a different accent. “They thought I was modern because I came from town” (64). Her cousins and she play marriage—putting makeup on and marrying one of the girls away. “Once [the bride] was ready, [she] would start crying and we would stroke her hair and try to convince her not to worry. ‘Marriage is a part of life,’ we said” (65).

The women in the village cover their faces. Malala does not. “One of my male cousins was angry and asked my father, ‘Why isn’t she covered?’ He replied, ‘She’s my daughter. Look after your own affairs.’ But some of the family thought people would gossip about us and say we were not properly following *Pashtunwali*” (66). Despite the injustices Malala sees other women facing, her father assures her things were worse for women in Afghanistan—girls’ schools were burned. Her father further assures her by saying, “I will protect your freedom, Malala. Carry on with your dreams” (68).

Chapter 5 Summary: Why I Don’t Wear Earrings and Pashtuns Don’t Say Thank You

“By the age of seven I was used to being the top of my class” (69). Malala competes with her good friend, Moniba. When a new girl, Malka-e-Noor joins the class, she thinks little of it, until Malka-e-Noor receives top marks on the year-end exams.

The incident hurts Malala, and she cried. Around the same time, Malala and her family moved to a different neighborhood. She meets Safina, a younger girl.

Malala plays with a fake cellphone her father bought her. It disappears, and one day, Safina plays with one that looks like Malala's. Malala begins to steal Safina's things and finds it thrilling. However, she is caught and her mother refuses to speak to her. "It's horrible to feel unworthy in the eyes of your parents" (71).

After that day, Malala did not steal or lie. She stops wearing jewelry. "What are these baubles which tempt me? Why should I lose my character for a few metal trinkets?" (72). Her father comforts her by talking about the mistakes others have made.

Malala enters a public speaking event. Her father writes her speech. "We thought speaking in English meant you were more intelligent. We were wrong of course. It does not matter what language you choose, the important thing is the words you use to express yourself" (78). Malala loses the event to Moniba. Instead of sadness, Malala realizes she must sometimes lose.

Chapter 6 Summary: Children of the Rubbish Mountain

Malala's family moves again as the school attracts more students. The increase in attendees meant Malala's family could buy a TV. Her favorite show features a boy with a magic pencil. "At night I would pray, 'God, give me Sanju's pencil. I won't tell anyone. Just leave it in my cupboard. I will use it to make everyone happy'" (80). In particular, Malala wants to help the children who rummage through the rubbish dump. Malala begs her father to give the children free entrance to school. Unfortunately, her father explains they were likely their family's lifelines.

However, her father usually gave away free spots. "Giving places to poor children didn't just mean my father lost their fees. Some of the richer parents took their children out of the school when they realized they were sharing classrooms with the sons and daughters of people who cleaned their homes or stitched their clothes" (83). Her father does not make much money. Regardless, he finds time to promote other endeavors. "Aside from corruption and bad government, my father's main concern in those days was the environment" (84). Malala describes him promoting peace and education through his organization. He also writes poetry about controversial topics.

After 9/11 the Pashtuns found themselves torn between two evils. On one side is the Taliban, and on the other is the Americans bombing Afghanistan. Malala points out some people called Osama bin Laden a hero, but she suggests they forgot “the Holy Quran clearly says it is wrong to kill” (86).

Despite the global issues enclosing around the valley, Malala and her father focus on local issues. “I was more concerned with matters closer to home—our own street to be exact. I told my friends at school about the rubbish dump children and that we should help” (88). She writes a letter to God, hoping He would help, and puts the letter in the river with the hope it would reach God.

Chapter 7 Summary: The Mufti Who Tried to Close Our School

Conflict arises regarding her father’s school. A religious authority, a mullah named Ghulamullah “called himself a *mufti*, which means he is an Islamic scholar and authority on Islamic law” (90). The man watched girls coming and going from the school each day. Malala’s father fears the man watching the school is an ominous sign. Ghulamullah reaches out to the property owner and accuses Ziauddin of running a *haram*(forbidden) school. The owner refuses to take the building away and tells Malala’s father to watch out for the mullah.

Malala turns her narrative to her country’s history. “It could hardly have been a bloodier beginning,” she says (91). Muslims flooded into the country from India and Hindus ran away to India. Many died on their way to cross new borders. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, their country’s founder, made a speech before independence, saying, “You are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed—it has nothing to do with the business of the state” (92). Despite the founding words, the country remained split and at war with itself. “Most Pakistanis are Sunnis like us—more than 80 percent—but within that we are again many groups” (93).

The *mufti* gathers several elders and influential leaders and brings them to Malala’s house. To Malala’s father, the man argues, “A girl is so sacred she should be in purdah, and so private that there is no lady’s name in the Quran, as God doesn’t want her to be named” (94). Her father points out that Maryam’s (Mary’s) name is in the Quran, and he tells the other men that the *mufti* refuses to greet him in the streets. The other men explain they thought he was an infidel, but they notice all the Qurans in his house. Her father explains he will have the girls enter from another entrance. It

appeases everyone except the *mufti*, but he leaves. The hypocrisy of it all? The *mufti*'s niece attends the school.

General Musharraf becomes the military leader and Malala considers him different from past generals. He “abolished the law that stated that for a woman to prove she was raped, she had to produce four male witnesses” (96). The new government banned CDs and DVDs. They also “insisted women cover their heads. It was as if they wanted to remove all traces of womankind from public” (97).

Soon, a local militant leader is bombed by the U.S. “Whatever you thought about Nek Mohammad, we were not at war with the Americans and were shocked that they would launch attacks from the sky on our soil” (100). A local cleric “announced that the deaths would be avenged by suicide bombings” (100). Malala’s father and his friends call a peace conference. No one listens and her father comes home frustrated. “I have a school, but I am neither a khan nor a political leader. I have no platform... I am only one small man” (101).

Chapter 8 Summary: The Autumn of the Earthquake

One day in October, an earthquake hits the valley. Malala is in school, and once the ground stops shaking, her teachers send everyone home. Aftershocks continue during the day. “Every time we felt a tremor we thought it was the Day of Judgement” (103). The earthquake was 7.6 on the Richter scale. It devastated Pakistan. “We remembered how scared we were that morning and started raising money at school. Everyone brought what they could” (104). General Musharraf declares the aftermath a “test of the nation” (105).

Due to the ongoing conflict between Afghanistan and the United States, U.S. helicopters cover their flag logos in order to drop aid without being attacked. One Islamic organization, a front to a militant group, called Jamaat-ul-Dawa (JuD) begins taking in children. “In our culture orphans are usually taken in by the extended family, but the earthquake was so bad that entire families had been wiped out” (107). Malala’s father tells her young boys are taken in by JuD and taught the Quran. But they also learn “that there is no such thing as science or literature, that dinosaurs never existed and man never went to the moon” (107).

Finally, on top of the devastation, another group begins preaching about the earthquake being a sign from God. It warns people that women have become too

free. If the ways of women aren't changed, the group pronounces, then punishment will be severe.

Chapter 4-8 Analysis

These chapters feature the oppression of women. Malala's extended family views her as a "modern" girl because she doesn't cover her face. In contrast, other women in the family always cover their faces. Even the games Malala and her cousins play perpetuate the oppression of women—they play "marriage," choosing who to marry off, and explaining to them that it is simply the way things are done. When General Musharraf enters the narrative, he is seen as good, at first. However, he soon insists all women cover their heads. Malala wonders if they are trying to get rid of all public femininity.

An ongoing motif, persistence, also extends into these chapters. The *mufti* represents a threat to both girls' rights (Malala) and school (her father). The man is upset at girls attending the school and demands the school be shut down. Of course, neither Malala nor her father back down. Her father makes a stand in front of village elders, who decide not to punish him or make him shut down his school. The earthquake represents another hurdle. Even as the country tries to recover, another group of people denounces women's activities as ungodly. They suggest the earthquake happened because of women. However, neither Malala nor her father let the hurdle harm their educational goals.

Chapters 9-11

Part 2: The Valley of Death

Chapter 9 Summary: Radio Mullah

The Taliban came to Malala's area when she was ten. "These were strange-looking men with long straggly hair and beards and camouflage vests over their shalwar kamiz" (111). Their leader, Maulana Fazlullah, joined them. "In the beginning Fazlullah was very wise. He introduced himself as an Islamic reformer and an interpreter of the Quran" (112). He and a deputy began preaching on a radio station, which Malala's family listened to. Unfortunately, the conversations moved away from sounding reasonable to denouncing much of what the valley inhabitants did. "They warned people to stop listening to music, watching movies and dancing. Sinful acts like these

had caused the earthquake, Fazlullah thundered, and if people didn't stop they would again invite the wrath of God" (113).

Shortly after the warnings, people begin throwing away their DVDs, CDs, and TVs. Malala's father despairs over people beginning to listen and like Fazlullah. "One of [Fazlullah's] favorite subjects was the injustice of the feudal system of the khans. Poor people were happy to see the khans getting their come-uppance. They saw [him] as a kind of Robin Hood" (115). Malala's father's friend warns that the Taliban would pretend to be nice before they too behaved like criminals.

Fazlullah targets women with his speeches, but Malala sees a discrepancy in his words. "I was confused by Fazlullah's words. In the Holy Quran it is not written that men should go outside and women should work all day in the home" (116). Despite the discrepancy, people send him money. He soon builds a large headquarters. Each village is required to send men for a day to help build it. One of the teachers at the school soon leaves to build. When he comes back, he refuses to teach girls. "My father tried to change his mind. 'I agree that female teachers should educate girls,' he said. 'But first we need to educate our girls so they can become teachers'" (118).

Women are no longer allowed to shop. Although the Taliban would not attack women in the market, they yell and threaten them, asserting women should stay at home. The valley becomes a kind of police state. Fazlullah's men patrol the streets, and Fazlullah creates new laws. When Malala and her father return to school after a holiday, they find a letter threatening to shut down the school. Her father changes the uniforms to be more conservative, but his friend wants him to stand firm.

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

"When Fazlullah came there were no more school trips" (123). Not only were girls not to be seen outside, but the valley's culture is targeted. The Taliban destroy a large Buddha, "which had watched over the valley since the seventh century" (124). Cable is shut off. "It seemed like the Taliban didn't want us to do anything" (124). The Taliban also attacks the police. Soon, they take over dozens of villages and set up administration. "All this happened and nobody did a thing" (125).

The Taliban begin using the girls of the Red Mosque madrasa (religious school) to terrorize other women. The women make CD and DVD bonfires, close shops, and kidnap women. "When it suits the Taliban, women can be vocal and visible" (127). The

military assaults the mosque and asks for the women to surrender. “Some of the girls refused, saying their teachers had taught them that to become a martyr is a glorious thing” (127). The military operation succeeded.

The mosque’s ultimate capture results in increased anger from Fazlullah and the Taliban. He vows to gather support in the name of the mosque. General Musharraf becomes a civilian president backed by female leader Benazir Bhutto’s party. Malala looks up to Benazir, who is in exile. “She was our only political leader to speak out against the militants and even offered to help American troops hunt for bin Laden inside Pakistani borders” (129). The shifting political scene causes Fazlullah to create curfews. They take police stations and “Hardly anyone resisted” (131).

Benazir is killed in an attack. Around the same time, Malala is learning the Quran from a teacher. He tells her it was good Benazir was killed. Horrified, she tells her father. His reply is that: “We don’t have any options. We are dependent on these mullahs to learn the Quran... But you just use him to learn the literal meaning of the words; don’t follow his explanations and interpretation. Only learn what God says. His words are divine messages, which you are free and independent to interpret” (134).

Chapter 11 Summary: The Clever Class

School continues to motivate Malala, despite the dark events happening around her. Most important to her motivation are the girls who compete with her: Moniba and Malka-e-Noor. To get through the dark days, the girls sketch and play. “But of course at school we were under threat too, and some of my friends dropped out. Fazlullah kept broadcasting that girls should stay at home, and his men had started blowing up schools, usually during nighttime curfew when the children were not there” (137).

“We were scared, but our fear was not as strong as our courage” (138). Malala’s father and several of his friends begin doing interviews. “They went back and forth to Peshawar and Islamabad and gave lots of interviews on the radio, particularly to the Voice of America and the BBCS, taking turns so there would always be one of them available” (139). Her father and his friends become some of the few speaking out. Most people are scared to say anything publicly for fear of retribution. Her father “hated the fact that most people would not speak up” (140).

Malala and her friends begin to get interviewed by news outlets, but as they got older, her friends’ brothers and families stop them from speaking out. “In my heart was the

belief that God would protect me. If I am speaking for my rights, for the rights of girls, I am not doing anything wrong. It's my duty to do so. God wants to see how we behave in such situations. There is a saying in the Quran, 'The falsehood has to go and the truth will prevail'" (141-2).

During one interview, a Taliban spokesman was supposed to be there to be interviewed as well. However, his interview was recorded, so there was no response to Malala's questions about education. Her father begins to feel sad because the public turned against schools, too. He went onto a live show to interview alongside a member of the Taliban. The representative refuses to answer Malala's father's refutations and questions.

The Taliban destroys hundreds of schools. Fazlullah's administration announces all girls' schools would close. Despite the threats, Malala's parents never ask her to withdraw. "The Taliban could take our pens and books, but they couldn't stop our minds from thinking" (146).

Chapter 9-11 Analysis

More oppression geared toward women is visible throughout these chapters. Fazlullah seems fine at first, until he attacks women, suggesting they need to stay hidden. Malala notices the discrepancy between his words and the real words of the Quran, pointing out the Quran does not say women should never go outside. His reach extends further, and a teacher at Malala's school resigns, saying he cannot teach at a school with girls. He argues that women should train women. Her father tries to stop him from leaving, asserting they need women to be educated before they can teach. Fazlullah's militants threaten and yell at women in the marketplace, making them feel unsafe.

However, the oppression doesn't end at the women. Militants attack the community's way of life, calling movies, music, and dancing sinful. People start to destroy their TVs, DVDs, and CDs. The Taliban use other oppressive measures such as curfews, destroying Buddhist statues, Benazir's murder, and police takeovers to subdue the citizens. Malala's father laments that no one does anything to stop the Taliban. Alas, when the oppressed are pushed down, they cannot get up.

Chapters 12-15

Chapter 12 Summary: The Bloody Square

Dead bodies are left in the square so people could see them each morning, as a warning against resisting the Taliban. The Taliban continues to target culture, and Malala notes the disappearing music and dancing that traditionally made up their lives. “I couldn’t understand what the Taliban were trying to do. ‘They are abusing our religion,’ I said in interviews. ‘How will you accept Islam if I put a gun to your head and say Islam is the true religion? If they want every person in the world to be Muslim, why don’t they show themselves to be good Muslims first?’” (149).

Unfortunately, few speak out. “It seemed as if people had decided the Taliban were here to stay and they had better get along with them” (149). Malala’s father is threatened—people tell him about his name being mentioned on Mullah FM. Regardless, her father continues to speak out. For others, the risk remains too high. “[F]ear is very powerful and in the end it was this fear that had made people turn against [others]. Terror had made people cruel. The Taliban bulldozed both our Pashtun values and the values of Islam” (153).

Chapter 13 Summary: The Diary of Gul Makai

A man from BBC radio is looking for a female teacher or schoolgirl to write a diary describing the situation in Swat. Malala offers herself as the subject. To make it easier for Malala, the man would call from a secure phone and guide her through questions. They used the pseudonym Gul Makai, meaning “cornflower.” He looked for “personal feelings and what he called my ‘pungent sentences’” (156).

Malala writes about many topics, including the burqa: “When you’re very young, you love the burqa because it’s great for dressing up. But when you are made to wear it, that’s a different matter” (156). Malala wants to tell everyone she is Gul Makai, but the BBC representative warns her against it. Malala does not believe that anyone would attack her, a child.

“I began to see that the pen and the words that come from it can be much more powerful than machine guns, tanks or helicopters” (157). Despite her powerful words, Malala watches her class dwindle from 27 to ten. Unfortunately, on January 14, school ends for Malala and all other girls. She wakes up to a Pakistani journalist’s cameras. He

follows Malala and documents what she did without school as part of a documentary for the *New York Times*.

Her father promises her that she will go back to school. Malala keeps fighting by speaking to the media. “Education is education. We should learn everything and then choose which path to follow. Education is neither Eastern nor Western, it is human” (162). The trips outside of the valley offer a short reprieve from threats.

Chapter 14 Summary: A Funny Kind of Peace

Fazlullah lifts the ban for girls and younger. Malala and others pretend to be younger. After about a week, gunshots ring out in celebration: The Taliban and the government came to a truce agreement. Their excitement was short-lived.

A friend and TV reporter is murdered during a peace march. Other countries begin criticizing what is happening in Swat. “But none of those people had to live here. We needed peace whoever brought it. In our case it happened to be a white-bearded militant called Sufi Mohammed” (169).

Chapter 15 Summary: Leaving the Valley

For their safety, Malala and her family leave the valley. Malala leaves behind most of her personal belongings, even her awards. The family members become IDPs—internally displaced persons. “It sounded like a disease” (177). Malala prays over her belongings, asking that they be protected while they were away. Thousands of people leave the valley. “[M]y father said, ‘It is as though we are the Israelites leaving Egypt, but we have no Moses to guide us’” (179). Her father speaks to the media during the exodus.

When her father leaves to warn others of the problems coming toward them, Malala sees her mother’s true strength. A man tries to approach them, but Malala’s mother hits him with her shoe. “I always knew my mother was a strong woman but I looked at her with new respect” (181).

Once in a new town, Malala continues to go to school. She is taught with boys because there isn’t enough room or staff to teach her separately. One day, for a parents visiting day, the school encourages boys to make speeches. The girls are encouraged to do so, but over a loud speaker, away from the crowds. Instead, Malala

speaks in front of the crowd. “People in the audience seemed surprised and I wondered whether they thought I was showing off or whether they were asking themselves why I wasn’t wearing a veil” (183).

Malala’s family continues to move place to place, ending up going to four different places in two months. All she wishes for is peace.

Chapter 12-15 Analysis

Malala begins to learn the power of words. Despite further subduing and oppressing methods from the Taliban, Malala speaks out. She puts effort into interviewing with different media outlets and describing what is happening in Pakistan. The news channel BBCS affords her the ultimate gesture of word power by giving her a blogging position with them. Malala’s grows leaps and bounds in these chapters.

The schools shut down, then the ban is lifted, and finally, a military operations sweeps into Swat. Yet, Malala’s growth continues. She despairs briefly when the schools shut down, but when the ban is lifted for girls 10 years old and younger, she flexes her strength as an individual and pretends to be younger. Her courage outmatches the Taliban’s efforts to stop her from learning. Even when the military operation moves in and her family must move out, Malala finds peace in education. Surrounded by boys in class, Malala grows more confident in herself. Despite girls traditionally making speeches over the loud speaker rather than in person, Malala puts herself on stage with the boys, proving that she is equal.

Readers also witness a continued bond between Malala and her father. He supports her interviewing and blogging efforts despite threats leveled against him. When Fazlullah shuts down schools for girls, Malala’s father insists she will continue to learn, refusing to let his daughter back down. He even supports her will to get on stage with the boys. In his eyes, she is no different than a son.

Chapters 16-20

Part 3: Three Girls, Three Bullets

Chapter 16 Summary: The Valley of Sorrows

Malala and her family head back home a week after the prime minister announces it is safe. However, many families “weren’t convinced it was safe to return” so the valley is empty (190). Malala and her father return to the school to survey the damage. Debris, anti-Taliban slogans, and bullet casings are scattered about. “I felt sorry that our precious school had become a battleground” (191).

The Taliban, it seems, is truly gone. “My father’s friend Ahmad Shah called it a ‘controlled peace, not a durable peace.’ But gradually people returned to the valley because Swat is beautiful and we cannot bear to be away from it for long” (193). Once their school is up and running, Malala’s class takes a trip. They participate in workshops and learn how to tell their stories.

Despite the time away from the valley, the teachers expect to be paid. Malala and her teacher Madam Maryam write to General Abbas, explaining the situation. “He was very kind and sent us 1,100,000 rupees so my father could pay everyone three months’ back pay” (197).

A monsoon descends upon the valley and the school is flooded. Malala recalls it taking several days before the water receded enough to go back. The valley is devastated—bridges were washed away and houses destroyed. The valley receives little help. “Foreign governments pointed out most of our politicians weren’t paying any income tax, so it was a bit much to ask hard-pressed taxpayers in their own countries to contribute” (203).

The horror continued when Malala’s father’s friend Dr. Mohammed Farooq is shot and killed. “Our country had so many crises and no real leaders to tackle them” (204).

Chapter 17 Summary: Praying to Be Tall

Malala talks about being thirteen and no longer growing. She fears not getting taller because if she was short “it wasn’t easy to be authoritative” (205). Although she dislikes high heels, she wears them.

Malala parallels this with a story about a Christian woman being sentenced to death. One person who spoke out for the Christian woman was a governor and close ally of the late Benazir Bhutto. Unfortunately, he was killed by his own bodyguards a couple days later. “Our country was going crazy. How was it possible that we were not garlanding murderers?” (209). Soon after the shooting, Malala’s father is threatened. However, he does not stop speaking out.

A CIA operative from America is captured. His safety is paid for and he is rushed back to the United States. The news causes uneasiness among the Pakistanis. Not long after, the Americans announce they have found and killed Osama bin Laden. What shocked many was how close to a military academy bin Laden’s compound was. “We couldn’t believe the army had been oblivious to bin Laden’s whereabouts” (211). When they found out their own government was not part of the plan to take bin Laden out, it put a bitter taste in many mouths. “People were intrigued by the news details that came every day, but they seemed angrier at the American incursion than at the fact that the world’s biggest terrorist had been living on our soil” (213).

Despite the sad things happening around Malala, there are spots of brightness. She finds out she has been nominated for an international peace prize sponsored by Kids Rights. Although she didn’t win, she was alter presented a check for \$4,500 to campaign for girls’ rights. She said, “I know the importance of education because my pens and books were taken from me by force. But the girls of Swat are not afraid of anyone. We have continued with our education” (214). Shortly after the award, she receives Pakistan’s first-ever National Peace Prize. Malala’s mother fears the new awards added fuel to the fire and that Malala was becoming a bigger target.

Her friends support her throughout the awards and fame. “I knew that any of the girls in my class could have achieved what I had achieved if they had had their parents’ support” (216). Malala and her family use some of her award money to help people in need. Malala saw girls during her travels who could not read. These girls motivate her to continue campaigning.

Chapter 18 Summary: The Woman and the Sea

Malala begins the chapter with a passage about her aunt. Her aunt lived near the sea, but had never seen it. Because she needed to be accompanied by a male, or, if she was daring, be able to read the signs to the sea, her aunt was wholly unable to go. Even

educated women faced challenges. “My headmistress Maryam was a strong educated woman, but in our society she could not live on her own and come to work. She had to be living with a husband, brother or parents” (219).

On a trip with her father, they are shocked to see a murderer’s picture decorated with garlands. On that same trip, they visit the tomb of Jinnah. Some of his speeches were displayed, including one about the importance of women. “It was hard to visit that place and read those speeches without thinking that Jinnah would be very disappointed in Pakistan” (222). She wonders why Muslims fight each other if everyone else is supposedly the enemy.

Soon, Malala finds out she is being targeted. She and her family are offered guards, but her father refuses them. “When there was Talibanization we were safe; now there are no Taliban we are unsafe” (225).

Chapter 19 Summary: A Private Talibanization

One day, a letter is delivered to Malala’s family. The letter consists of propaganda against her father’s school and female education. Although the letter was handed out all over the market, many shopkeepers ignored it and threw it away. Her father adamantly speaks out against the propaganda. “My father spoke like a lion, but I could see in his heard he was worried and scared” (230).

Her father’s friend warns that the Taliban is a mentality and they could be all over Swat. Other friends asked her father to stay hidden, but he refuses to be a coward. “His only precaution was to change his routine” to make it harder for radicals to track him (234).

Chapter 20 Summary: Who is Malala?

Malala begins to become paranoid, seeing the Taliban everywhere. Despite her father’s relative indifference, Malala takes more precautions. She checks the windows and doors multiple times every night. She also prays much more than normal, asking for protection from the Taliban.

Tests begin at school. She obsesses over her grades and studies all through the night. One day, after one of her tests, she exits the school with her friends. Each of her friends cover their face, but Malala only covers her head. A man stops their bus, and

while he argued with the driver, another man comes around the back and asks which girl was Malala. He shoots her and two of her friends. “The last thing I remember is that I was thinking about the revision I needed to do for the next day” (242).

Chapter 16-20 Analysis

Malala’s growth comes to a head—she worries her short stature will harm her assertiveness. Humorously, her height has nothing to do with her power to incite passion in others. When her family returns to the valley, her father and she find their school had become a battleground. Her words resonate with people, so much so that she is given several awards in a short period of time. Her education prepared her for battle. Just as her words made people award her things, her words make people want to eliminate her. She finds out she is being targeted.

In true Yousafzai fashion, Malala pays little attention to the threats and whispered words. She is her father’s daughter and plans to speak out until the end. All of her education and actions over the past couple years culminate in a violent battleground—her school. Just as she leaves school, her bus is accosted—the result of too many people knowing her name and too many people with an interest in silencing her powerful words. The man asks, “Who is Malala?” but he didn’t need to. Malala never let herself be oppressed or pressured into societal norms. As such, she is the only girl without her face covered—an act of confidence and unashamed belief in her rights. She is shot, but she and her cause are not silenced.

Chapters 21-Epilogue

Part 4: Between Life and Death

Chapter 21 Summary: “God, I Entrust Her to You”

News of Malala’s injury spread throughout the town. Her father was at a meeting when he received the news. When he arrives at the hospital, he notices TV cameras and photographers. He knows Malala must have been shot. “All children are special to their parents, but to my father I was his universe. I had been his comrade in arms for so long, first secretly as Gul Makai, then quite openly as Malala” (246).

Unfortunately, Malala’s mother does not know what was going on. She was told several stories, including one about Malala hurting her foot. But when her mother

hears a helicopter going over the house, she knows it was Malala's. She takes her scarf off her head and tells the sky, "God, I entrust her to You" (250).

Malala is flown to a military hospital. Once there, a neurosurgeon speaks with her father. He worries the man is far too young to be taking care of Malala. The military hospital makes her father uncomfortable, particularly after the doctor said Malala's condition was serious, but did not operate. Many people come to the hospital and wait outside to offer their support. "While I was hovering between life and death, the Taliban issued a statement assuming responsibility for shooting me but denying it was because of my campaign for education" (256).

Soon, it is decided Malala should go abroad.

Chapter 22 Summary: Journey into the Unknown

Malala's father begins to lose hope. The science told him she wasn't doing well: deteriorating vital signs, an induced coma, etc. However, her mother continues to pray. She is certain Malala will survive.

Malala is flown to Birmingham, England and one of her new doctors spends most of the flight moving around and checking monitors. The doctor says, "If anything had happened to her it would have been blamed on the white woman. If she'd died I would have killed Pakistan's Mother Teresa" (263).

Meanwhile, her family remains under threat from an attack. On top of that, the family has trouble getting a passport to go with Malala.

Part 5: A Second Life

Chapter 23 Summary: "The Girl Shot in the Head, Birmingham"

Malala wakes up, alone, in Birmingham's hospital. One of her doctors, Dr. Javid, speaks to her in Urdu, but she still doesn't understand where she is. "I repeated the questions to anyone who came in. They all said the same. But I was not convinced. I had no idea what had happened to me and I didn't trust anyone" (277). With her family still in Swat, the doctors call Malala's family to update them. Malala is unable to speak, but she is able to hear her father's voice.

Malala works hard to write, but she forgets words and letters. Her doctor tells her she was shot on the school bus, along with two of her friends. “I felt nothing, maybe just a bit satisfied. ‘So they did it.’ My only regret was that I hadn’t had a chance to speak to them before they shot me. Now they’d never hear what I had to say. I didn’t even think a single bad thought about the man who shot me—I had no thoughts of revenge—I just wanted to go back to Swat. I wanted to go home” (282).

Malala finally gets her voice back. She speaks to her parents on the phone, but worries she sounds different. Her father assures her she sounds the same. Finally, she learns her family will come to Birmingham.

Malala thinks about all the things she wants to tell Moniba, but, she notes, “I didn’t realize then I wouldn’t be going home” (289).

Chapter 24 Summary: “They Have Snatched Her Smile”

When her family arrives, Malala is astonished at their appearance—they seem tired, older, and greyer. She also noticed they seemed uncomfortable by her appearance. Her father laments, “The Taliban are cruel—they have snatched her smile... You can give someone eyes or lungs, but you cannot restore their smile” (292).

Her attacker is revealed to be Ataullah Khan, who was arrested during the military operation in Swat, but was released shortly after his arrest. Despite the sad news, the United Nations announces something bright: they have designated November 10 as Malala Day.

Malala continues to work toward recovery. She does facial exercises daily and begins to read again. She reads *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, to which she relates.

The president of Pakistan comes to visit Malala. Although the hospital fears the media frenzy, they allow him to come. After all, he is going to pay the hospital bill. “[President] Zardari told the high commissioner to give my father a post as education attaché so he would have a salary to live on and a diplomatic passport so he would not need to seek asylum to stay in the UK” (298).

Epilogue: One Child, One Teacher, One Book, One Pen...

Malala recovers and the family moves into a rented house. Her mother is lonely. In Swat, she was social, but now she doesn't have any friends. Her father continues to go to conferences, speaking out about education. "I used to be known as his daughter; now he is known as my father" (306).

Malala goes back to school, but she too has trouble making friends. She Skypes with Moniba and saves her jokes for those sessions.

She tries not to think about the shooting, but even when she does, she doesn't remember exactly what happened. The scene changes for her each day.

Malala makes a speech at the U.N. "I didn't know how my speech was received until the audience gave me a standing ovation. My mother was in tears and my father said I had become everybody's daughter" (310). Her mother is so proud, she allows herself to be photographed for the first time.

Malala wonders when she will go back to Pakistan. She can't yet, but she knows she will. She also knows she will continue to fight for education.

Chapter 21-Epilogue Analysis

These final chapters present the father-daughter bond as a lifeline. When Malala's father finds out she has been shot, he rushes to the hospital and stays by his daughter's side. He laments the Taliban knew how to take out two birds with one shot—Malala is his soulmate. He wonders how a father can live without a daughter.

As Malala's life hangs in the balance, a binary opposition is introduced: science versus religion. While her mother prays, her father fears her death based on the scientific evidence available to them. Even when the worst is over for Malala, her father is sad that the Taliban stole her smile—something he contrasts with transplantable organs like lungs, kidneys, and more. Her smile is something less scientific, it is not a body part. No, her smile is an inner, perhaps spiritual, thing. The Taliban tried to take away the fire in Malala.

Finally, the power of words is tested. After all, the Taliban proclaims they didn't shoot Malala because of her campaigns. Yet, strangely, they do not say what made them

choose an innocent girl to hurt. If the Taliban says her words had no power over them, their lie is revealed in front of the U.N. After recovering, Malala's speech on education and girls' rights receives a standing ovation. Her words do, indeed, have power.

MAJOR CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Malala

Readers watch Malala grow throughout her narrative. From the beginning, readers understand Malala is different. She points out that her father put her name on a family tree normally reserved for males. She also notes her father calls her *Jani Mun*, or soulmate. Later, Malala's cousins call her unconventionality "modern." In many ways, Malala is the modern girl of Swat, though she realizes later she isn't modern at all. Regardless, it is both what makes her different and the support of her family that makes Malala grow and evolve.

Many of Malala's early stories are about her father and his activities. However, as time passes, the narrative shifts. The shift in narrative matches the end when Malala notes her father becomes known because of her, and not the other way around. Through her parents' support, Malala succeeds in becoming her own, modern girl—one who can advocate for others, one who appears "dangerous" enough to be shot.

Ziauddin, Malala's father

Malala's father is a pillar of resilience for Malala. He, like Malala, pursued an education. Even without his parents' support, Ziauddin carves out a place for himself in college—learning to debate and speak. As a child, a stutter plagues him, especially around his father, who sees it as a flaw. However, Ziauddin does not let his stutter define him. He learns to speak publically, much to the delight of others. His lifelong passion for learning translates in a battle for everyone's right to education. He builds several schools until he finally finds success.

In Ziauddin are the greatest of Malala's qualities. It is apparent he passes them on to her throughout the narrative. From him, she learns the importance of education, perseverance, and the importance of speaking out. Even in his darkest of hours, under threat, Ziauddin never quits fighting. He speaks out against the Taliban and he campaigns for local issues. He teaches Malala that persistence makes a difference.

Fazlullah

Fazlullah becomes Malala's motivator. He is the face of the Taliban in Swat. Although, at first, she sees him as a possible pillar of hope, she quickly sees his true intentions. When he orders girls quit going to school, she is devastated. She says, "The Taliban could take our pens and books, but they couldn't stop our minds from thinking" (146). He falsely claims his actions are in the name of the Quran and spouts hateful rhetoric. Malala, unlike many others, sees through it. By opposing his words and actions, Malala finds the courage to press forward.

Toor Pekai, Malala's mother

Malala's mother offers something different from her father. What Malala's mother gives her is spirituality and trust in God. On the one side, her father: rational, educated, and persistent. On the other side, her mother: spiritual, religious, and consistent. Her mother was not educated, which Toor Pekai didn't see as an issue until she met Malala's father. She wished she had gone to school. She believes in God and the words of the Quran. Through both, she channels spirituality that is beneficial to a young girl in a violent country. When all seems lost, Toor Pekai prays. At the end of the narrative, Malala notes her mother prayed over her for hours, telling Malala's father that Malala would live.

The Taliban

Although the Taliban is an abstract entity consisting of hundreds, even thousands, of people in Malala's valley, the Taliban is a character in Malala's life and shapes her story. Without the Taliban, the horror (outside of the couple natural disasters) would not have disturbed Malala's valley. Without the Taliban, the military would not have set up shop for several months flushing the Taliban, and Swat's residents, out. The Taliban creates fear, and through this fear, Malala's courage is born. She speaks out through the media. Eventually, she is shot by a Taliban agent. Her life was, effectively, shaped by the Taliban.

THEMES

Individual vs. Society

Much of the narrative revolves around Malala's struggle against societal inclinations. She is a girl in a man's world. Around her, people expect girls to leave school early or not attend at all. Instead of fitting into the mold, Malala fights for her right to learn.

Similarly, her entire family can be looked at as an "individual" against society. They are one group looking to go against the grain. Her father struggled against what was expected of him as a teenager, which did not include school. He puts himself through school and beats the odds of opening his own school, particularly when he takes on the system of bribery and unjust payments needed to open and maintain a school. He is one against many.

Malala's father instills the same fighting spirit in her. Despite societal pressure to stop going to school, Malala pointedly remarks the Taliban can take the books and pens, but they cannot take away her thoughts. She continues to think, to question, and to learn.

Malala and her family find little support during the days of the Taliban and the military operation. Even immediately before she is shot, Malala and her family receive support only from outside sources, including the media. However, the theme of individual versus society is briefly broken after Malala is shot—the country and the world rally around her. Once out of the hospital, though, Malala finds herself alone in an unfamiliar country, again one among many.

Knowledge vs. Ignorance

Another consistent theme throughout Malala's narrative is knowledge versus ignorance. Malala's goal is to move as far away from ignorance as possible. She is born into a family that values education. Her father went to college, even with the odds stacked against him, and opens his own school. Although her mother did not go to college, she understands the importance of learning and encourages Malala to attend.

In contrast, Malala sees the general ignorance of her community, particularly when the Taliban first shows up. Using religion to convince people to turn away from education, the Taliban takes advantage of the community's ignorance. Most people

are uneducated and cannot read the Quran. Therefore, they trust what they are told by their elders.

Throughout the novel, Malala and her father fight against the ignorance of others. Whether it is trying to explain to the community the Taliban's errors or defending Malala's education and clothing to outsiders, they work hard to fight ignorance with knowledge. After Malala is shot and recovers, her only regret is she didn't get to tell the man who shot her about girls' rights.

Power of Words

The ultimate theme of the narrative is the power of words. Malala's father learns early on that words have power. He fixes a stutter to conquer public speaking. Later, he goes on to join debate teams and student groups. Eventually, he advocates for others, including school principals, students, and community members. He does it all because few people speak out—and those that do carry power.

Malala follows in her father's path, speaking out for girls and for education. Her words gain attention, just as her father's do. Both receive threats because their words ruffle feathers. The Taliban discounts Malala's testimony, however, saying they did not shoot her because of her campaigning. Regardless, Malala did nothing more than speak out, so there appears to be no other reason to have shot her. The power of her words bring the U.N. to their feet and her mother to her knees—the final act of the narrative showing Malala is not broken, she has recovered.

SYMBOLS AND MOTIFS

Persistence

Persistence permeates the narrative—it is the most common motif, though it is not mentioned by name. Malala's entire narrative demonstrates her persistence to continue learning and pushing societal expectations. Her family's story is a story of persistence: her father worked hard to get through college, then worked through a couple failed schools before opening a successful one. Even after the Taliban shoots Malala, she persists, recovers, and thrives. Eventually, she makes a speech in front of the U.N., advocating for girls' rights.

Oppression

What would persistence be without some form of oppression? Oppression surrounds Malala and her family, but instead of pushing them down, it motivates them. The Taliban moves into town and begins mandating curfews, limitations on school, limitations for women, and more. While everyone else remains silent, Malala and her father speak out. When religious leaders denounce Malala's learning, she continues going to school. However, outside of their family, others are oppressed. This oppression leads them to fear rebelling or making their own choices. It harms society. It harms progress. It creates a culture of death, fear, and darkness.

The Quran

An important symbol in Malala's narrative is the Quran. The Taliban, religious leaders, and others reference it to gain control over the community. Because many people are not educated and cannot read, they do not know the words of the Quran outside what leaders tell them. Through this ignorance, power figures take control of the masses. Malala describes learning the Quran from a man who agrees with the killings taking place in the country. She is horrified, but her father reminds her she needs to learn the Quran so she can interpret it for herself.

The Quran also represents a powerful symbol of hope. Malala's mother prays and speaks Quranic passages to the sky, hoping it will help Malala recover. Similarly, Malala recites Quranic passages over her books to protect them before her family leaves Swat. It is seen as powerful and protecting.

Face Covering

The face covering is a symbol of oppression. Some women wear the face covering or the burqa because they are told it is what women must do. Others, like Malala do not wear it, in public or in private. Malala's cousins call her "modern" because she doesn't cover her face in public. However, she is never told why she needs to do it. When the Taliban comes, they tell women and girls they must do it to observe *purdah*, a term referring to the cloistering away of women. Malala takes it off when she is safely in school. However, without the face covering, she is easily identifiable by her shooter. Malala makes a special note that she is the only one without her face covered, she is the only one unaffected by oppression.

IMPORTANT QUOTES

1. “‘Who is Malala?’ he demanded. No one said anything, but several of the girls looked at me. I was the only girl with my face not covered.” (Prologue, p. 9)

Without the story having begun, readers learn something critical about Malala: she is different. She is the only one without her face covered. The implications behind the lack of cover may be initially lost on some readers, but the implications are great in Malala’s culture and country.

2. “My father always said, ‘Malala will be free as a bird.’ I dreamed of going to the top of Mount Elum like Alexander the Great to touch Jupiter and even beyond the valley. But, as I watched my brothers running across the roof, flying their kites and skillfully flicking the strings back and forth to cut each other’s down, I wondered how free a daughter could be.”(Chapter 1, p. 26)

Despite her father’s support and her continued education, Malala understands the barriers she faces. She watches her brothers, who are already free, and wonders how she can be equally free, especially when she must fight for it. However, her father’s proclamation inspires Malala and she fights, with him beside her.

3. “I will protect your freedom, Malala. Carry on with your dreams.” (Chapter 4, p. 68)

Just as he proclaims Malala will be free, her father promises to protect the freedom she gains. He understands the implications of his “modern” daughter fighting for education and for her rights. Further, he wants her to remember her dreams, despite the challenges. In the meantime, he will campaign for her and others.

4. “Mullahs often misinterpret the Quran and Hadith when they teach them in our country, as few people understand the original Arabic. Fuzlullah exploited this ignorance.” (Chapter 9, p. 113)

One of the toughest challenges both Malala and her father face is the ignorance of the community. The average villager fears God’s wrath. They aren’t educated and thus their fear in God competes with common sense. Often, the fear of God is stronger than a person’s understanding of the world. The Taliban uses this to gain

the upper hand. They, however, fail to capture those who are educated and understand what is being said.

5. “Ziauddin, you have charisma; you can speak up and organize against them... Life isn’t just about taking in oxygen and giving out carbon dioxide. You can stay there accepting everything from the Taliban or you can make a stand against them.” (Chapter 9, p. 122)

Ziauddin’s friend convinces him to take up the pen, so to speak, and organize against the Taliban. There are risks, which cause Ziauddin to almost falter. He perseveres and agrees he can take a stand. Rather than sit down quietly, he begins speaking louder.

6. “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. (Chapter 10, p. 124).

Malala is feeling pressure from the Taliban. They want to limit the schooling girls receive and ensure girls are covered up and out of the public eye. Malala does not want to be dressed up in what one group considers appropriate, and thus suggests they see her as a doll. She rightly wonders why else God would have made them different if each person was supposed to act like the next. Her thinking fuels her fight.

7. “All this happened and no one did a thing.” (Chapter 10, p. 125).

The first of many statements like this. Despite the injustice occurring all over the valley and the country, Malala notices the people who matter most (the police, the government) do not lift a finger. On top of that, even the citizens, including many of her family members, barely make a sound. What could they do when so many refuse to stand up?

8. “When it suits the Taliban, women can be vocal and visible” (Chapter 10, p. 127).

Women from one mosque are used to further the Taliban cause. Malala notices these women are not reprimanded when they enter the streets in protest, shutting down stores and burning CDs and DVDs. Because their actions suit the Taliban’s needs, the women are “allowed” to be both vocal and visible.

9. “We don’t have any options. We are dependent on these mullahs to learn the Quran... .But you just use him to learn the literal meaning of the words; don’t follow his explanations and interpretation. Only learn what God says. His words are divine messages, which you are free and independent to interpret.” (Chapter 10, p. 134)

Malala learns the Quran from a man who applauds the death of Benazir, Malala’s hero, because he believes women should not be so vocal and visible. Her father calms her, explaining that there is no one else to teach her the Quran.

10. “We were scared, but our fear was not as strong as our courage.” (Chapter 11, p. 138)

A constant motif throughout the narrative, Malala’s family is made up of strength. Fear stimulates them into finding more courage than ever before. In the face of danger, Malala and her father continue to speak out. They are different, just as Malala notes, and God made them.

11. “He hated the fact that most people would not speak up.” (Chapter 11, p. 140)

Again, the issue of people remaining silent comes up. Malala’s father continues to speak out, attending conferences, meetings, and interviews. Yet, despite his efforts, people do not support him. Too many stay silent in a world made up of much noise.

12. “In my heart was the belief that God would protect me. If I am speaking for my rights, for the rights of girls, I am not doing anything wrong. It’s my duty to do so. God wants to see how we behave in such situations. There is a saying in the Quran, ‘The falsehood has to go and the truth will prevail.’” (Chapter 11, p. 141-2)

With Malala’s additional engagements, the threat of danger looms closer. However, she does not despair. She believes she will be protected because what she believes in is so strong.

13. “The Taliban could take our pens and books, but they couldn’t stop our minds from thinking.” (Chapter 11, p. 146)

When the Taliban announces girls can no longer attend school, Malala is frustrated. However, she realizes that she can think outside a school building. And thinking results in learning, in questioning. She may be battered, but she is not broken.

14. “I couldn’t understand what the Taliban were trying to do. ‘They are abusing our religion,’ I said in interviews. ‘How will you accept Islam if I put a gun to your head and say Islam is the true religion? If they want every person in the world to be Muslim, why don’t they show themselves to be good Muslims first?’” (Chapter 12, p. 149)

Malala sees a discrepancy between how the Taliban’s stated mission and their actions. She also understands the Quran and understands the Taliban is misguided. She muses, almost comically, about how violence will make people want to convert.

15. “When you’re very young, you love the burqa because it’s great for dressing up. But when you are made to wear it, that’s a different matter.” (Chapter 13, p. 156)

In this statement, Malala reveals something important about her culture. The burqa is introduced at a young age and is seen as something positive. What is unclear is whether Malala’s final statement is true across all girls her age or unique to those who have been educated. When it is forced, it loses its positive association.

16. “Our country had so many crises and no real leaders to tackle them.” (Chapter 16, p. 204)

The crises stack up in Malala’s country and she watches as no one does a thing to help the country. Now that she is older, she understands it comes down to leadership. Unfortunately, the most passionate and educated citizens are not in a position of leadership, something her father laments.

17. “I knew that any of the girls in my class could have achieved what I had achieved if they had had their parents’ support.” (Chapter 17, p. 216)

Malala has achieved much at a young age, winning awards and being invited to interview for several media outlets. She understands her achievement is due to the support of her mother and father. Unfortunately, her classmates do not have the same support, but she still sees them as successful. After all, they are learning. They are becoming educated.

18. “If Christians, Hindus or Jews are really our enemies, as so many say, why are we Muslims fighting with each other? Our people have become misguided. They think their greatest concern is defending Islam and are being led astray by those like the Taliban who deliverable misinterpret the Quran.” (Chapter 18, p. 223)

Again, the violence of her nation comes back to the Quran. Malala is confused how her countrymen can call other people their enemy when the enemy is alive and well within their own country: people killing each other because they are not “Muslim” enough. Truly defending Islam would mean reading and correctly interpreting the Quran.

19. “All children are special to their parents, but to my father I was his universe. I had been his comrade in arms for so long, first secretly as Gul Makai, then quite openly as Malala.” (Chapter 21, p. 246)

Malala has been shot, and her father is devastated. All children are special to their parents, but Malala’s father nicknamed her his soulmate. The reason is apparent throughout Malala’s journey. And, just as anyone might feel when they lose someone extremely important to them, her father fears living without his soulmate, his daughter.

20. “While I was hovering between life and death, the Taliban issued a statement assuming responsibility for shooting me but denying it was because of my campaign for education.” (Chapter 21, p. 256)

The Taliban admits to shooting Malala. However, the rest of their statement appears ludicrous. Why else would Malala be shot? She was just a girl. If the shooting was not a result of her campaign, what else could it be for?

21. “I felt nothing, maybe just a bit satisfied. ‘So they did it.’ My only regret was that I hadn’t had a chance to speak to them before they shot me. Now they’d never hear what I had to say. I didn’t even think a single bad thought about the man

who shot me—I had no thoughts of revenge—I just wanted to go back to Swat. I wanted to go home.” (Chapter 23, p. 282)

Malala asks her doctors what happened to her. They explain she was shot on the school bus. Malala does not elaborate on why she feels satisfied they did it, but it could be because she realizes she fought hard and it was noticed.

22. “The Taliban are cruel—they have snatched her smile... You can give someone eyes or lungs, but you cannot restore their smile.” (Chapter 24, p. 292)

Malala’s face needs to be reconstructed because of a damaged nerve. Her father worries her smile has been stolen. What is more important to his statement here is what he means figuratively. You can give someone something physical, but you cannot give them something emotional. He worries they have stolen the fight in Malala.

23. “Mr. Zardari told the high commissioner to give my father a post as education attaché so he would have a salary to live on and a diplomatic passport so he would not need to seek asylum to stay in the UK.” (Chapter 24, p. 298)

Despite Pakistan’s poor leadership, they reward Malala with something. The president of Pakistan asks that her father be given a salary and passport so he and the family can continue to live there. Mr. Zardari perhaps understands the reality: Malala and her family cannot return yet.

24. “I used to be known as his daughter; now he is known as my father.” (Epilogue, p. 306)

After being shot, Malala became a global figure. In Pakistan, everyone knew her because of her father. Now, everyone knows her father because of her. Their connection perhaps solidifies them as soulmates.

25. “I didn’t know how my speech was received until the audience gave me a standing ovation. My mother was in tears and my father said I had become everybody’s daughter.” (Epilogue, p. 310)

Malala gives a speech on education at the U.N. She worries she didn’t do a good job until the audience stands to applaud her. Her parents are proud of her. Her father

even suggests she has become more than just his daughter, she has become the whole world's daughter.

ESSAY TOPICS

1. Malala's grandfather appears to have limited support for his son. In contrast, Malala's father fully supports her. How does her father's support allow Malala to persevere? Include examples.
2. Malala's mother gave up going to school because her cousins stayed at home. How is Malala different and why might she have not been influenced by other girls?
3. Malala shares a story about a TV show she watched. The show included a boy with a magical pencil. In what ways does the magical pencil relate to the life of her family and her own life?
4. From the day Malala is born, her father is proud of her existence. He even calls her *Jani Mun*, or soulmate. Do you think the nickname is fitting? In what ways is Malala her father's soulmate? In what ways is she not?
5. After the flooding, Malala's cousin calls Swat a valley of sorrow. Which event shaped the valley the most? Explain.
6. Persistence and perseverance is a recurring motif throughout the novel. Which character exhibits the most persistence and perseverance? Explain.
7. Malala laments that she is no longer the smartest in her class now that she is in Birmingham. In what way does this relate to her ongoing campaign for education?
8. People do not speak up in Swat or in Pakistan in general. Do you think the threat hanging over people's heads is worth silence? Why or why not?
9. Malala is young. Is she a good figure to fight for girls' education? Why or why not?
10. Despite the religious aspects of everyday life, many people remain ignorant to the Quran's teachings. Would education fix this? Why or why not?