

# Malala Yousafzai

Malala Yousafzai is a Pakistani school pupil and activist. In response to her campaign for children's education and her criticism of the Taliban, she was shot in the head. She survived, and went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 for her contributions to children's rights.

Malala was born (12 July 1997) in Mingora, the Swat District of north west Pakistan to a Sunni Muslim family. She was named Malala, which means 'grief stricken' after a famous female Pashtun\* poet and warrior from Afghanistan.

Her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai is a poet, and runs a chain of public schools. He is a leading educational advocate\* himself. In 2009, she began writing an anonymous blog for the BBC expressing her views on education and life under the threat of the Taliban\* taking over her valley. It was her father who suggested his own daughter to the BBC. She wrote under the byline "Gul Makai".

During this period, the Taliban's military hold on the area intensified. At times, Malala reported hearing artillery from the advancing Taliban forces. As the Taliban took control of the area they issued edicts\* banning television, banning music, and banning women from going shopping and limiting women's education. Many girls' schools were blown up and as a consequence pupils stayed at home, scared of possible reprisals\* from the Taliban. However, for a time, there was a brief respite when the Taliban stated girls could receive primary education, if they wore Burkhas\*. But, a climate of fear prevailed and Malala and her father began to receive death threats for their outspoken views. As a consequence, Malala and her father began to fear for their safety. Her father once considered moving Malala outside of Swat to a boarding school, but Malala didn't want to move.

After the BBC blog ended, Malala featured in a documentary made by New York Times reporter Adam B. Ellick. She also received greater international coverage and her identity about writing the BBC blog was revealed. In 2011, she received Pakistan's first National Youth Peace Prize and she was nominated by Archbishop Desmond Tutu for the International Children's Peace Prize. Her increased profile and strident criticism of the Taliban caused Taliban leaders to meet, and in 2012, they voted to kill her.

On 9 October, 2012, a masked gunman entered her school bus and asked "Which one of you is Malala? Speak up, otherwise I will shoot at you all."

Malala was identified and she was shot with a single bullet which went through her head, neck and shoulder.

An extract from [www.biographyonline.net](http://www.biographyonline.net)

## Glossary

Pashtun — a group of people from Pakistan and Afghanistan

advocate — someone who publicly supports a cause

Taliban — a political group

edict — an official order

reprisals — revenge

Burkha — a garment which covers the whole body

1 Why do you think Malala remained anonymous when she blogged for the BBC?

1 mark

2 Why do you think Malala refused to move away from Swat?

2 marks

3 How do you think Malala might have felt when her identity was revealed and she became more well-known? Explain your answer.

2 marks

4 What do you think the word "strident" (line 21) means?

1 mark

5 Do you think Malala's father regrets asking Malala to write the BBC blog? Explain your answer.

2 marks

6 Malala's name can be translated as "grief stricken". Do you think "grief stricken" is an accurate description of her life so far? Explain your answer.

2 marks

Total  
out of 10

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## Question Book:

Year 6, pages 18-19

## Author / Source:

www.biographyonline.net

## Genre:

Non-fiction — biography

## Cross-curricular links:

- PSHE (human rights)
- Geography (rivers)

## Introduction

The true story of Malala Yousafzai and her fight to uphold human rights whilst living under the Taliban is inspirational. This biography explores Malala's early activism, when she wrote an anonymous blog for the BBC and became increasingly critical of the Taliban's regime in Pakistan. The extract is an ideal springboard for wider discussions about the importance of education and gender equality.

## Answers

1. E.g. Because if the Taliban found out who she was then she'd be in danger.
2. E.g. Because she didn't want to give in to pressure from the Taliban. She might also have been scared to move away from her friends and family.
3. E.g. She might have felt happy because her work was becoming more well known, but also scared because it would be easier for the Taliban to find her and prevent her from speaking out against them.
4. E.g. harsh; bold
5. Any appropriate answer. E.g. Yes, because if Malala hadn't written the blog then she wouldn't have become such a well-known opponent of the Taliban, so they probably wouldn't have shot her. OR E.g. No, because the blog allowed Malala to raise awareness of the cruelty of the Taliban's regime and win the International Children's Peace Prize. Her father's decision helped her to become an international hero.
6. Any appropriate answer. E.g. Yes, because she has experienced a lot of hardship and pain. She has been persecuted and was nearly murdered by the Taliban. OR E.g. No. Although some terrible things have happened to her, she has also achieved some amazing things and never seems to have given up hope.

## Extra Activities

- The extract ends on a cliffhanger. Ask pupils to research what happened to Malala after she was shot, and write up the information in the form of a biography.
- Malala was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014. Ask pupils to research other Nobel Peace Prize winners and choose one that they find particularly inspirational. Divide the class into pairs. Pupils should imagine they're going to interview their chosen winner and create a list of questions they would like to ask them. Get pupils to swap questions, research the answers and complete their partner's interview.
- As a class, discuss why pupils think Malala was willing to take such risks for education. Is the right to go to school something worth fighting for? Ask pupils to think of something they would fight for (e.g. gender equality, freedom of speech, racial equality) and get them to write their own blog post about it. Tell pupils that their blog post doesn't have to be based on personal experience.
- Ask pupils to identify Pakistan on a map. Point out the location of the Swat Valley, where Malala grew up. Explain that a huge river runs through the area. Give pupils a list of key terminology to do with rivers, e.g. source, mouth, tributaries, valley. Pupils should create an informative poster about the River Swat, which uses each word on the list.