I Am Malala

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF MALALA YOUSAFZAI

Malala Yousafzai was born in the town of Mingora, Pakistan to a poor but prominent Muslim family, headed by Ziauddin Yousafzai. Growing up, Ziauddin encouraged Malala to study literature and rhetoric, and to express herself freely. From an early age, Malala was conscious of the inferior position of women in her society: she was especially conscious of the difference between her mother, Tor Pekai, a woman with no formal education, and her father, a man with considerable training in writing, poetry, and oration. At the age of 11, Malala began writing a diary for a BBC blog, thanks to contacts her father had established. She also made an appearance in a *New York Times* documentary on life in Pakistan under the Taliban. Following these two projects, Malala became increasingly active in the media, in spite of her young age. She gave interviews in which she criticized the rise of the violent religious extremist group, the Taliban, in her country. In the fall of 2012, Malala was shot by a Taliban soldier. She was treated in Pakistani military hospitals, and afterwards, thanks to her international fame, taken to superior medical facilities in Birmingham, England. Malala made a full recovery from her bullet wounds, and continued to actively campaign for women's rights and education. In 2014, she became the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in its 114-year history.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

I Am Malala alludes to a great number of events in Pakistani history, beginning with the story of the country's founding in 1947. During the 1920s and 30s, the great Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi led a nonviolent resistance against the British Empire, which, at the time, controlled the area that would eventually become India and Pakistan. In the 1940s, following the end of World War II, the British Empire abandoned its imperial territories in Asia. While Gandhi had proposed a one-state successor to British rule, India and Pakistan ultimately became two separate countries, with Pakistan home to a larger percentage of Muslims and India home to a larger number of Hindus. In the 1950s and 60s, the supposed "Golden Age" of the country, Pakistan's economy grew rapidly. This rapid growth came to an abrupt end in the 1980s, when the country came under the control of General Zia, a violent dictator who oversaw a general radicalization of the Pakistani population. Zia skillfully made an alliance with the United States by promising to aid the U.S. in its conflicts with the Soviet Union. As a result, Pakistan began to receive large amounts of foreign aid and military training from the United States. It was during Zia's reign that Osama Bin Laden traveled to Pakistan to help in its fight against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. In 2001, at the start of the American-led "War on Terror," a new leader came into power in Pakistan: General Pervez Musharraf. Musharraf promised to aid the United States in its struggle to fight terrorists such as Osama Bin Laden. Nevertheless, Pakistan grew increasingly radical during the early 2000s. A large percentage of its citizens believed that the United States was a grave threat to the world and that the Jews were responsible for most of the world's economic exploitation. The Taliban rose to prominence in the country, and used its military force to attack the aspects of Pakistani society that it judged to be perversions of Islam. Suicide bombers, acting on behalf of the Taliban, blew up American buildings and schools for women. The Taliban, it is widely believed, conspired to murder Benazir Bhutto, a female politician who had promised to promote women's rights (including the right to a free education) in Pakistan.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Because *I Am Malala* is a memoir, a work of nonfiction, it's difficult and not entirely appropriate to compare it to works of literature. Nevertheless, the book is clearly related to other memoirs about periods of crisis. One such memoir is *The Diary of Anne Frank*, first published in 1947. In this tremendously moving work, Anne Frank, a young Jewish girl living in the Netherlands in the early 1940s, describes her family's struggle to hide from the Nazis, who were then in the process of rounding up all Jews and sending them to concentration camps to be murdered. Though Anne Frank was only 12 when she began writing her diary, she's remarkably insightful about the cruelty taking place around her. In spite of the atrocities she witnesses, Anne remains optimistic, and maintains her faith in the innate goodness of all human beings. One sees the same combination of innocence, insightfulness, and unshakeable optimism in Malala—indeed, when *I Am Malala* was published, many critics compared it to *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *I Am Malala: The Story of the Girl Who Stood Up for Education and was Shot by the Taliban*
- **Where Written:** Birmingham, United Kingdom
- **When Published:** October 2013
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary Non-fiction, Political Memoir
- **Genre:** Memoir
- **Setting:** Pakistan (various cities), United Kingdom (Birmingham)

- **Climax:** Malala is shot
- **Antagonist:** the Taliban / sexism / violent extremism
- **Point of View:** First person

EXTRA CREDIT

Pop culture, anyone?: Since her rise to global fame in the early 2010s, Malala Yousafzai has made numerous appearances in American TV shows. In the summer of 2015, she was a guest on *The Daily Show With Jon Stewart*—on the program, Stewart playfully asked Malala if he could adopt her. Malala was even alluded to on an episode of the *Netflix* show *Bojack Horseman* when a character referred to her as "that Pakistani girl who keeps winning Nobel Prizes."

To be great is to be misunderstood: Although *I Am Malala* has garnered praise from readers and critics around the world, it hasn't been a success everywhere. Shortly after the book was published, the All Pakistan Private Schools Federation, an influential group in the country, announced that the book would be banned in the 150,000 schools that were members of the Federation for "disrespecting Islam." Malala, a devout Muslim, was reportedly horrified.

PLOT SUMMARY

The book begins on October 9, 2012, as Malala Yousafzai, a teenaged girl, makes her way to school by bus. On her ride to school, Malala thinks about how her hometown of Mingora, Pakistan has changed in the last decade, and how the Taliban (a radical Islamist group) continue to pose a threat to advocates of education and women's rights. Suddenly, the bus stops, and a man climbs onboard. He demands to know who Malala is. Malala says nothing, but her identity is obvious: she's not wearing her **burqa** (female veil). The man raises a gun and shoots Malala in the head.

The book then "flashes back" to Malala's birth. When she was born, few people in her community bothered to congratulate her parents, Ziauddin and Tor Pekai, because the birth of a girl is seen as a failure on the part of the parents. Malala explains more about her culture. She is a Pashtun, an ethnic group situated mostly in Afghanistan and Pakistan. She lives in the Swat Valley, a beautiful part of Northwestern Pakistan. She is also a devout Muslim, and has been all her life. From a very early age, she was conscious of the restrictions being placed on her because of her sex.

Malala's father, Ziauddin, is a charismatic, educated man. He grew up studying poetry and literature, and earned his family's respect by winning several prestigious debating competitions. In the 1980s, when Pakistan fell under the control of the brutal dictator General Zia, Ziauddin founded a series of schools that offered educations to girls as well as boys. While many of these ventures failed—since many Muslims in Pakistan refused to believe in a woman's right to an education—Ziauddin eventually found success. As an adult, he married Tor Pekai for love, rather than because of a family arrangement—this, Malala notes, is highly irregular in Pashtun culture. Ziauddin became a passionate advocate for free speech, education, and women's rights: three causes that he raised Malala to respect deeply.

As a child, Malala was clever but shy. Ziauddin encouraged her to participate in speaking and debating competitions, and she did so, gradually working her way up to become one of the most talented public speakers of her age. She excelled in the classroom, usually ranking first in her classes. Once, when Malala was about six years old, she stole a toy from her friend, and afterwards developed a habit of stealing other things. When they found out about this, Malala's parents were so ashamed of her that Malala resolved to never steal anything or do anything sinful ever again. She claims that she never has.

Growing up, Malala noticed the rampant poverty in her community. She pestered her father to allow more children to enter his school on scholarship, and Ziauddin agreed. Ziauddin and Tor Pekai raised Malala to be a pious Muslim. Despite believing in the Islamic faith, Malala noticed from an early age that Pakistanis would cite Islam when they belittled women and forbade them from learning. Malala began to develop her own interpretation of Islam, whereby women could educate themselves while also being perfectly faithful Muslims.

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Malala's community became violent and religiously extreme. The organization called the Taliban rose to prominence in the area, headed by Maulana Fazlullah. The Taliban offered a strict, repressive interpretation of Islam, whereby women should remained covered by a burqa in public, and certainly not attend school. Claiming that all other religious were worthless, the Taliban blew up the enormous Buddha carved into the side of the Swat Valley. This horrified Malala and her family.

In 2007, Pakistan's situation deteriorates still further when the Taliban assassinate Benazir Bhutto, the female prime minister, and an important role model for Malala (who is ten years old at the time). In the aftermath of the assassination, the Taliban becomes more violent, blowing up schools across Pakistan that offer educations to girls as well as boys. Ziauddin uses his influence to write a series of articles for Pakistani papers, in which he condemn the Taliban for their violence and cruelty, as well as their nonsensical interpretation of the Quran (Islam's holy book).

In 2009, Ziauddin uses his contacts with the BBC to arrange for Malala to write a series of diary entries about her life under the Taliban. Malala assumes a false name for protection, and her diaries become widely read in both Pakistan and the Western world. The Taliban, meanwhile, threaten to attack all women's schools that don't close down. Reluctantly, Ziauddin shuts down his schools, and Malala is forced to stay home from

school, too. Shortly afterwards, however, Fazlullah (the Taliban head) decides to allow girls to attend school, proving that Ziauddin's protests and articles have been somewhat successful. Malala, encouraged by the success of her diaries, makes a small appearance in a documentary about the Taliban directed by an American journalist, Adam Ellick.

In late 2009, the Taliban enter a long war with the Pakistani government. Malala, along with the rest of her family, is forced to leave her home in the Swat Valley. Ziauddin takes his family to Islamabad for three months, and when they return, they're relieved to find their home more or less intact. Throughout 2009, Malala continues giving interviews in which she condemns the Taliban for interfering with her education, and in 2010, she takes a trip to Islamabad, accompanied by Shiza Shahid, a journalist and friend of her father. In the city, Malala sees women with educations and successful careers—this experience is enormously inspiring to her.

In 2011, following the death of Osama bin Laden, Malala learns that she's been nominated for an international award recognizing commitment to children's rights. While she does not win, she's nominated for further humanitarian awards in recognition of her broadcasts and diary, and wins several of them. She meets important heads of state, including the Prime Minister of Pakistan. As her reputation grows, she continues to oppose the Taliban. The Taliban threaten to kill Malala if she persists in her denunciations.

The narrative then comes full-circle to Malala's shooting. In the aftermath of the attempt on her life, Malala is rushed to a military hospital, where a skilled surgeon, Colonel Junaid, tries to save her life. He succeeds in performing a difficult brain surgery on Malala, and Malala at first seems to be making a full recovery. While her parents and friends frantically wait for news, two British doctors, Dr. Javid Kayani and Dr. Fiona Reynolds, arrive at the hospital. They insist that Malala is in danger of losing her life, since the facilities at the Pakistani hospital are sub-par. After much negotiating, General Kayani, an important government official, agrees to arrange for Malala to be transported to superior medical facilities in Birmingham, England. Malala is flown to England while her parents remain behind—the Pakistan government delays their travel for fear that they'll try to remain in England.

Malala wakes up in the hospital in England. Dr. Reynolds acts as her legal guardian while Ziauddin and Tor Pekai struggle to fly to England. After nearly a week, the government of Pakistan relents and allows them to visit their recovering daughter. In England, they're immensely relieved to learn that Malala will make a full recovery, though she'll need to spend a long time in the hospital.

As she waits in the hospital, Malala learns that she's become globally famous following her shooting. Heads of state and celebrities send her flowers, and other humanitarians, inspired by her example, speak out against the Taliban's brutality. Malala resolves to use her fame to crusade for education and women's rights on a global scale.

The book ends in 2013. Malala's family has taken up residence in England. Ziauddin works as a consultant for both Pakistan's educational system and the committee on education for the United Nations. Malala attends school in Birmingham, focusing on her studies in spite of her enormous fame. She feels more than a little uncomfortable in her new country, not least because her classmates think of her as a celebrity, not a classmate. Nevertheless, Malala has emerged from her shooting stronger and more determined to fight injustice than ever. As the book ends, she reminds readers that they are lucky to be alive and to be loved by God. Though the Taliban tried to kill her, she concludes, they couldn't kill the global crusade for education and equality.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Malala Yousafzai – The author and central figure of *I Am Malala*, Malala Yousafzai is a strong, intelligent, and intensely passionate crusader for women's rights and the right to free education. During the course of the book, she appears on television and the radio, before the United Nations, and in the capitol buildings of dozens of countries, always lobbying for the same issues. She is also extraordinarily young for someone so politically active—as of 2015, she is only 18 years old, and for many of the crucial events in *I Am Malala*, she's barely a teenager. There are many points in the book when it's easy to forget Malala's age, as she always seems mature beyond her years. Malala's courage and passion make her seem almost superhuman, especially in light of the global fame she's achieved in recent years. In part, Malala intends for her book to correct this perception, as she shows us how she developed her passion for justice. Malala is modest, always reminding us that she rose to fame thanks to the help and encouragement of other people, especially her father, Ziauddin. Ultimately, *I Am Malala* shows Malala to be both a product of her environment (her exposure to writing and communication from an early age, her father's influence, etc.), and an innately brave and intelligent young woman.

Ziauddin Yousafzai – Malala's father and role model, Ziauddin is an educated, articulate, and charismatic man who passes on to his daughter a passion for freedom, education, and equality. As a child, Ziauddin is afflicted with a nervous stutter, and he also struggles to assert his own personality in the face of Rohul, his articulate, charismatic father. Ultimately, through hard work and perseverance Ziauddin becomes a talented public speaker. As an adult, he uses his rhetorical abilities to organize schools for young women—a measure that makes him a traitor to Islam in the eyes of the Taliban. Despite the Taliban's threats,

Ziauddin continues to run his school and encourages Malala to fight for education and women's rights. Ziauddin is instrumental in connecting Malala with the journalists and broadcasters who first bring her to national prominence. While Ziauddin is intensely proud of his daughter's eloquence and single-mindedness, his pride turns to guilt when Malala is attacked by a Taliban soldier. Ultimately, Ziauddin continues to use his talents to fight for equal rights and equal education, and encourages Malala to do exactly the same.

Tor Pekai Yousafzai – Malala's mother, Tor Pekai, is a loving parent, though she lacks the necessary education to inspire her daughter as Ziauddin, her husband, does. She is intensely religious, and always prays five times a day (as the Quran suggests). Tor Pekai often feels insecure about her lack of a formal education, especially because Ziauddin is an educated, literate man. Nevertheless, she shares her husband's passion for equality, and encourages Malala to learn and speak out against the Taliban. In a sense, Tor Pekai represents a cautionary tale for Malala: while Malala loves her mother, she lobbies for women to enjoy the educational opportunities that her mother was never given.

Khushal Yousafzai – Malala's younger brother Khushal is a minor character in the book. He isn't especially close with Malala, and attends school in another town for much of the time when Malala is becoming involved in politics. In one of the only major interactions between Khushal and Malala shown in the book, Khushal expresses his desire to stay home from school, and Malala angrily rebuffs him—he should feel lucky to learn, she insists.

Malka e-Noor – Malala's classmate and "rival" for success in the classroom, Malka e-Noor is as intelligent, or almost as intelligent, as Malala—yet she doesn't fight for education or women's rights, as Malala does. Her presence in the book reminds us that intelligence, while important, isn't enough: one needs bravery and integrity to enact real change in the world.

Rohul Amin – Ziauddin's father, Rohul Amin is an intimidatingly charismatic and articulate man. Growing up, Ziauddin is always terrified by his father, as his own embarrassing stutter stands in stark contrast with Rohul Amin's eloquence. Rohul begins to show more respect for Ziauddin when Ziauddin overcomes his stutter and wins a series of prestigious speaking contests. Yet he quarrels with his son once again when Ziauddin fails to show the academic aptitude necessary to become a doctor. Although Ziauddin eventually finds a way to continue his education without his father's financial support, he has an uneasy relationship with Rohul Amin for the rest of his life. Nevertheless, he allows Rohul to visit Malala. Rohul shows great affection for Malala, and his rhetorical prowess is a major influence on her own mental growth.

Hidayatullah – A college friend of Ziauddin, with whom Ziauddin founds the Khushal School. While Hidayatullah plays an important part in making the Khushal School a success, he eventually becomes fed up with the slow progress and failing profitability of the school, and leaves Ziauddin to found a school of his own.

Benazir Bhutto – The first female prime minister of Pakistan, a rival of General Pervez Musharraf, and an important role model for Malala. Benazir Bhutto is a talented and charismatic politician who uses her influence to fight for women's rights, and claims that she will fight the forces of religious extremism in her country. While Benazir enacts meaningful political changes in her country, her career is cut short in 2007 when a Taliban assassin murders her.

General Pervez Musharraf — One of the key Pakistani leaders of Malala's lifetime, General Pervez Musharraf is a brutal, untrustworthy, but undeniably talented politician. A military leader by training, he maintains control of the country for eleven years, always claiming that he plans to step down soon. Musharraf cleverly aligns himself with the United States by promising to use their foreign aid to fight the forces of terrorism and extremism in his country. For more than half a decade, Musharraf "hedges his bets," promising both religious extremists and American politicians that he's on their side. (In reality, Malala maintains, he's on no one's side but his own: most of America's foreign aid goes to building elaborate mansions and villas for his pleasure.) Plainly, Malala dislikes Musharraf for raising his own interests above those of his state, and for denying his full support to advocates of free education and women's rights. At one point, Malala loosely implies that he's responsible for the death of Benazir Bhutto.

Safina – A young girl, the same age as Malala, who lives in Malala's community. Safina unknowingly plays an important part in Malala's moral development: when Malala suspects that Safina has stolen her toy telephone, Malala develops a bad habit of stealing. She's later punished for her thefts, and feels so guilty about them that she resolves to be a moral person for the rest of her life.

Raymond Davis – An American diplomat and supposed CIA agent who's arrested in Pakistan after shooting two Muslims who he claimed were harassing him. Davis's arrest causes relations between America and Pakistan to deteriorate in the early 2010s, and later makes it more difficult for Malala to be taken out of the country for medical treatment.

Malauna Fazlullah – Malauna Fazlullah is an influential Muslim leader and one of the first outspoken advocates for the Taliban in Pakistan. At the beginning of his public career, Fazlullah bills himself as a moderate, calling for a balance of "Western" ways and Quran teachings. As the Taliban become more popular and influential, however, Fazlullah's views grow more extreme. He began calling for women to wear their **burqas** at all times (see Symbols), and refrain from attending schools of any kind. By the time Malala turns ten, Fazlullah openly supports Taliban violence, including the murder of women who disobey his

interpretation of Quranic law.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Atal Yousafzai – Malala's youngest brother (seven years younger than she), Atal isn't a major character in *I Am Malala*, despite his blood ties to Malala herself. He's depicted as a rambunctious young boy, more interested in games and jokes than rights and education (understandably, considering his age).

Usman Bhai Jan – The man who drives children in Mingora to school, and the man who's driving the bus when a Taliban soldier shoots Malala.

Moniba – Malala's best friend in the town of Mingora, Moniba is an intelligent student, who is often runner-up to Malala in her exam scores. She's shown to be brave and interested in politics, two qualities that endear her to Malala.

Shazia – A fellow student of Malala, who is injured by the Taliban soldier who shoots Malala.

Kainat Riaz – A fellow student of Malala, who is injured by the Taliban soldier who shoots Malala.

Jehan Sher Khan Yousafzai – Ziauddin's cousin, and one of the only family members who celebrates Malala's birth.

Jehanzeb – A prominent military and political leader who controlled the Swati Valley during its supposed "Golden Age," the period between 1945 and 1969.

Nasir Pacha – A friend of Ziauddin's brother-in-law, who was instrumental in helping Ziauddin continue his education at an advanced level.

Khushal Khan Khattak – A renowned Pakistani poet, and the namesake of Ziauddin's Khushal School, as well as the namesake of Khushal, Ziauddin's son.

Mohammed Naeem Khan – A long-time friend of Ziauddin, with whom Ziauddin makes plans to found a school. Mohammed becomes irritated with Ziauddin when they run into difficulties raising money, and they part on bad terms.

Fatima – A girl in Malala's community who makes eloquent speeches, and inspires Malala to make speeches of her own.

Ghulamullah – A *mufti* (Islamic scholar) who lives in Malala's town of Mingora. He repeatedly tries to force Ziauddin to shut down his school, on the grounds that it's sacrilegious to educate women.

President Asif Zardari – Benazir Bhutto's successor as the president of Pakistan, Asif Zardari appears toward the end of *I Am Malala*, where he's instrumental in first delaying, then paying for Malala's transportation to England and her medical treatment there.

Abdul Hai Kakar – An influential BBC reporter who publishes information about women's lives under the Taliban, and, thanks to Ziauddin, arranges for Malala to write a diary about her life.

Adam Ellick – An American reporter for the *New York Times* who produces a documentary about women's lives under the Taliban and shoots footage of Malala.

Shiza Shahid – An acquaintance of Ziauddin who brings Malala to Islamabad, where Malala is exposed to Western culture, and to a society that encourages women to be educated and empowered.

Asia Bibi – A Christian woman living in Pakistan who is controversially sentenced to death for criticizing Islam.

Aunt Najma – An aunt of Malala, who lives in a seaside city but, thanks to repressive laws for women, has never seen the ocean.

Mohammed Ali Jinnah – The renowned founder of Pakistan, whose tomb Malala visits during the course of her visit to the city of Karachi.

Shehla Anjum – A reporter who warns Malala that the Taliban are trying to kill her.

Haroon – A young boy, only slightly older than Malala, who tells Malala that he loves her.

Miss Shazia – A math teacher at Malala's school who claims to have had a premonition about Malala's attack.

General Kayani – An important chief in the Pakistani army (no relation to Javid Kayani), who, following Malala's shooting, arranges for Malala to be treated in a Pakistani military hospital, and later plays an important role in delaying Malala's transportation to superior medical facilities in England.

Dr. Fiona Reynolds – A British doctor who travels to Pakistan to treat Malala following her shooting by the Taliban. She strongly encourages doctors to transport Malala to superior medical facilities, and later becomes Malala's guardian when Malala is transported to England.

Dr. Javid Kayani – An English doctor who travels to Pakistan to treat Malala following her shooting by the Taliban. He later becomes one of her most frequent companions when she's in a hospital in Birmingham. (No relation to General Kayani.)

Arfa Karim – A young woman who speaks out for women's rights alongside Malala.

Rehanna – A Muslim chaplain who visits Malala during her time in the Birmingham hospital.

Rehman Malik – The Pakistani interior minister, Rehman Malik delays Malala's treatment in England after she's shot by the Taliban, because he doesn't want to embarrass Pakistan. He's also concerned that Malala will seek political asylum in England, which would be even more embarrassing for his country.

Ataullah Khan – A Taliban soldier who takes credit for shooting Malala, and is, at the end of *I Am Malala*, still at large.

Adnan Rashid – A Taliban soldier who was arrested for trying to assassinate President Musharraf in 2003. He later writes a

letter to Malala, in which he expresses his shock that the Taliban tried to kill her.

Nawaz Sharif – An intermittent prime minister of Pakistan in the late 90s and early 2000s.

Colonel Junaid – A young but highly experienced doctor who saves Malala's life by performing a complicated surgery after she's shot in the head.

William Hague – The British foreign minister.

Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed – The foreign minister of the United Arab Emirates.

Gordon Brown – The former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and the U.N. special envoy for education, later an important ally of Malala and Ziauddin.

Faiz Muhammed – The brother of Tor Pekai, and an important influence on Ziauddin's moral education.

General Zia ul-Haq – The dictator of Pakistan at the end of the Cold War, General Zia ul-Haq was an important factor in promoting religious extremism in his country, and thus encouraging the rise of the Taliban.

Barack Obama – The 44th President of the United States, and a hero of Malala.

Ban Ki-moon – The secretary general of the United Nations.

Malalai – A legendary heroine of the Pashtuns, Malala's ethnic group, Malalai is Malala's namesake. In the 19th century, Malalai led the Pashtuns in a successful uprising against the British Empire, resulting in one of the only defeats in the Empire's long history.

Khan Abdul Ghaffer Khan – A poet, philosopher, and disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, whose writings influence Malala in her commitment to peace, freedom, and education.

Madam Maryam – The principal of Malala's school.

Aunt Babo – Malala's aunt, who is killed by her doctor when she goes in for treatment.

Major General Athar Abbas – The commander of the Pakistani army, and a (sometimes) reluctant ally of Malala in the second half of the memoir.

Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani – The Prime Minister of Pakistan, criticized by Malala for his lack of interest in women's rights.

Zahid Khan –And old friend of Ziauddin, attacked and nearly murdered by the Taliban in 2009.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Perhaps the central theme of *I Am Malala*—even more important than the power of education—is the theme of women's rights. Malala Yousafzai, the young Pakistani girl who narrates the book, is passionate about the equality of the sexes, and often quotes the founder of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, regarding this issue: "No struggle can succeed without women participating side by side with men. There are two powers in the world; one is the sword and the other is the pen. There is a third power stronger than both, that of women."

Women have had a complex role in Pakistani history. Malala is a Pashtun, a tribe that traditionally confines women to the domestic world, and even "trades" women as if they're objects. And yet the greatest idol of the Pashtuns is Malala's namesake, Malalai, the courageous young woman who led the Pashtuns to victory against the British Empire (at the time the most powerful force on the planet). Since the founding of Pakistan following World War II, women have continued to play a conflicted role in their region's history. Evidently, Mohammed Ali Jinnah wanted women to play an active role in politics ("side by side" with men), and in some ways, they have—Benazir Bhutto rose to lead Pakistan in the late 1990s, as the first female head of state in the Muslim world. And yet in many ways women are still treated as inferior to men. They're informally discouraged from pursuing an education (for example, Malala's mother, Tor Pekai, stopped going to school when she was only 6 years old), they're granted fewer rights in court, etc.

Malala grows up at a time when women's rights are in jeopardy in Pakistan. Following the events of September 11, 2001, the Taliban, a radical fundamentalist terrorist group, become prominent in Pakistan as well as Afghanistan. Despite the government's lackluster attempts to control the situation, the Taliban use violence and intimidation to enforce their ideology, according to which it is God's will that women hide their faces in public by wearing a **burqa** (a kind of veil), and refrain from attending schools. From an early age, Malala is capable of seeing the Taliban for what they are: disturbed men who, in a time of global instability, take out their anger, fear, and aggression on women.

In spite of the growing crisis of women's rights in her country, Malala grows up knowing the value of strong, educated women. This is partly because of the role models she's surrounded by. Her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai, is a charismatic, educated man who has believed in the importance of equality between the sexes for the better part of his life. Ziauddin uses his talent to run a chain of schools that offer good, affordable education for women as well as men, and also uses his literary training to pen popular articles arguing for the importance of women's rights. Ziauddin teaches Malala to respect women, and gives her

books that teach her lessons about the historical importance of women (even Malala's name is a "lesson" of this kind).

As Malala grows up, her passion for women's rights strengthens. She begins making radio broadcasts and writing articles of her own, in which she argues for equal rights and universal education. When she visits Islamabad as a teenager, she sees a proud, thriving city full of women with careers and equal rights. Women's rights, she realizes, aren't just important because they're morally correct—they're important because, just as Jinnah said, they're *valuable*: they contribute to the good of the city and to the good of the country.

In the end, Malala's enthusiasm for women's rights proves too powerful for the Taliban to fight. Though they send a soldier to assassinate Malala, the assassination attempt fails. Moreover, Malala continues to denounce the Taliban and support feminism (though she doesn't call it this) even after she nearly dies—and her near-martyrdom gives her a global platform for her views.

THE POWER OF EDUCATION

From the first scene—in which Malala is shot by the Taliban for riding a bus to school—to the final chapter—in which Malala lobbies for a UN resolution in favor of universal education—*I Am Malala* celebrates the importance of education. It could be said that education determines the way Malala comes of age: the more she learns, the more she recognizes the value of learning, and the more mature she becomes.

Education empowers people, not only by giving them knowledge that they can use to gain power, but by encouraging them to have confidence in themselves. Ziauddin, Malala's father, knows this first-hand. As a child, he struggles to overcome a stammer and assert himself before his proud, intimidating father, Rohul Amin. Ziauddin studies literature and rhetoric, eventually winning a series of prestigious speaking competitions. In this way, he overcomes his stammer, and develops the drive and work ethic that continue to make him a successful political figure for years afterwards. From an early age, Malala is aware of Ziauddin's self-education. One of the earliest parts of her education, one might say, is her realization that she can do anything with the proper studying and preparation.

As Malala grows up, her respect for education grows. While she does well on her exams (usually ranking at the top of her class), her most important moments of learning come when she sees the impact of education on others. This is particularly clear in the chapter where Malala goes to Islamabad with her father's friend, Shiza Shahid. In the large, cosmopolitan city, Malala is overjoyed to see women with professional careers and strong, forceful personalities. Each of these women tells Malala the same thing: pursue your education at all costs. It's no coincidence that when Malala returns to her native town of Mingora, she throws herself into her political projects: condemning the Taliban for their opposition to universal education, making radio broadcasts, and reaching out to struggling women around her country. Malala's coming-of-age largely consists of her increasing recognition of the value of learning.

There's never a moment in *I Am Malala* where Malala has serious doubts about the value of education—indeed, the only change in her attitude toward education is that she comes to value it more and more. As the book ends, Malala is stronger and more mature than ever, and thus, more confident about the value of education. In the final chapter, she embarks on her most ambitious project yet: a United Nations resolution designed to ensure an education for every child on the planet.

ISLAM AND ITS INTERPRETATIONS

Malala makes it clear that she is a devout Muslim—a follower of the faith of Islam. Islam is one of the three Abrahamic religions (the other two are Judaism and Christianity): monotheistic religions that believe that God revealed himself to the prophet Abraham. Islam was founded by Mohammed, a man who lived in the Middle East during the 6th century. Mohammed claimed to have been visited by the angel Gabriel, who dictated to him the entire Quran—the holy book of the Islamic faith. Today, Islam claims more than 1 billion members, and includes many different sects, each of which interprets the faith in different ways. It's important to understand some of the nuances of Islam to grasp the stakes of the conflict between Malala and her opponents.

While Malala is steadfast in her Islamic faith and her love for Allah—the Muslim name for God—her moral beliefs lead her to clash with the Taliban, a powerful, violent Muslim group based in Afghanistan as well as Malala's native Pakistan. The Taliban believe (among other things) that the Quran dictates that women should live their lives by retreating from the "public sphere"—in other words, they should wear a **burqa** (see symbols) in public, and refrain from attending school and seeking education. Malala disagrees with the Taliban's interpretation of Islam, however. She believes that one can be a woman, be educated, walk in public without a veil, and still be a loyal Muslim. In a sense, *I Am Malala* is about the long, dangerous, and sometimes violent clash between Malala's religious beliefs and those of the Taliban. By both sides' own admission, this is basically a clash between two interpretations of Islam.

Although *I Am Malala* isn't a treatise on theology—Malala doesn't stop to refute the Taliban's arguments point-by-point—Malala makes clear the nature of her disagreement with the Taliban. The Taliban, she notes, have only risen to

prominence in the last thirty years. It's no coincidence that this era was arguably the most violent in Pakistani history: in the 80s and early 90s, the dictator General Zia ruled Pakistan with an iron fist, murdering his political opponents. Zia, Malala explains, proved to an entire generation that violence and force can be highly effective ways to get what one wants. Worse, Zia popularized his own radical and highly ahistorical interpretation of Islam. In the Quran, Mohammed argues that all Muslims participate in the *jihad*—a nebulous concept that has been variously translated as "war," "conflict," "deliberation," "Holy War," and "struggle." While part of the *jihad*, as it's usually been understood, is the internal, psychological struggle of the loyal Muslim with his own temptations, Zia stressed the external, violent, warlike interpretations of *jihad*. The result, Malala strongly implies, is that the generation that succeeded Zia's (the generation that birthed the Taliban) uses force instead of reason.

The Taliban treat Malala as an enemy not only because of her particular interpretation of the faith—the group is furious that a woman would dare to interpret the Quran in the first place. The Taliban proudly celebrate their own interpretation of Islam, arrogantly dismissing all others. When Malala tries to publicly argue that Allah wants women to study the faith by learning to read and write, the Taliban try to murder Malala, rather than have faith in their own interpretation of Islam. For Malala, this is proof of the flaws in their arguments: instead of trusting that their interpretation of Allah's law will "win out" in the end, they childishly turn to violence, in a vain effort to bully others into following their beliefs. Malala, by contrast, doesn't try to back up her arguments with guns or force. Her only weapon, she maintains, is her Muslim faith.

While *I Am Malala* doesn't address interpretations of the Islamic faith in great detail, it's very important to understand the role that Islam plays in the lives of the people described in its pages—particularly in light of the recent debates about Islam taking place in the political sphere. Ultimately, Malala uses her book to establish herself as someone who believes in the Islamic faith *and* believes in universal education and equal rights for women—a combination that, in the political rhetoric of both the United States and Pakistan, sometimes seems not to exist.

GOODNESS

Since her rise to global fame in 2013, Malala Yousafzai has become almost universally renowned for her selfless devotion to helping the people of her country. She's the youngest person ever to win the Nobel Peace Prize, the world's most prestigious award for helping other people. There are even those who think of her as a "living saint"—incapable of doing any wrong. In light of Malala's reputation as a highly, or even perfectly, moral young woman, it's almost impossible to read her memoir without wondering where her goodness "comes from." Are living saints born or made?

In *I Am Malala*, Malala doesn't try to pretend that she's a saint, yet she claims to maintain a standard of good behavior that almost any other human being would find unbearable. She includes plenty of anecdotes about bickering with her siblings and parents, getting in fights with her friends—in essence, the things all teenagers do. When she was a small child, she explains, she stole a toy from her friend Safina. Afterwards, Malala began to develop a bad habit of stealing from others. When her parents found out, Malala was so ashamed of herself that she resolved to never steal anything, or commit *any* sin, again. Malala claims to have honored her resolution: she still prays to Allah for forgiveness for the theft she committed as a child, and keeps up her good behavior at all times. The overall effect of these chapters is disorienting. Malala seems impossibly "good," and yet it's made clear that she wasn't born this way. Instead, she *chooses* to be moral—a choice of which, she implies, we're all capable of.

As *I Am Malala* proceeds, Malala's virtue continues to seem both unattainable and perfectly commonsensical. All of her broadcasts and brave crusades against the Taliban, she explains, are motivated by her recognition of a simple fact: it is wrong to exploit women, and thus, no moral person could sit back while women are exploited. There's nothing incredibly uncommon or new about Malala's thinking on the subject of women's rights. But her sense of obligation to help those who are helpless, and her bravery in pursuing that obligation, is extraordinary.

The more Malala tries to explain her goodness, the more inexplicable it becomes. She wants to fight for the right to education and equality, she claims, because these rights are universal. Yet recognizing the universality of human rights isn't a guarantee that someone *will* fight for these rights. Particularly in a country like Pakistan, doing so takes bravery, intelligence, and drive, in addition to the obvious sense of right and wrong. This is clear even when one looks at Malala's own family: Malala's two siblings have been exposed to the same moral education as their sister, and yet they don't fight for women's freedom with anywhere near the same intensity that Malala does. In the end, *I Am Malala* is a somewhat frustrating book as well as an inspiring one. Although the title promises to "explain" Malala to us, her bravery, her integrity, her drive—and thus, her goodness—remain a mystery.

FAME, POWER, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ROLE MODELS

Malala is an icon, renowned for her support for education and women's rights. As a result, one of the most prominent themes in *I Am Malala* is the theme of fame itself: how heroes and role models, known by millions of people

they've never met, can contribute to change or distract from it.

From a young age, Malala is surrounded by good role models. Her paternal grandfather, Rohul Amin, is a famously brilliant speaker and rhetorician, capable of bringing any audience to cheers. Her father, Ziauddin, is an even more impressive man: a great speaker and journalist, as well as the founder of a large chain of schools that offer cheap, comprehensive education to thousands of boys and girls. When Malala begins to take steps to fight for education and women's rights as a young girl, she does so anonymously: she's still in the shadow of her role models, especially her father. At the age of 11, she writes a series of diary entries for the BBC, using a pseudonym to protect herself from harassment from the Taliban, the group she criticizes in her diary.

As Malala grows up and accumulates an increasingly impressive resume of fighting for political causes, she inevitably begins to rise to prominence, with somewhat mixed results. Humanitarian organizations give her lavish awards, often for many thousands of dollars, singling her out for her bravery and integrity. However, Malala's first efforts at "being famous" are clumsy and uneven, as she herself acknowledges. She complains that traveling to accept lots of awards is actually counterproductive, because it distracts her from writing articles and making radio broadcasts in support of the causes she's supposed to be fighting for. Fame can also be misleading: by accepting an award for her humanitarian work, Malala gives the impression that she, and she alone, is responsible for changing the *status quo* in Pakistan. Malala readily admits that this is nonsense: she's been helped along by dozens of other people, including her father and her teachers.

Although Malala recognizes that fame has some disadvantages, she ultimately embraces her global fame because it gives her a platform from which she can continue her political projects. In a sense, the Taliban attack that nearly claims Malala's life *forces* her to be famous. A Taliban soldier climbs onboard Malala's bus and asks, "Who is Malala?" When it becomes obvious who Malala is, the soldier shoots her. This incident makes Malala even more famous than she was before. She becomes a martyr, wounded for bravely going to school. In the aftermath of her shooting, Malala proves that she has learned some valuable lessons about how to be a role model for other people. Instead of using *I Am Malala* to trumpet her own brilliance, Malala humbly admits that she owes her success to many other people: the surgeons who saved her life, her father, the journalists who published her work, etc. Nor does Malala let her fame distract her from her political goals. On the contrary, her fame becomes a part of her political project, as she realizes that she can use it to increase awareness of the situation of women in Pakistan.

In the end, Malala recognizes that being a role model for millions of people can be challenging, and sometimes counterproductive. Yet she also realizes that this level of fame can be a powerful political weapon, one that she'd be foolish not to use to her advantage. Thus, for the good of her cause, she "chooses" to be famous, a choice that's boldly apparent in the title of her book: *I Am Malala*.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

BURQA

Because *I Am Malala* is a memoir— a work of nonfiction—it doesn't contain many symbols. Malala's goal is to tell us, plainly and straightforwardly, where she comes from and what she plans to do with her future. Nevertheless, the **burqa**—the female veil, a required garb in many parts of the Muslim world—functions on a symbolic as well as a literal level in the book. Malala notes that as a child, she finds wearing a burqa fun, since doing so involves "dressing up." But as she grows older, Malala begins to see the burqa as an impediment to women's rights. All around her, she sees women who are forbidden from educating themselves or opening themselves to new experiences. One of the most poignant examples of this phenomenon comes in the form of Malala's aunt, Babo—a woman who has lived in a large coastal city for her entire life, but who has always been forbidden to travel to see the ocean. As Malala sees it, the burqa is a symbol of women's cultural inferiority in Pakistan: they are covered from view, and taught to be ashamed of their identities. As a result, women are restricted in their ability to express themselves freely, travel where they want to travel, and, most importantly of all, seek an education. On the day that Malala is shot, her would-be assassin has no trouble identifying her, as she is the only girl on the bus with her face uncovered. Without her burqa, Malala is the only one who can "see" the world clearly, but also, tragically, the only one who can be seen.

While the Taliban criticize and ultimately try to kill Malala for "defaming Islam," Malala insists that there's nothing sacrilegious about a Muslim refusing to wear a burqa. Encouraged by her father, Malala studies the Quran herself and derives great inspiration and comfort from its verses. In the end, the burqa may be a symbol of the repression forced upon women in the largely Muslim society of Pakistan, but this doesn't mean that Malala's refusal to wear a burqa symbolizes her rejection of Islam. On the contrary, Malala's bare face (shown on the cover of *I Am Malala*) symbolizes her refusal to submit to sexism and repression: she will educate and empower herself, studying the Quran and other books.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Back Bay Books edition of *I am Malala* published in 2015.

Prologue Quotes

The man was wearing a peaked cap and had a handkerchief over his nose and mouth as if he had the flu. He looked like a college student. Then he swung himself onto the tailboard at the back and leaned in right over us.
"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.

Related Characters: Malala Yousafzai (speaker), Ataullah Khan

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 9

Explanation and Analysis

In the prologue to her memoir, Malala paints a startling picture of the day she was shot by a Taliban assassin. The man stops Malala's school bus and marches inside, asking for Malala. Although Malala says nothing at all, it's obvious enough who she is: she's literally the only girl on the bus not wearing the traditional burqa (or veil).

The absence of a burqa on Malala's face, you could say, is her undoing: because she wears no burqa, the Taliban soldier shoots her and sends her to the hospital. But in a broader sense, Malala's choice to discard the burqa (under her country's Taliban rule) demonstrates her bravery and determination. The burqa is a traditional symbol of Islamic faith and feminine domesticity: to wear a burqa is to be an obedient, faithful woman. (Of course, this isn't always the case, and for many women the burqa can represent strength, religious faith, and individuality.) Even in her appearance, Malala is saying that she doesn't accept that women must be second-class citizens--they should be equal to men, and have the same freedom of speech and expression.

In all, Malala takes on the qualities of a martyr in this scene. She stands quietly in opposition to misogyny in Pakistan, and she's punished by Taliban soldiers for her bravery and commitment to equality.

Chapter 1 Quotes

For most Pashtuns it's a gloomy day when a daughter is born.

Related Characters: Malala Yousafzai (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 13

Explanation and Analysis

From the beginning, Malala makes it clear that women in Pakistan are usually treated as second-class citizens. When a baby is born in the Pashtun community, Malala explains, it's considered bad luck if it's a woman.

As Malala goes on to explain, the Pashtuns are an old, proud tribe of people, many of whom live within the country of Pakistan's border. The Pashtuns are often warlike and violent, meaning that women don't always have a natural "place" in society--since fighting is considered a high virtue, women, with their weaker bodies, are considered less "virtuous" than men. In short, by many Western standards, the Pashtuns would qualify as a profoundly sexist culture.

What's especially unfair about the Pashtun take on women, Malala makes clear, is that women are judged and demeaned before they're even aware that they *are* women--i.e., from the moment they're born. As a young, educated woman, Malala tries to reverse the sexism of her society by showing that women are capable of the same achievement and success as men.

Chapter 2 Quotes

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. When a chicken was slaughtered for dinner, the girls would get the wings and the neck while the luscious breast meat was enjoyed by my father, his brother, and my grandfather. "From early on I could feel I was different from my sisters," my father says.

Related Characters: Ziauddin Yousafzai, Malala Yousafzai (speaker), Rohul Amin

Related Themes:

Page Number: 29

Explanation and Analysis

In this quotation, Malala gives details about how women are separated from men from an early age: they're even fed differently. Young boys, who supposedly need the extra nutrition to grow into strong, proud warriors for the Pashtun tribe, are given the juiciest, most delicious chicken meat, while young girls are fed the leftovers--wings and neck meat.

As the quotation makes very clear, there's nothing more intuitive for a child than eating. Therefore, for boys and girls to be fed different cuts of the chicken is a surprisingly powerful way to teach them that they're different. Over the course of years and years, boys are taught that they "deserve" better than women, with the result that they grow into men who've embraced the sexist ideas on which they were raised.

❝ Under Zia's regime life for women in Pakistan became much more restricted. Jinnah said, "No struggle can succeed without women participating side by side with men. There are two powers in the world; one is the sword and the other is the pen. There is a third power stronger than both, that of women."

Related Characters: Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Malala Yousafzai (speaker), General Zia ul-Haq

Related Themes:

Page Number: 30-31

Explanation and Analysis

Malala gives a brief account of Pakistani history since World War Two. In the middle of the 20th century, Pakistan was controlled by Muhammed Ali Jinnah, an educated, popular leader who was notable in that he supported equal rights for women. As Malala explains, Jinnah wanted women to enjoy the same rights and opportunities as men--he wanted them to be able to vote, work the same jobs as men, enjoy the same rights in court, etc.

Following Jinnah's death, however, Pakistan fell under the control of a military dictator, General Zia. Zia reversed many of Pakistan's feminist leanings--where Jinnah wanted equality, Zia wanted to restore the traditional Pakistani arrangement, whereby women largely stayed in the home and didn't hold jobs or appear in court.

In giving such an account of Pakistan's history, Malala aims to show that her country, in spite of some sexist aspects of its history and culture, isn't *unprecedentedly* sexist. Malala shows that Jinnah--a hugely popular, charismatic leader--was a feminist, too. By paralleling her beliefs with Jinnah, she makes her platform seem more acceptable to a Pakistani audience, while also dispelling some Western prejudices about Pakistan (i.e., that it's "barbaric" to women).

Chapter 3 Quotes

❝ [My father] believes strongly in freedom of speech. "First, let's read the book and then why not respond with our own book," he suggested. He ended by asking in a thundering voice my grandfather would have been proud of, "Is Islam such a weak religion that it cannot tolerate a book written against it? Not *my* Islam!"

Related Characters: Ziauddin Yousafzai, Malala Yousafzai (speaker), Rohul Amin

Related Themes:

Page Number: 46

Explanation and Analysis

In this section, Malala describes her father's actions during the 1980s, with regard to one of the most infamous events of the decade: the *fatwah* placed on the life of Salman Rushdie. Rushdie, a celebrated English-language Indian author, wrote a book called *The Satanic Verses*, in which he wrote about the prophet Muhammed and satirized elements of Islam. Since "depicting" Muhammed in any way was strictly taboo in Islam, there were some fundamentalist Muslims who wanted Rushdie to be punished or even killed for his book.

Yet here, Malala clarifies that while there were many Muslims who wanted to hurt Rushdie, not all did. Some, like Malala's father, Ziauddin, argued that Muslims shouldn't attack Rushdie simply because they disagreed with him. Ziauddin made it clear that he was a proper, righteous Muslim--and yet he also argued for the freedom of speech: Rushdie must be allowed to say whatever he wanted, even if many people found it offensive or heretical. The Salman Rushdie affair is still an acid test for intellectuals throughout the world: some treat the incident as proof that Islam is a fundamentally violent religion, one that can't handle any criticism of its principles. There are even some who've used the Rushdie affair to suggest that Mulsims themselves are dangerous. Yet Malala makes it clear that such assumptions are just offensive stereotypes. There were many more Muslims, such as Zaiuddin, who respected Rushdie's right to write whatever he wanted.

Chapter 5 Quotes

❝ Though I felt bad, I was also relieved it was over. Since that day I have never lied or stolen. Not a single lie nor a single penny, not even those coins my father leaves around the house, which we're allowed to buy snacks with.

Related Characters: Malala Yousafzai (speaker), Ziauddin Yousafzai

Related Themes:

Page Number: 71-72

Explanation and Analysis

In this section, Malala makes a claim that seems, on the surface, impossible. She insists that she's never told a lie, and never stolen anything--in short, never done anything wrong. She explains that she was inspired to be "good" after her parents caught her stealing a pair of earrings from a friend.

Malala's "crime" (committed when she was just a little girl) might seem inconsequential to most people. But Malala was so embarrassed and racked with guilt from her theft that she resolved to become a better person. In a fundamental way, then, Malala is "strange" in her moral righteousness. She finds it possible to maintain a standard of ethical behavior that almost anyone else on the planet would find impossible.

Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ Some of our religious people saw Osama bin Laden as a hero. In the bazaar you could buy posters of him on a white horse and boxes of sweets with his picture on them. These clerics said 9/11 was revenge on the Americans for what they had been doing to other people round the world, but they ignored the fact that the people in the World Trade Center were innocent and had nothing to do with American policy and that the Holy Quran clearly says it is wrong to kill. Our people see conspiracies behind everything, and many argued that the attack was actually carried out by Jews as an excuse for America to launch a war on the Muslim world. Some of our newspapers printed stories that no Jews went to work at the World Trade Center that day. My father said this was rubbish.

Related Characters: Malala Yousafzai (speaker), Ziauddin Yousafzai

Related Themes:

Page Number: 86

Explanation and Analysis

Malala discusses the aftermath of September 11, 2011, when Osama Bin Laden engineered the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City. While bin Laden's actions were regarded as war crimes throughout much of the world, Malala explains that bin Laden was regarded as a hero by some in her own country. Bin Laden was praised for getting "revenge" on the United States, a country that, it was widely agreed, caused violence and death throughout the Middle East.

Malala makes it crystal-clear that she doesn't agree with this opinion. She takes pains to show that the people in her country who supported 9/11 weren't thinking clearly at all--they just used 9/11 to air their grievances against Jews, American imperialists, etc. Malala shows that the Pakistani response to 9/11 was rooted in ignorance more than anything else. She also stresses that there is absolutely no Islamic justification for Bin Laden's terrorism: the Quran is explicitly against murder. In short, the people who use Islam as a justification for terrorism are simply bad Muslims.

Chapter 7 Quotes

❝ I am proud that our country was created as the world's first Muslim homeland, but we still don't agree on what this means. The Quran teaches us *sabar*—patience—but often it feels that we have forgotten the word and think Islam means women sitting at home in purdah or wearing burqas while men do jihad.

Related Characters: Malala Yousafzai (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 91

Explanation and Analysis

Throughout the memoir, Malala offers her own interpretation of Islam. Malala admits that her interpretation is hardly the only one: there are some Muslims who believe that their religion gives them justification to attack American soldiers and kill American families. But Malala grounds her arguments in specific passages from the Quran, the holy book of the Islamic faith. Here, Malala cites a passage from the Quran in which Muslims are encouraged to practice patience. As Malala interprets the word "patience," Muslims shouldn't resort to violence simply because they want "results" now. There are

terrorists who believe that the fact that Pakistan is a largely Muslim country means that they should protect their country from Western influence at all costs--Malala insists that such acts of terrorism violate the Quran's emphasis on patience.

In general, Malala admits that there's some disagreement on what Islam means and what it asks Muslims to do. Her goal in the passage is to show that there's a legitimate, consistent interpretation of Islam that forbids terrorism and violence against others--an argument that, unfortunately, many Islamophobes in the U.S. refuse to believe.

Chapter 8 Quotes

❝ *Mullah* from the TNSM preached that the earthquake was a warning from God. If we did not mend our ways and introduce *shariat* or Islamic law, they shouted in their thundering voices, more severe punishment would come.

Related Characters: Malala Yousafzai (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 107

Explanation and Analysis

Shortly after September 11, 2001, there is an earthquake in Pakistan. Many Pakistani people--supported by their mullahs, or religious leaders--believed that the earthquake was a sign from Allah, telling Muslims to fight America by any means necessary. The earthquake was also used to justify the imposition of strict "Muslim" law: women were forbidden to go to school, for example.

As Malala makes clear, the earthquake is a classic confusion of causation and correlation. Certain leaders can use earthquakes and other natural disasters to justify their radical interpretations of Islam--but things could just as easily go the opposite way (i.e., the earthquake is punishment for those who use Islam to oppress and kill others, etc.). Malala implies that education could dispel confusion about the causes of earthquakes and encourage the people of Pakistan to think more rationally about the world and about their religion.

Chapter 9 Quotes

❝ In the beginning Fazlullah was very wise. He introduced himself as an Islamic reformer and an interpreter of the Quran. My mother is very devout, and to start with she liked Fazlullah. He used his station to encourage people to adopt good habits and abandon practices he said were bad.

Related Characters: Malauna Fazlullah

Related Themes:

Page Number: 112

Explanation and Analysis

Malala describes an important Taliban leader, Malauna Fazlullah. Fazlullah first became prominent in the early 2000s. He painted himself as a moderate: instead of advocating for women wearing burqas and jihadists killing American soldiers, he talked about smaller, more reasonable-sounding reforms. Only later did Fazlullah begin saying what was really on his mind.

As Malala suggests, Fazlullah was a cynical manipulator. He knew that what he believed would come across as barbaric to many, so he tried to slowly "adjust" people to his point of view little by little. Like the proverbial frog in a pot of water, Fazlullah's Muslim listeners slowly became more and more used to radical points of view. Malala implies that the interpretation of Islam advocated by the Taliban (as Fazlullah) is irrational and counterintuitive--people have to be "tricked" into believing it. By contrast, Malala argues that her own pacifist interpretation of Islam is reasonable and based on education and knowledge.

Chapter 10 Quotes

❝ We don't have any option. We are dependent on these mullahs to learn the Quran," he said. "But you just use him to learn the literal meanings of the words; don't follow his explanations and interpretations. Only learn what God says. His words are divine messages, which you are free to interpret."

Related Characters: Ziauddin Yousafzai (speaker), Malala Yousafzai

Related Themes:

Page Number: 134

Explanation and Analysis

In this quotation, Malala's father gives her instructions about how to relate to Islam. The Pakistani people rely on

mullahs, holy men, to interpret Islam: mullahs are trained to read the Quran accurately and carefully and offer a logical reading of the text. But Zaiuddin (Malala's father) has come to see that many of the mullahs in Pakistan can't be trusted any more: they're too political, and too willing to throw in their lot with the Taliban, encouraging ordinary people to subjugate women and hurt the innocent.

Because the mullahs of Pakistan can't be trusted, Zaiuddin encourages Malala to adopt an unusual approach to Islam: instead of believing in the teachings of an appointed religious leader, she should use them to learn the Quran herself and develop her own interpretations of the text. While there are many Muslims who would find Ziauddin's approach simply incorrect (or even heretical), it has some notable advantages. For instance, by reading the Quran herself, Malala moves past the sexism of her society. Mullahs in Pakistan give sexist, biased interpretations of the Quran, in no small part because they're men themselves. Malala, as a woman, is more likely to read the Quran in terms of equality between the sexes. In short, Ziauddin doesn't want Malala to "rebel" against Islam: he wants his daughter to be less biased, and therefore more truly Islamic, then the mullahs themselves.

Chapter 11 Quotes

It was school that kept me going in those dark days.

Related Characters: Malala Yousafzai (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 135

Explanation and Analysis

In the mid to late 2000s, life is rough in Pakistan. The country has been torn apart by war between American soldiers and Taliban fighters. Entire communities have been destroyed in the crossfire. In these dark times, Malala always turns back to education. School is more than a place for learning--for Malala, school is a place where she can be optimistic about her future; confident that her lessons in math, writing, and history will help her become a more successful, happy adult. Malala also shows readers that school is a place of fun and laughter: she and her classmates have a great time putting on plays and pageants that distract everyone from the hardships of Pakistani life. In all, Malala uses this chapter to paint a picture of education as a force for good--not just a luxury, but a necessity for all human beings.

Chapter 12 Quotes

"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?"

Related Characters: Malala Yousafzai (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 149

Explanation and Analysis

As Malala becomes more well-known throughout her country, her message of peace and hope becomes more passionate. In this passage, Malala conducts a series of interviews in which she makes the argument that a true Muslim would never use violence or intimidation to convert other people to the faith. As she puts it, nobody can be tortured or frightened into becoming a Muslim: the choice must be freely made. In other words, the Taliban's terrorist actions are counterproductive: they won't create any new Muslims; only send the false message that Islam is a religion based on threats.

Malala firmly believes that Islam is a religion of peace. Furthermore, people should be exposed to Islam, along with other ideas, through education--only then can people truly choose to embrace Islam in their own lives. Malala's interpretation of Islam isn't the most popular one in Pakistan, but she uses her interviews and speeches to popularize her point of view.

Chapter 13 Quotes

The Taliban's deadline was drawing closer: girls had to stop going to school. How could they stop more than 50,000 girls from going to school in the twenty-first century? I kept hoping something would happen and the schools would remain open. But finally the deadline was upon us.

Related Characters: Malala Yousafzai (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 158

Explanation and Analysis

As the first decade of the 2000s comes to an end, the Taliban issue a threat: all girls must stop going to school or

be punished for their supposed defiance of Islamic law. On some level, Malala wants to believe that the girls of her country will defy the Taliban's pompous threat--there are more than 50,000 of them, after all. But then again, Malala knows the truth: the Taliban is powerful and intimidating enough that the young women of Pakistan will withdraw from their schools to save their own lives.

In one way, the fact that the Taliban succeed in banning women from school is a massive victory for their ideology. The Taliban maintain that good Muslim women must be docile and subservient to men: they should spend most of their time in the home, and certainly not bother with education. By threatening the young women of their country, the Taliban have "succeeded" in enacting their dubious interpretation of the religion. But on another level, the Taliban's threat is a sign of weakness. The Taliban, we can tell, are genuinely scared of women: like Muhammed Ali Jinnah, they recognize that there's nothing more powerful than educated, ambitious women. That the Taliban, with all their guns and bombs, could be so intimidated by the prospect of girls learning math shows how weak they really are, and how bankrupt their interpretation of Islam ultimately is.

❝ Education is education. We should learn everything and then choose which path to follow. Education is neither Eastern nor Western, it is human.

Related Characters: Malala Yousafzai (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 162

Explanation and Analysis

In this quotation, Malala offers one of her most powerful arguments foe the importance of education. There are some Muslims--the Taliban leaders, for example--who maintain that education is dangerous for women. Education, it's argued, teaches women to be ambitious, competitive, and generally disobey men--therefore, it's best for women to stay out of schools and serve their husbands.

Malala, by contrast, argues that education is a basic human right, not an affront to religious faith. Whether the student is Muslim, Christian, or atheist, it's morally wrong to deny her the freedom to attend school. The crux of Malala's point is that only *with* education can a woman (or a man) become a good Muslim: only when a student learns about all the religions and ideas in the world can she truly choose to become a Muslim. In general, then, Malala supports the notion of a "marketplace of ideas." Instead of threatening or intimidating people into accepting Islam, Malala wants Islam to be an available option for the people of the world, open to study and analysis. Ironically, Malala is much more confident in the power of Islam than the Taliban are: where the Taliban think it's necessary to bully people into embracing the faith, Malala is sure that people will choose it freely, simply because it's right.

Chapter 14 Quotes

❝ A few days later the video was everywhere. A woman filmmaker in Islamabad got hold of it and it was shown on Pakistan TV over and over, and then around the world. People were rightly outraged, but this reaction seemed odd to us as it showed they had no idea of the awful things going on in our valley. I wish their outrage extended to the Taliban's banning of girls' education.

Related Characters: Malala Yousafzai (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 170

Explanation and Analysis

In the city of Islamabad, a woman is savagely beaten for "daring" to buy makeup from a store, and someone manages to capture the horrific incident on video. The video quickly becomes a sensation: for some, proof that Pakistan has become a violent, repressive country that doesn't tolerate freedom for women.

Malala's reaction to the notoriety of the video is interesting, both for what she says and what she leaves unsaid. Malala insists that the video, while important, distracts from an equally important human rights issue: the fact that women are deprived of their right to education. Put another way, Malala finds it strange that the international community is shocked by women being attacked, but curiously unconcerned when women are denied the right to go to school--it would seem that the rest of the world doesn't value education for women as strongly as Malala would have hoped.

It's also possible that Malala is irritated with the video because it depicts women as victims. While it's important to draw attention to the atrocities committed against women, Malala wants to prove to the world that women are strong and self-sufficient: that they can make speeches, conduct interviews, and advocate for human rights. By showing

women in pain and danger, the video doesn't go far enough--it encourages other countries to think of women as passive victims who need to be protected, but not necessarily empowered.

Chapter 16 Quotes

❝ It seemed like everyone knew I had written the BBC diary. Some thought my father had done it for me but Madam Maryam, our principal, told them, "No. Malala is not just a good speaker but also a good writer."

Related Characters: Malala Yousafzai, Madam Maryam (speaker), Ziauddin Yousafzai

Related Themes:

Page Number: 193

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, we see Malala beginning to take on the role of a spokesperson--a well-known, even famous, figure, whose job is to advocate for her point of view to an audience of millions. Malala, encouraged by her father's friend at the BBC, writes a diary in which she describes what it's like to be a young woman in Pakistan. Although Malala doesn't sign her name to the diaries, everyone guesses that she wrote them, based on the experiences she documents. Some people even believe that Malala's father wrote the diaries--notably, Malala herself doesn't insist that she wrote them; her principal does so instead.

At this point in the memoir, Malala is a little reluctant being the center of attention. She doesn't sign her name to the diaries, and when people guess that she wrote them, she doesn't seem to acknowledge that she's the author. Malala is dealing with big, international issues, but she's also learning how to be famous--a major responsibility for anyone, let alone a teenager.

❝ Islamabad was totally different from Swat. It was as different for us as Islamabad is to New York. Shiza introduced us to women who were lawyers and doctors and also activists, which showed us that women could do important jobs yet still keep their culture and traditions. We saw women in the streets without purdah, their heads completely uncovered. I stopped wearing my shawl over my head in some of the meetings, thinking I had become a modern girl.

Related Characters: Malala Yousafzai (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 194

Explanation and Analysis

In this section of the memoir, Malala travels to the city of Islamabad, Pakistan's capital. Islamabad is by far the largest city Malala has ever seen—it's also one of the most thoroughly "Westernized." Women in Islamabad seem confident and proud—a far cry from the submissive, docile ideal Malala sees in her own community. The sight of an entire city of empowered, educated women confirms beyond any reasonable doubt that educating both sexes is not—as the Taliban continue to claim—a death-knell for society; on the contrary, it's one of the best ways for society to grow.

Malala's experiences in Islamabad also demonstrate the importance of role models. Malala is inspired by the women she meets in the city, and aspires to be more like them in her own life—hence her decision to shed her veil. By the same token, Malala tries to be a role model for women around the world, acting brave in order to inspire other people to follow her distinguished example.

Chapter 18 Quotes

❝ Aunt Najma was in tears. She had never seen the sea before.

Related Characters: Malala Yousafzai (speaker), Aunt Najma

Related Themes:

Page Number: 218

Explanation and Analysis

In this chapter, Malala and her family travel to Karachi, a coastal city they've never seen before. Astoundingly, Malala's Aunt Najma has never been to a coastal town before—in fact, she's never seen the sea at all. In no small part, Najma has never seen the sea because, as a woman, she's never had the freedom to travel anywhere on her own. Her emotional reaction to the sight of the sea suggests the pent-up frustration in millions of women who have been deprived of their right to travel, learn about the world, etc. In a symbolic sense, Malala is trying to use her speeches and interviews to introduce women to "the sea"—in other words, to show them the vastness of the world's knowledge, of which they've been deprived for too long.

Chapter 19 Quotes

❝ "Go and ask the manager of the White Palace Hotel and he will tell you what these girls did..."
He put down the paper. "It has no signature. Anonymous."

Related Characters: Ziauddin Yousafzai (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 229

Explanation and Analysis

Malala begins to become a more public figure—she writes editorials in her own name instead of using a pseudonym, and appears across the Middle East to speak out in favor of women's rights and the right to education. At the same time, Malala begins to attract widespread criticism for her supposed heresy—the more public she becomes, the more hated she becomes, too. In this quotation, an anonymous critic implies that Malala and the women who follow her are somehow sinful, and therefore their views are discredited. Without ever explaining what, exactly, Malala "did," he creates the impression that she had sex or betrayed her Islamic faith. As Malala makes clear, the anonymous critic is just grasping at straws—he makes suggestions because he knows perfectly well that Malala has done nothing wrong. (And yet it's these vague suspicions that are most effective in attempting to discredit Malala, rather than direct accusations that could be easily refuted.)

The passage draws a clear contrast between Malala's brave, lucid speeches on behalf of her cause and the anonymous critic's vague, cowardly attacks on her character. Malala's enemies are cowards, not even brave enough to admit their own names—their anonymity is a sign that Malala is beginning to gain the upper hand, while her opponents are beginning to cower and hide from public view.

Chapter 23 Quotes

❝ The first two questions my pen wrote were, "Why have I no father?" and "My father has no money. Who will pay for all this?"

Related Characters: Malala Yousafzai (speaker), Ziauddin Yousafzai

Related Themes:

Page Number: 277

Explanation and Analysis

After Malala is attacked by the Taliban, she's rushed to a series of hospitals. She's even transported to London, where medical facilities are better. There, she remains in a coma for days. When she eventually wakes up, she first question she asks is about her family; the second is about payment for her treatment.

Even at her least conscious, Malala has a strong instinct to look out for other people, especially her family—hence her first question. She loves her father more than anyone, and can't stand the idea of being separated from him by the Taliban's attack. Malala is also a phenomenally responsible young woman; she hates the idea of placing a burden on anyone else, hence her second question. Malala again acts as a role model to readers: even at her lowest point, she embodies humility and decency, and wants others to aspire to do the same.

❝ "Too many people in the Muslim world can't believe a Muslim can do such a thing," she said. "My mother, for example, would say they can't be Muslims. Some people call themselves Muslims but their actions are not Islamic." We talked about how things happen for different reasons, this happened to me, and how education for females not just males is one of our Islamic rights. I was speaking up for my rights as a Muslim woman to be able to go to school.

Related Characters: Malala Yousafzai, Dr. Fiona Reynolds (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 283

Explanation and Analysis

In the hospital in England, Malala forms a fast friendship with her doctor, Fiona Reynolds. The two of them discuss Malala's crusade for human rights and women's rights, and Fiona is greatly impressed. Here, Fiona and Malala talk about the way Muslims are perceived. Many in the Muslim world, Malala explains, believe that no true Muslim can be in favor of equal rights for men and women, as Malala is. But Malala insists that the truest Muslims are those who celebrate peace, tolerance, and equality.

Malala's conversation with Fiona reflects her growing presence on the international stage. For most of the novel, Malala was arguing for women's rights within her own country. Here, she continues to stand up for what she believes in, but her audience is much greater. Since many of

her greatest supporters live in the Western world, Malala changes the focus of her project somewhat--she's not just fighting for education anymore. By talking about Islam with Western people like Fiona, she's also acting as an ambassador for Islam itself—a religion that too many people in the Western world regard as violent and intolerant.

Chapter 24 Quotes

❝ We humans don't realize how great God is. He has given us an extraordinary brain and a sensitive loving heart. He has blessed us with two lips to talk and express our feelings, two eyes which see a world of colors and beauty, two feet which walk on the road of life, two hands to work for us, a nose which smells the beauty of fragrance, and two ears to hear the words of love.

Related Characters: Malala Yousafzai (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 300-301

Explanation and Analysis

Throughout her memoir, Malala makes it clear that she's not just an advocate for women's rights: she's a pious, practicing Muslim, albeit one who worships Allah in her own way. In this quotation, Malala offers one of her most eloquent expressions of her faith. In spite of practices which might seem anti-Muslim to many (believing in education for women, not wearing the veil, distrusting mullahs, etc.), Malala is absolutely a follower of Islam. However, her belief in certain aspects of the faith, such as its pacifism and emphasis on patience, lead her to oppose practices advocated by some fundamentalist Muslims, such as jihad and the repression of women.

It's interesting to note that Malala refers to God as "God" (the more typical name for the Jewish/Christian/Muslim deity among Western religious people), not Allah (the more typical Muslim term for the same deity). In this book, Malala is trying to appeal to a Western audience more than an Islamic audience: she lives in a Western country, won the Nobel Peace Prize (given out by a Swedish panel), and speaks in countries throughout the Western world. In other words, Malala refers to "God," not "Allah" because, as an ambassador for her country, she wants Western audiences to find commonalities between faiths—and in the simple, beautiful wisdom of this passage, she urges readers to find commonalities between all humans.

❝ I was a good girl. In my heart I had only the desire to help people. It wasn't about the awards or the money. I always prayed to God, "I want to help people and please help me do that."

Related Characters: Malala Yousafzai (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 301

Explanation and Analysis

Malala concludes her memoir with a simple, straightforward evocation of her faith and passion. As a worldwide celebrity, Malala is invited onto talk shows, gets a book deal, etc. There are many who accuse Malala of "selling out"--appearing on television because of her own vanity, nothing more. But Malala insists that the opposite is true: she appears on the global stage because she wants to attract attention to women's rights and other political causes.

Malala's quotation illustrates some of the challenges of celebrity. Malala first agrees to become a public figure because she believes her appearance will aid the causes she believes in. Malala's challenge is to never allow herself to become "bigger" than her cause: i.e., to argue for what she believes in, not talk about her personal life for its own sake.

Of course, there's a fine line between being a political advocate and being a celebrity, and Malala faces an enormous amount of pressure as a global figure: if she makes any mistake in her private life, she'll attract attention away from the issues. Her only course of action is to be perfect: honest, virtuous, etc. By writing a memoir, Malala's goal is to build awareness of human rights abuses in her native country, using her own life as a "teaching tool."

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

PROLOGUE: THE DAY MY WORLD CHANGED

The book begins, "I come from a country which was created at midnight. When I almost died it was just after midday." The speaker—Malala, but unnamed for the time being—explains that one year ago, in the city of Mingora, Pakistan, she was shot by the Taliban, and then taken to a hospital outside of the country. Malala insists that she'll return to her home one day. For the time being, however, she lives in Birmingham, England. Malala finds her new home vastly different from Pakistan—it's far more technologically advanced, but it's also intimidating and alienating.

Malala is still unnamed at this point, but she is the assumed speaker, as this is her memoir. The opening sentence of the book has the effect of inextricably tying Malala to her country, and we get a sense of her love for Pakistan—even though she's in a more technologically advanced place (England), she can't wait to return home. We will learn about many problems in Pakistan, but it's important to remember that Malala herself never wavers in her love for her homeland.

Malala flashes back to "the day everything changed": October 9, 2012. On this day, Malala was going to her usual classes at school. She describes the school system in Pakistan. Malala's father founded the Khushal School before she was born. It offers an education to girls: chemistry, English language, Urdu, biology, etc. Malala notes that most of her classmates wanted to be doctors when they grew up. She adds that none of her classmates could be viewed as "threats" by any stretch of the imagination.

Malala's clarification that none of the girls in her father's school were threats is almost redundant, but also forbidding of what's to come. It should be assumed that the girls aren't "threats," but the very mention of the word implies that someone did *consider the girls to be threats.*

Malala describes the day of October 9 at her school. The day begins at 9, since the students have their yearly exams. Malala's father wakes her up, speaking to her in Persian. Her mother yells for her to wake up as well, teasingly calling her "Pisho," or "Cat." Eventually, Malala gets out of bed and prepares for her day of exams. Her rival at school is Malka e-Noor—as she dresses, Malala thinks to herself that she's almost always beaten Malka on her exams.

Although we've been informed that this day changes everything, it's not immediately clear what makes it so special. At first it seems perfectly banal: Malala seems like an ordinary teenaged girl, bickering with her family and worrying about exams.

Malala's school isn't far from her home, and often she walks there in the mornings. Occasionally she travels to school with her friends in a rickshaw. In recent months, however, she has been taking the bus. Recently, the Malala's mother has been concerned about her daughter's safety. The Malala's father has been an outspoken critic of the Taliban in recent years, and as a result, he's been getting death threats. Nevertheless, Malala's parents agree that the Taliban would never attack a girl. Malala often thinks about what would happen to her if a terrorist from the Taliban attacked her. She always concludes that it would be best to ask the terrorist to listen to her, rather than try to fight back.

As casual as Malala seemed in the previous section, it's now clear that there's some anxiety and paranoia lurking beneath her "ordinary" life. She fears for her and her family's safety, to a degree that would be inconceivable to most people reading this summary. But despite the fact that she's being threatened by the Taliban, Malala doesn't wish any violence upon them. On the contrary, she seems to believe in forgiveness rather than the old principle of "an eye for an eye." Because Malala reaches this conclusion before *she's shot, it remains to be seen if she'll change her mind after the attack.*

Since her father has been receiving death threats from the Taliban, Malala has been taking precautions, even though she thinks it unlikely that a Taliban member would attack her. She locks the gate of her house every night, and prays to Allah more frequently than usual. She talks to her friend Moniba about the Taliban. Moniba wants to be a fashion designer, but because it's difficult for women to find any work other than medicine or education, she tells everyone that she wants to be a doctor. Malala assures Moniba that the Taliban would never attack a "small girl."

The fact that there are few career opportunities available to women suggests that the country as a whole is experiencing tough times, but it also suggests that women, far more than men, are being restricted from doing as they please. We already knew that they couldn't go to school safely, but now we see that they also can't pursue the jobs they want.

Malala runs to her bus. The other girls in her community, all of them wearing headscarves (**burqas**) to cover their faces, run to catch the bus as well. Malala reports that her memories of the day become hazy at this point. Her last clear memory is of sitting in the bus, next to Moniba, as the bus turns a corner. In her dreams, she explains, she imagines her father being shot along with her. The reality, however, is this: the bus was suddenly stopped, only a few hundred meters from the school. A young, bearded man stopped the bus driver. He claimed to need "information" about some of the children. The bus driver, Usman Bhai Jan, tells the man that he should go to the school to investigate.

We can sense that something important—perhaps even traumatic—is about to happen, as Malala's lack of memory about the incident suggests trauma or injury. Based on what Malala has previously said about the state of education and security in Pakistan, we can assume that the bearded man climbing aboard the bus is looking to do harm to the children—not, as he claims, looking for information about them.

Malala and Moniba listen as the young man argues with Usman Bhai Jan. Suddenly, a second man, dressed in white, thrusts open the door and climbs onto the bus. He demands to know which girl is Malala. No one speaks. However, the speaker realizes that she is the only girl not wearing her **burqa**. Without warning, the man points a gun at Malala and fires three times. One bullet hits her in the eye and shoulder. The second bullet hits her friend Shazia's hand. The third hits the arm of her friend, Kainat Riaz. Malala—who now explicitly reveals her name—says that the attacker's hand was shaking when he fired the gun. Malala explains that she will now tell "her story."

In this shocking scene, we see the scope of the book ahead of us. In response to the bearded man's rough question, Malala's book bravely offers an answer: "I am Malala." We're also given further insight into Malala's enormous capacity for empathy and understanding. While others might brand their assassins villains or cowards, Malala seems more interested in understanding what was going through her assassin's head. She notes that his hands were shaking, suggesting that at the time of the act itself, he's terrified or ashamed of killing a young girl. The burqa acts as a kind of symbol in the book, especially in this scene. Malala can "see" more clearly than the other girls—because she doesn't wear a burqa—but this means that she can also be clearly seen, and thus targeted.

CHAPTER 1: A DAUGHTER IS BORN

Malala explains that she was born at dawn (traditionally a sign of luck in her community), but many people in the village still felt sorry for her family because Malala was a girl. As she puts it, women in her country are seen as second-class citizens, fit only for making food and birthing more children.

Malala doesn't always express her outrage, even in describing seemingly outrageous things. She can be surprisingly matter-of-fact about the sexism in her community—and its "ordinariness" makes it all the more sinister.

One of the only people to celebrate Malala's birth was her father's cousin, Jehan Sher Khan Yousafzai. He gave Malala a "handsome gift of money." He also brought with him a large family tree, showing the sons and fathers of Malala's family. Malala's father, Ziauddin, had an unusual reaction when his cousin brought the family free. Instead of accepting it as a gift, he took a pen and drew a line to indicate Malala's birth, even though she was a woman. Ziauddin insisted that Malala was special, and celebrated her birth with coins and fruit—gifts usually reserved for male children.

At times Malala makes large, sweeping statements about the state of sexism, religious extremism, etc., in Pakistan. Yet she's very careful never to paint Pakistan with too broad a brush—she always recognizes that there are exceptions to the statements she's making (like Jehan Sher Khan). Ziauddin will be a huge influence on Malala, and we see that he adored her from the start, refusing to treat her any differently from male children.

Malala is named after Malalai, a heroine of Afghanistan. Malala's ethnic group, the Pashtuns, are divided between two countries, Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan. The Pashtuns obey a strict moral code of honor, which obligates them to treat all people with honor and respect. The Pashtuns are also a proud, warlike people. Malalai is a heroine to them because in the 1880s, she led the Pashtuns in a successful uprising against the British Empire. Malalai was only a teenager at the time, and she set aside married life to become a general and a warrior. British soldiers killed her, but her troops eventually defeated the British. To this day, monuments to Malalai are built in Afghanistan, and she's a symbol of the native resistance to foreign aggression.

Malala's description of her namesake creates a curious tension in the book. It's clear that Pashtun culture as it exists in the early 21st century is in many ways highly repressive and sexist. Yet at the same time, women have played an unusually large role in Pashtun history, and in fact one stands at the center of its single greatest military victory. Thus it seems self-contradictory that this society should so revere the women of its past while having so little respect for the women of its present. Malalai will be an important historical precedent for Malala's own heroism.


Malala continues explaining her culture. She lives in Swat Valley, a beautiful place full of fruit trees, rivers, and forests. In the winter, the villagers ski in the nearby mountains. Swat is currently a part of the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in Pakistan. Formerly, Swat was an independent state, but following Indian independence in 1947, it became an autonomous state of Pakistan. The people of Swat use the Pakistan currency—the rupee—but nonetheless maintain an unusually large amount of cultural and political autonomy from Pakistan. Most of the people of Swat have never left their valley, even though the capital of Pakistan, Islamabad, is only a hundred miles away.

One thing to keep in mind, Malala stresses, is that everyone *in Mingora is restricted in his or her movements—not just the women. Indeed, the majority of people in the community haven't even left Swat. This is also a very beautiful part of the world, and it's clear that Malala loves her homeland deeply. This then makes it all the more tragic when Swat is beset with violence, oppression, and suffering.*


Malala and her family live in the village of Mingora, the largest town in Swat. Swat has been an Islamic town since the 11th century. Prior to this time, however, it was a Buddhist state, and there are still ruins of Buddhist temples in Swat. Malala has grown up surrounded by birds and other animals, enjoying the beauty of the valley and the surrounding Hindu Kush mountains.

Swat is unique from its Pakistani neighbors in many ways. It's the home of many different religious traditions, including Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim. This religious diversity is a large part of its appeal to Malala from a young age, as she loves exploring the ruins of the temples.

Malala's family is very poor. Despite founding the first school for girls in Mingora, Malala's father and his family live in a shack. Nevertheless, Malala's family frequently entertains visitors, cooking for them and spending time with them. Hospitality, Malala explains, is a crucial part of her culture. Malala's brother, Khushal, is named after their father's school, which he attends. Her youngest brother, Atal, is seven years younger than she. Her family is very small by Swati standards. Malala's father, unlike the majority of Swati men, never hits his wife, whose name is Tor Pekai. Malala notes that the people in her community aspire to have paler skin. Malala's father, for instance, was always ashamed of his dark skin as a child. Only after he married Tor Pekai did he overcome his shame. Tor Pekai and Ziauddin had an unusual marriage, since they married out of love, not social obligation. This is highly rare in Pakistan, Malala notes.

It's hard to imagine a family in any other place being so committed to hospitality, even when the family itself is in danger of falling into poverty. And yet in many ways, Malala's family isn't at all typical of the Pashtun or Pakistani norms. On the contrary, Ziauddin and Tor Pekai married for love—something which may seem familiar to American readers, but is irregular for Pakistanis, as we're meant to understand. It's also notable that Ziauddin doesn't beat his wife or children—he doesn't assume that he is naturally superior and entitled to violence just because he is a man. Many Pakistani men do feel this way, Malala explains, which doesn't bode well for the rise of extremism in the coming years.

Malala continues describing her family. Tor Pekai is very religious, and always prays five times a day, as is the Muslim custom. Malala's father was rarely around when Malala was growing up: Ziauddin was busy writing poetry, organizing literary societies, and taking measures to preserve the environment in the valley. Although he is from an impoverished village, Ziauddin used his intelligence and hard work to become successful. Malala grew up respecting the power of language, largely as a result of her father's influence.

Malala benefits from strong role models from a very early age. While Ziauddin isn't often directly present in Malala's life while she's growing up, his "presence" as an influence in her life is enormous. He teaches her to respect the environment, literature, and poetry, and to understand the power of words. This will become more important as Malala becomes a public speaker and writer (of this very memoir, among other things).

Malala's family is descended from the Yousafzai, a noted Pashtun tribe who celebrated combat as well as poetry. The Yousafzai feuded with one another constantly, but in 1917, one Yousafzai warrior managed to impose order on the Swati Valley. His son, Jehanzeb, brought great wealth and prosperity to the Valley. In 1969, the year Malala's father was born, the Valley firmly united with Pakistan. Malala thinks of herself as Swati first, then Pashtun, then Pakistani.

Malala's identity thus far has seemed to be based almost entirely on peace, nonviolence, and forgiveness—even of the Taliban who threaten her life. Ironically, she's descended from a family that celebrates war and conflict as a way of life. And yet the Yousafzais also celebrate poetry, again emphasizing the power of words for Malala.

Growing up, Malala noticed that, as a woman, she was restricted from traveling where she wanted. From an early age, however, Malala decided that she wouldn't let the sexism of her society stifle her. Her father encouraged her to be "free as a bird."

Malala seems to be born with a sense of freedom and natural morality, but then also has these traits nurtured and encouraged by her father, who is an excellent role model, it seems.

CHAPTER 2: MY FATHER THE FALCON

Malala's father, she notes, had an ironic curse: although he loved poetry and words, he had a horrible stutter that made it difficult for him to communicate. His stutter was worsened by the fact that his own father (Malala's grandfather), Rohul Amin, had a beautiful, clear voice. Rohul was a popular theology teacher, widely praised for his electrifying speeches and sermons. Rohul took his son to get various treatments for his stutter, but none of them worked. Despite his speech impediment, Ziauddin attended the best schools in the valley, a luxury that didn't extend to his sisters (Malala's aunts). Growing up, Ziauddin was also fed better than his sisters. Ziaddun was able to listen to his father discuss politics and current events, as Rohul had met many of Pakistan's greatest political leaders, including Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founder of the country.

In this section, Malala draws a sharp contrast between her own relationship with her father (loving, supportive) and her father's relationship with his *father (aggressive, intimidating). Despite the two men's differences, Ziauddin clearly does become a good speaker and communicator, and passes on his father's wisdom to Malala—Malala mentions Mohammed Ali Jinnah several more times, suggesting Rohul's influence. Perhaps in part this is because Ziauddin eventually "works out" a good relationship with Rohul.*

Malala explains some of her country's history. Pakistan has already amassed a long list of military coups, despite being founded fairly recently. When Malala's father was only 8 years old, a general, Zia ul-Haq, seized power and executed the Prime Minister. The United States refused to send more foreign aid to Pakistan, since it saw Zia as a reprehensible dictator. Zia made life harder for women, weakening their rights in court and the political sphere. One result of this was that more women were raped, and their rapists were increasingly set free after trial.

I Am Malala *is a book about the life of its main character, but it's also designed as a Westerner's introduction to Pakistan. It's assumed that the reader has little to no knowledge of Pakistan's history, and so Malala gives a basic overview that would be redundant to a Pakistani reader. Malala wants to be a representative of her country, as well as a representative of human rights.*

In 1979, there was another major change in Pakistan: the Russians invaded Afghanistan. As a result, Afghanis fled into Pakistan, and General Zia allowed them to stay. Because of Russia's actions, American befriended Pakistan once again, wanting to take sides against their Cold War enemy, the USSR. Zia cleverly manipulated public opinion to make it seem that he was bravely fighting against Soviet aggression, as well as supporting Muslim rights. Saudi Arabia sent Zia large sums of money, as did America. Osama bin Laden traveled to Pakistan to be a volunteer fighter on behalf of Zia.

One of the major themes of the book is the relationship between the United States and Pakistan. Many American readers might not know about American involvement in Pakistan, and especially might not be aware that the US once supported Osama bin Laden and provided him with weapons. America likes to present itself as a benevolent force in the world, but from the perspective of many other countries—especially Pakistan, as we will see—it is essentially an imperialist power mostly concerned with protecting its economic interests. Zia and bin Laden certainly aren't models for human rights, but the US supports them because they fight against the USSR.

The Pashtuns don't entirely accept the national border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, because they've traditionally been divided evenly across this border. One consequence of Zia's rule in Pakistan, Malala believes, was that Muslims became more violent. Zia encouraged his followers to obey the law of *jihad*—the "struggle" for their religion. Malala adds that the CIA also encouraged Muslims to be violent, so that they would have eager allies in battle.

Malala is surprisingly shrewd in the way she tells her story. Here, for instance, she implies that Pakistan's recent outbreaks of violence and extremism are not an inherent part of Pakistani culture. On the contrary, they're indicative of a recent change in the country—one influenced by the West, but which is now turned vehemently against the West. Because this is a relatively new phenomenon, Malala suggests, it can be un-learned.

As a young man, Ziauddin gravitated towards the principle of *jihad*. He prayed for war between the Soviets and the Afghanis, so that he would have a chance to prove his bravery. Shortly after his "conversion" to *jihad*, Ziauddin met Faiz Mohammed, the brother of Tor Pekai, his future wife. Faiz Muhammed helped to convince Ziauddin to reconsider his desire for war and violence. As a young man, Ziauddin also dealt with bullying from his cousins, since he was short and dark-skinned—two qualities that were thought to symbolize mediocrity.

The Ziauddin who appears in these flashback sections is nothing like the Ziauddin we see in Malala's life: he's warlike, angry, and eager to hurt other people. Part of Malala's enthusiasm for politics and political reform, we may surmise, is based on her knowledge of Ziauddin: if Ziauddin is capable of changing himself so utterly, then perhaps Malala is capable of transforming others.

As Ziauddin grew older, he learned to be calm, generous, and selfless, thanks largely to his friendship with Faiz Muhammed. When the wife of his former headmaster—a man who had tormented Ziauddin as a student—had an accident, Ziauddin bravely volunteered to donate his blood, saving the headmaster's wife's life. Stunned, the headmaster apologized to Ziauddin for teasing him years before. Ziauddin also studied poetry and rhetoric, eventually earning his own father's respect.

Instead of practicing the familiar law of "an eye for an eye," Ziauddin sacrifices his own health and well-being to help other people, even the people who have wronged him in the past. While these details in the book may seem like tangents to the story, they're actually critical for understanding the way Malala looks at the universe. From a young age, she's had an excellent role model.

When Ziauddin was in his early twenties, he stunned his father by signing up for a public speaking competition. Although Rohul was skeptical of his son's stutter, he wrote a speech for his son to deliver. Ziauddin practiced for weeks, and when he delivered the speech, it was a great success. Ziauddin was awarded the top prize. This, Ziauddin would often tell Malala, was the first thing he'd done that had made Rohul smile. Afterwards, Ziauddin entered many other rhetoric competitions, usually winning or earning a prize. Rohul became enormously proud of his son's success. In honor of his rhetorical skills, Rohul nicknamed him "Ziauddin Shaheen," which means "Ziauddin, the falcon." Ziauddin politely refused this nickname, since a falcon is a "cruel bird."

Ziauddin undergoes a number of transformations in this chapter: from a nervous young man into a confident adult; from an angry soldier to a calm pacifist, etc. Here, he transforms from a stuttering teenager to a mature, masterful speaker. By proving that he can speak to others, Ziauddin demonstrates his power as a politician and an educator. He passes on this passion for politics and education to Malala—it's entirely possible that if Ziauddin hadn't won his speaking competition, we wouldn't be reading Malala's book.

CHAPTER 3: GROWING UP IN A SCHOOL

Malala notes that her mother began and finished school at the age of six. At first Tor Pekai was proud of being the only girl in her school, but ultimately, she couldn't force herself to continue—she saw her female friends playing every day, and couldn't convince herself that there was any point to learning. After Tor Pekai married Ziauddin, however, she began to regret her decision. Her husband was extremely knowledgeable, and she couldn't keep up with him. Largely because of Tor Pekai's encouragement, Ziauddin founded a school for girls.

Malala is close to both of her parents, but in one sense Tor Pekai represents a "cautionary tale," both for Ziauddin and Malala. When education is discouraged for women, it's easy for young girls to give in to what's easier and more fun—not going to school—as they don't yet have a mature perspective on the importance of education. But missing out on an education often leaves women like Tor Pekai unsatisfied and regretful.

Malala explains that Ziauddin's decision to pursue education and poetry as a career disappointed Rohul. Rohul had wanted his son to become a doctor, but Ziauddin's abilities in math and science weren't strong enough. When the time came for Ziauddin to attend Jehanzeb College, the finest school in Swat, Rohul refused to pay for his education—if Ziauddin wasn't going to become a doctor, he decided, there was no point. Ziauddin feared that, without any further education, he would end up teaching in Sewoor—a typical career path for people in Swat, and not a particularly desirable one for Pashtuns. Pashtuns, Malala explains, look down on the people of Sewoor because of their dark skin.

Ziauddin's decision to pursue education and literature is a bold one, particularly considering his relationship with his father. Again Malala mentions the fact that Pashtuns discriminate against dark-skinned people. This is probably a cultural remnant of colonialism—the belief that whiteness is superior has gradually developed into an inferiority complex and racial hierarchy even in non-whites. Malala is often strikingly realistic about her culture, not shying away from either the positives or the negatives.

Malala explains that Ziauddin found a way to be happy, despite Rohul's refusal to pay for his further education. Ziauddin befriended a friend of his brother-in-law, Nasir Pacha. Nasir Pacha suggested that Ziauddin live with him in Spal Bandi, a beautiful mountain valley. Ziauddin agreed to live there, and there he encountered women who were less repressed and timid than those in his birthplace. With Nasir Pacha's help, Ziauddin was able to attend Jehanzeb College.

In one sense, Malala's version of Ziauddin's story is like a prequel to her own story, which we have yet to hear. Like Malala, Ziauddin relies extensively on the kindness of his friends and neighbors. Although it's tempting to read his life as a story of "one man overcoming the odds," the reality is that Ziauddin's life is a testament to the importance of helping other people, and accepting others' help.

While Ziauddin attended Jehanzeb College, many important historical events happened. General Zia died in a plane crash that may have been caused by a bomb. Zia's successor was Benazir Bhutto, the daughter of the Prime Minister whom Zia had executed. Bhutto encouraged free speech and new student organizations, many of which Ziauddin participated in at college. Ziauddin gained a reputation as a skilled speaker and debater, and eventually rose to become the general secretary of the Pakhtoon Students Federation, an important lobbying group for Pashtun rights. Traditionally, Malala explains, Pashtuns are ignored in Pakistani society—the best jobs and opportunities go to the Punjabis.

Throughout this chapter, Malala shows the ways that the events of history influence the lives of individual Pakistani people. Here, for instance, Ziauddin's career as a public speaker and debater—in essence, a mascot for the importance of free speech—is intimately tied to the rise of Benazir Bhutto. It's implied, for instance, that Ziauddin would never have been allowed to lobby for Pashtun rights so freely under General Zia—Zia would have sent an army to break up the demonstrations.

Another important event that occurred while Ziauddin was in college was the publishing of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. In Rushdie's novel, he parodied details of Mohammed's life—an act which was considered blasphemous by many Muslims. Quickly, Muslims across India and Pakistan began protesting Rushdie's book. In Iran, the Ayatollah Khomeini called for Rushdie's death, and urged all loyal Muslims to help kill him. At college, there was a campus-wide debate on the merits of Rushdie's book. While most of the students believed that Rushdie's book should be banned (some even thought that Rushdie should be murdered), Ziauddin argued for free speech and the freedom of expression. He insisted that if Muslims could be so enraged by a simple book, then Islam was a weak religion—the best way to respond to *The Satanic Verses* was to ignore it.

The Salman Rushdie affair is often considered an "acid test" of one's political leanings. It's possible to argue that Rushdie was trying to offend Muslims by satirizing the prophet Mohammed in his novel, but it also seems reasonable to say that Rushdie shouldn't have been persecuted for his right to free speech (especially considering that The Satanic Verses *has great literary value, and little real criticism of Islam). Ziauddin chooses a middle ground, acknowledging that Rushdie's book is offensive, but refusing to believe that he should be hurt for writing it. Ziauddin basically argues that God doesn't need humans to use violence on his behalf—God can defend himself. The best way to actually convert people to Islam is through reasoned discourse and good deeds, not threats and violence. This idea will be important as Malala defends Islam while also condemning violent extremism.*

Following his years at Jehanzeb, Ziauddin worked as an English teacher at a private college. He was a good teacher, but the pay was low. He planned to marry Tor Pekai, but found that he didn't have enough money to do so. One of his coworkers was his old friend, Mohammed Naeem Khan. Together, they planned to found a school of their own, one which would encourage independent thought. The plan turned out to be more difficult than they'd thought, and they were forced to take out costly loans from banks. Although they secured a building for their school, they found that there weren't enough families in need of English tuition to make ends meet.

Malala doesn't sugarcoat the difficulties of achieving one's goals. She goes into great detail about the setbacks her father went through when trying to set up a school system in the Swat Valley. Again Ziauddin makes progress because he's lucky enough to have loyal friends like Mohammed Naeem Khan. Although Malala never says so explicitly, we can assume that Ziauddin and Mohammed want to establish schools because of their passion for free speech and the right to education.

As time went on, Ziauddin and Mohammed began to argue. Eventually, Mohammed demanded that Ziauddin give him his share of the money. Ziauddin obliged, reluctantly, and Mohammed abandoned work on the school. Ziauddin began working with another college friend, Hidayatullah. Together, they named their new school the Khushal School, after the poet Khushal Khan Khattak, their mutual hero. At first, there were only three students. Ziauddin and Hidayatullah found it nearly impossible to make ends meet: they couldn't even afford desks for their three students. Desperate, they turned to Pakistani administrators for government funding. The superintendent of Pakistani schools met with Ziauddin, only to demand a bribe. Ziauddin angrily refused, both because of his Pashtun pride and because he simply didn't have any money to bribe the superintendent.

In this long, important section, we see the ways that Ziauddin deals with complications in his plans. He falls out with his friend Mohammed, but doesn't let this ruin his goal of building a chain of schools: he values the school project even more highly than he values one man's friendship. Ziauddin's challenges are external as well as internal, as he learns that the school system in Pakistan (at the time) is designed to make superintendents rich, not to educate children. Malala makes it clear that Ziauddin's Pashtun roots lead him to oppose corruption—Malala acknowledges that there are many problems in Pashtun culture, but a crucial part of it is also a fierce commitment to what is right.

Frustrated with the slow pace and tiny size of his school, Ziauddin turned to politics to strengthen education in his community. Using his skills as a speaker and a debater, he rose to become the president of an organization called the Swat Association of Private Schools. Ziauddin grew the organization from only 15 members to more than 400. He made money on the side by selling popcorn to children. Somehow, Malala explains, his financial difficulties made his spirits "high." Ziauddin met with a local TV advertiser and persuaded the man to advertise for his school on television.

Ziauddin's ascent to fame seems simultaneously difficult and easy. We get the image of him selling popcorn to support his schools, but we're given little information about how *exactly his charisma as a speaker and debater translated into greater enrollment in the schools. While it's a little frustrating that Malala doesn't give us more information on the subject it's inspiring to hear that Ziauddin's failure made him work harder, rather than give up—another aspect of a good role model.*

In the midst of his financial difficulties, Ziauddin married Tor Pekai. He kept this information fairly private—in Pakistan, weddings are huge, expensive affairs, and if all of Ziauddin's friends know about the wedding, he would have been unable to entertain them all. Rohul refused to pay large sums for the wedding, meaning that Ziauddin was forced to take out more loans from the bank. Ziauddin bought his wife beautiful gold bangles and other jewels. When he returned to Mingora with his new wife, Hidayatullah was stunned—Ziauddin hadn't told him about his marriage beforehand.

Ziauddin's relationship with Tor Pekai is unusual in a number of ways. We've already been told that Ziauddin married Tor Pekai for love, rather than because his family arranged the marriage. In a sense, Ziauddin's relationship with Tor Pekai is similar to his relationship with education: he loves both his wife and his schools for the most intimate, personal of reasons—not because of any obligation to.

Malala continues describing her parents' history. Ziauddin, now married to Tor Pekai, set to work improving his new school. Tor Pekai helped out by painting the school and installing lights. Despite the new couple's happiness and optimism, the school continued to lose money. Ziauddin couldn't afford to pay his teachers money, and eventually the jeweler who had sold Ziauddin the bangles he gave to Tor Pekai came to Mingora, demanding money. Ziauddin had no choice but to give the jeweler his jewels back—this humiliated him. The school endured more problems: floods, power shortages, and teachers who quit in the middle of the year.

Although Tor Pekai isn't an educated woman, this doesn't mean that she can't be helpful to the establishment of the schools in the Swat Valley. As Malala grows up, she learns that her mother was essential in the building of Ziauddin's schools: she has strong role models in both of her parents. Malala never loses sight of the difficulties that afflicted her father as a young man: he couldn't even pay for his wife's jewelry at the wedding.

Throughout the difficult early period in his school's history, Ziauddin remained optimistic. He advertised for his school across the valley. It was during this period that Malala was born. She grew up in her father's schoolhouse, observing the students and the teachers. When Malala was young, Ziauddin's friend and partner, Hidayatullah, left the school to found one of his own. Ziauddin accepted Hidayatullah's departure. This occurred in the latter half of the year 2001. It was during this time that terrorists bombed the Twin Towers in New York—an event that Malala was only dimly aware of. Nobody in Pakistan, Malala concludes, could have predicted how September 11 would change life in their part of the world.

The way Malala mentions the bombing of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 is almost off-handed—it's certainly not the focal point of a chapter, or a section of the book. Nevertheless we can sense that 9/11 will "change everything," both in the United States and in Pakistan. The terrorist attack will usher in a global "War on Terror," which we'll read more about in the coming chapters. While to Americans 9/11 was an epoch-defining catastrophe, Malala's detached perspective on the attack helps remind us that violence occurs in other parts of the world all the time, much of it perpetrated by America itself, and the people affected by it are no less valuable than those lost on 9/11.

CHAPTER 4: THE VILLAGE

Growing up, Malala's parents noticed that she had the qualities of both of her grandfathers: like Rohul, she was vocal, and like Tor Pekai's grandfather, she was calm and wise. Malala loved to spend time with Rohul, whom she knew as *Baba*. Baba would sing Malala songs and tell her stories.

Malala's relationship with Rohul Amin has none of the venom and competitiveness implicit in Rohul's relationship with Ziauddin. Grandfathers are often gentler with their grandchildren than with their children, and also Rohul might not have as high expectations for Malala because she's a girl.

Growing up, Malala looked forward to the Eid holidays, a biannual celebration of Abraham's sacrifice to God—the founding event of monotheism. Malala and her family would walk many miles to Barkana, a neighboring village, and Malala savored the sights of trees and animals while she walked. Occasionally, she would see a plane or helicopter flying high above the ground. Malala believes that it was her father who gave her a love for nature. Whenever Malala visited Barkana, she was surprised to find that her cousins and relatives who lived in Barkana found her snobbish and overly sophisticated. Malala read books and believed in women's rights—two qualities that struck her extended family as pretentious.

From an early age, Malala is conscious of being different from the people around her. Unlike the vast majority of her relatives, she reads books and celebrates women's rights to education and equality. At the same time, Malala feels an unshakeable sense of connection to her community—both to the people who don't like her at all, and to the land itself. These early chapters of Malala's life have an almost mythical tone to them—she seems like a child of the valley, tied to her people by an almost supernatural bond.

Malala notes that while she's proud to be a Pashtun, Pashtun culture "has a lot to answer for" when it comes to the treatment of women. Growing up, she couldn't help but notice that women were often beaten by their husbands, or even kidnapped. There is a Pashtun custom called *swara*, whereby two groups can settle a feud by exchanging women. Malala complained about *swara* to her father, who agreed with her that the custom was barbaric, but added that women were better off in Pakistan than in Afghanistan. Malala, encouraged by her father, read European books like *Anna Karenina* and *Pride and Prejudice*.

Malala confronts the paradox of her existence in this final section. She feels boundless love for her friends, her neighbors, and her community, but she also can't force herself to respect a culture that treats women as second-class citizens or even as currency. Malala will return to this paradox many times in her book: whenever she feels especially close to Pakistan, some event will remind her that her home is still, in many ways, "foreign" to her.

CHAPTER 5: WHY I DON'T WEAR EARRINGS AND PASHTUNS DON'T SAY THANK YOU

As a child, Malala gained a reputation for being highly intelligent in her classes. She participated in almost every student activity—sports, theater, and music. One year, a new student named Malka e-Noor appeared in her class, and quickly began doing better than Malala on her exams. Malala was at first shocked that anyone could upstage her. Also around this time, Malala's family moved to a different house, and she befriended a girl in her new neighborhood named Safina. One day, Malala discovered that her toy telephone had gone missing, and she suspected Safina of stealing it. In response, Malala stole Safina's jewelry, and then quickly developed a bad habit of stealing from others.

As we read I Am Malala, *it's sometimes difficult to remember that Malala is only a young girl—indeed, she's a small child for many chapters. Malala is apparently mature from a young age, and she also doesn't linger on the "immature" details of her life. One exception to this rule arrives at the beginning of this chapter. It's almost refreshing, after all the heady information in the previous chapters, to see Malala being a kid and having flaws of her own.*

One day, a few months after Malala developed her habit of stealing, her cousins confronted her. They explained that they knew about her misdeeds, and couldn't believe that she was a thief. Ever since this unpleasant confrontation, Malala has refused to lie or steal. To this day, she claims, she feels guilty for stealing as a child, and prays to God for forgiveness. Malala's guilt makes her question Pashtun custom. The Pashtuns believe that every mistake must be corrected with a punishment, just as every good deed must be reciprocated with an equally good one. Malala has always been skeptical of this idea—she thinks it leads to an endless cycle of misdeed and revenge. It's better to learn to forgive others, she concludes.

This is one of the most important sections in the entire book. It's basically a "creation myth" in which it's explained how Malala becomes the "living saint" she's sometimes said to be. The implication of Malala's guilt and penitence is that sin is its own punishment—and thus the Pashtun custom of harshly punishing every crime is outdated and actively harmful.

One of Malala's important influences, she explains, was the philosopher Khan Abdul Ghaffer Khan, whom she read from an early age. Khan, a disciple of Gandhi, believed that nonviolence was the only moral way to live one's life. Khan was also skeptical of the value of revenge—a skepticism that Malala shares.

Clearly Malala is narrating the book as a young girl, but she's also been reading Khan for many years. We wonder when Malala first picked up one of Khan's books—was she 15? 12? 9? That Malala doesn't give us many of these details makes her seem even more preternaturally sophisticated and mature.

As Malala grew up, Pakistan entered a period of political instability. The country alternated between electing Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif as prime minister. Then General Pervez Musharraf staged a military coup and seized power. In all, he spent seven years as the dictator of Pakistan, despite repeatedly promising to step down "very soon." During this era, a succession of DCs—deputy commissioners—arrived in Swat in a supposed effort to bring prosperity to the region. None of these DCs succeeded—indeed, they were more interested in lining their own pockets and stealing Swati wealth.

It's especially jarring to jump from Malala's moral epiphany to the moral degradation of Pakistan in Malala's early life. Malala has just established that the old doctrine of quid pro quo, *an eye for an eye, is redundant and harmful. Here, then, we see this doctrine at its worst: the corrupt bureaucrats and government officials under Musharraf are only interested in "favors," in the quid pro quo of bribery and extortion. All of Pakistan suffers as a result.*

Malala, determined to be a moral person, spent much of her childhood running errands for other people. Malala looked up to an older girl at school, whose name was Fatima. Fatima made speeches before hundreds of onlookers, usually in English—English, Malala notes, was the language of prestige and wisdom among Pakistani people. Eager to impress her father, Malala decided to enter a public speaking competition, just as her father had done when he was a young man. The topic for the competition was "Honesty is the best policy." Malala made a speech written by her father, as was the custom. When she made her speech before a large audience, she was extremely nervous. At the end of the competition she came in second, and her best friend Moniba won. Malala wasn't hurt by her loss, as she remembered the words of Abraham Lincoln: "Teach him how to gracefully lose." She resolved to put all her effort into her speeches in the future, and to speak "from the heart."

As Malala looks back on the major influences in her life—her father, her mother, Benazir Bhutto, Fatima—we begin to notice something. There's no reason why Malala had *to imitate Fatima by making speeches of her own—she could have given up and never made a speech again. Similarly, Malala could have seen her father's eloquence and charisma as unattainable, and thus been discouraged in developing her own charisma. In other words, the notion of a "role model" suggests that Malala is a product of her environment, someone responding to the influence of people around her. But* I Am Malala *also suggests that people have control over who their role models are, and what kind of influence they exert. Malala isn't simply influenced by the people around her—she* chooses *to be influenced by them, and then takes actions of her own.*

CHAPTER 6: CHILDREN OF THE RUBBISH MOUNTAIN

The Khushal School began to attract more pupils, and so Malala's family became more financially secure. Eventually they move into a more comfortable home. One night, Malala was throwing trash into the large "rubbish mountain" in her community. She noticed a young girl, about the same age as her, cowering behind the piles of trash. Malala was afraid to talk to the girl. When she explained what she'd seen to her father, he told her that the girl was undoubtedly looking for trash that she could sell to a shop—shopkeepers forced children to search for goods.

From an early age, Malala is conscious of being different from her neighbors, and yet all the more connected to them because of her differences. This is plainly the case in this scene, in which Malala develops a passion for fighting poverty and inequality in Pakistan, one that only grows stronger as she grows up.

Malala was moved by her father's description of the child in the rubbish mountain, and she begged her father to offer the girl a free place at his school. Ziauddin agreed—over the years, he'd given away many free places because Malala and Tor Pekai asked him to do so. At this point, Ziauddin's school had more than 800 students, and three locations. More than 100 students attended the school for free. One side effect of this was that the richer students left Ziauddin's school, as their parents didn't want them associating with the poor. Nevertheless, Ziauddin remained a powerful, respected man in his community, despite the fact that he had little money and few family connections.

In this section we get a reminder of the influence that Tor Pekai exerts on her husband. While she isn't an educated woman, or even a particularly confident one, she's capable of recognizing that Ziauddin should let poor children into his school, even if it means making less money. Ziauddin, to his credit, listens to Tor Pekai instead of dismissing her opinion, as many Pashtun men would do. Ziauddin is widely recognized as a generous, deeply moral man, and Tor Pekai's advice is a large part of his reputation. It's also indicative of Malala's natural goodness that she responds to the sight of suffering with compassion.

Ziauddin then turned from running his school to preserving the environment in Swat. Because Mingora was growing quickly—at this point, it had over 100,000 citizens—trees were being depleted, and the water was growing dirty. He founded a group called the Global Peace Council, whose purpose—despite the ironic name—was to preserve Swat's natural beauty. Ziauddin also continued to write poetry, much of it about women's rights. Once, he read a poem about peace before a crowd in Kabul, Afghanistan, and his audience cheered and yelled for him to read the poem again.

Ziauddin seems like a person who delights in having projects—who is always looking for more to do, both because of his passion for helping others, and because of his energy and drive. Here he founds a group whose bombastic name (he's not truly dealing with global issues at all) testifies to his high ambitions. Ziauddin recognizes that women's rights are a cultural issue, meaning that he'll have to use culture (here, poetry) to change the public's mind.

Malala explains the political climate in Pakistan at the time. Following September 11, America needed Pakistan as an ally—thus, they tried to befriend General Musharraf. It was also at this time that the Taliban was becoming a visible presence in Pakistan. Many of the people in Malala's community supported the Taliban. Indeed, Pakistan's own intelligence service, the ISI, had essentially created the Taliban, as former ISI operatives had left to form this group. America wanted to prevent the Taliban from growing any more powerful, and thus tried to make alliances with Pakistan.

In this section we're reminded that Malala is living in the post-9/11 era. This means that the United States is intimately involved in Pakistan's affairs, and it also means that they've developed an uneasy alliance with General Musharraf. Like his predecessor, General Zia, Musharraf seems willing to manipulate public opinion and "play both sides," acting as an ally to the U.S. when it suits him.

Malala notes that many of her neighbors thought of Osama bin Laden as a hero for engineering the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York. Others claimed that the Jews masterminded the attack—a claim that Malala's father angrily dismissed as racist nonsense. Throughout the country, Musharraf announced that he would be cooperating with the United States. This decision made Musharraf unpopular, and locally, many political leaders declared fatwas (official religious statements) condemning America. Musharraf "hedged his bets" by collecting huge amounts of foreign aid from America, and then using it to supply jihadists. Malala's father hated Musharraf for promising to help the people of Pakistan, and then refusing to use any foreign aid to actually improve their lives.

Malala never denies the fact that many of the people in her community are racist, sexist, and homophobic—all things which many Americans would find deeply offensive. The prevalence of fatwas (usually condemning someone to death) in Pakistan during this time also shows a willingness to use and support violence in order to achieve one's ends. At the same time, Malala has already established her love and affection for the people in her community, despite the fact that she doesn't share many of their views. She wants to educate her neighbors and teach them to move past their petty bigotry.

CHAPTER 7: THE MUFTI WHO TRIED TO CLOSE OUR SCHOOL

Near Malala's school, there lived a tall, handsome *mufti* (scholar of Islam) named Ghulamullah. Malala's father sensed that Ghulamullah didn't approve of the notion of a school for women. "He was right," Malala notes. Ghulamullah eventually accused Ziauddin of running a *haram* (blasphemous) school, and of corrupting women against Allah.

Thus far in the book, Islam has been very important in Malala's life, but there haven't been any true representatives of the religion itself. Here Ghulamullah acts that part, raising all sorts of questions about what, precisely, it means to be a "representative" of a religion that should be available to everyone.

Malala makes a few comments on Islam in Pakistan. While she's proud to be a member of the Muslim community, she rejects the notion that Islam involves women being submissive to men. The Quran (Islam's holy book), she argues, teaches Muslims to be patient, but Muslims in Pakistan often resort to violence to get their way. In the 70s and 80s, millions of Hindus were chased out of Pakistan, and many of them were murdered. In retaliation, Hindus attacked Muslims fleeing India—this created a cycle of violence that continues in Malala's lifetime. Even within Islam, Malala continues, there is a historic split between the Sunnis and Shias. These two religious sects have always disagreed about who the proper successor to Muhammed was. The vast majority of Pakistan—about 80 percent—is Sunni. But even within this group, there many subgroups. There are the Barelvis, the Salafists, the Deobandi, etc. Each of these subgroups celebrates the Quran in a slightly different way.

In direct contrast to Ghulamullah, Malala offers her own interpretation of the Quran, the holy book of Islam. This is in itself a radical act, as women aren't usually allowed to interpret holy scripture in the fundamentalist Muslim world—they're supposed to rely on the interpretations of people like Ghulamullah. While Malala doesn't offer a great amount of detail about her interpretation of Islam (she doesn't offer exact passages from the Quran, for instance), she does use this section to argue for her right *to interpret the Quran in the first place. By emphasizing the many sects of Islam, she also suggests that people get lost in unimportant, external details and lose sight of the larger lessons of the religion: like patience and compassion.*

Ghulamullah held a public meeting to discuss the virtues of Ziauddin's school. He invited Ziauddin to this meeting, where he accused Ziauddin of perverting the Quran. Ziauddin calmly argued that the Quran encouraged women to improve their minds and souls, citing passages from the book to back up his argument. Eventually, he and Ghulamullah agreed to a compromise: Ziauddin would build a new, private gate through which the girls would enter the school. This way, men wouldn't see women entering the school. Ghulamullah didn't like this compromise, however, since he was aiming to shut down Ziauddin's school altogether.

Although Ziauddin is an idealist who's passionately loyal to the principle of women's rights and equal education, he's also perfectly willingly to compromise—he is, in short, a realist when he needs to be. Here he clearly gets the better of his argument with Ghulamullah. He allows minor modifications to his school, and in return is allowed to keep his school open. Ghulamullah, however, is clearly of the extremist mindset that doesn't accept compromise.

In the early 2000s, Malala's community grew noticeably more conservative than the rest of Pakistan. Malala's neighbors embraced the doctrine of *jihad* and openly criticized the United States. Jihadists walked through the streets openly. Malala was terrified of these people, because they despised the notion of women's rights. In 2003, Ziauddin opened a high school in Swat. At first the school was coed, but this quickly changed—the climate in Pakistan was too controversial, and Ziauddin was forced to separate the boys and girls. Once again the *mufti* tried to shut down the school, but failed. Ziauddin was still too popular and respected.

Many times, Malala suggests that the conservatism and fundamentalism rampant in her community isn't truly a product of Islam itself—rather, it's a reflection of the instability in Pakistan in recent decades. General Zia's violence, US support of radical Muslim fighters (like bin Laden) against the USSR, and the new "War on Terror" have set a dangerous precedent that the jihadists have taken up. For the time being, however, Ziauddin's charisma and popularity win out over the demands of the extremists.

In 2004, Malala reports, General Musharraf sent troops to the area between Afghanistan and Pakistan as a part of his alliance with the United States. This area was rumored to be a safe haven for members of al-Qaeda, the group that claimed responsibility for the 9/11 attacks. Many people in Malala's community went to fight, but later refused to attack al-Qaeda due to their personal sympathies with the movement. Shortly afterwards, Malala reports, the United States sent drones to attack Pakistani villages, supposedly to eliminate Osama bin Laden.

Malala captures the sense of confusion and betrayal common in Pakistan at the time. The government of the country, headed by General Musharraf, has aligned itself with the US, but millions of its people also continue to support organizations that openly oppose the US. Essentially Pakistan is being torn apart by its contradictory relationship to the West.

In 2006, an American drone killed 82 people in the town of Khar, very close to where Malala lived. America claimed that the drone was targeting an al-Qaeda training camp, despite the fact that most of the 82 dead were children. In response, the elders in Mingora held a meeting, in which they proposed that all loyal Muslims take up arms against the United States. Malala's father was one of the only people who opposed this plan—he argued that opposing America would only bring further violence and death to Mingora. Much to his frustration, few people agreed with him.

Ziauddin has used a similar argument before when Salman Rushdie was running from Islamic fatwas. Here he tries to argue against violently attacking the West, but his arguments find little support in his community. Clearly the country is shifting towards fundamentalism. Malala's account here also emphasizes a point often suppressed or ignored in America: that America's "War on Terror" killed thousands of civilians and children—people who had nothing to do with 9/11. Many Pakistanis' hatred of the US is thus not so different from Americans' hatred of terrorists. As of 2015, American drones still patrol parts of Pakistan.

CHAPTER 8: THE AUTUMN OF THE EARTHQUAKE

One day in 2005, when Malala was about thirteen years old, there was an earthquake in Swat. While Mingora was largely spared from damage, the earthquake did huge damage to nearby cities like Kashmir and Kabul. Children and the elderly died in the disaster. In the aftermath, Malala's family campaigned to raise money to help the families of the victims of the earthquake.

It's often said that crises bring out the best and the worst in human beings. Here, the earthquake brings out the best in Malala's family: they selflessly donate money to earthquake victims and help the families of people who died.

In response to the earthquake, the United States sent helicopters and aid to Pakistan. At the same time, the JuD (Jamaat-ul-Dawa), a fundamentalist group, took in thousands of children who had been orphaned by the earthquake. As a result, these children grew up believing in the teachings of the JuD, including the idea that women had no rights. Mullahs preached that the earthquake was a sign that Pakistan had angered Allah, and that Muslims should embrace the Quran with new passion.

It should be noted that the US responds to the earthquake in much the same way that Ziauddin's family does: by sending help and money. Of course, it's highly likely that the US is primarily trying to build support for itself among the people of Pakistan, rather than acting out of any strictly humanitarian impulse.

CHAPTER 9: RADIO MULLAH

When Malala was ten years old, the Taliban came to the Swat valley. When she first saw the Taliban, Malala thought they resembled vampires, like the creatures she'd been reading about in the *Twilight* books. They wore black turbans and had long beards, even by Pakistani standards. The leader of the Taliban in the area was a man named Maulana Fazlullah. At first, Fazlullah claimed to be a "reformer" of the Quran. He encouraged people to give up drugs and cigarettes to improve their health. As time went on, however, he became more extreme in his rhetoric, calling the government officials of Pakistan "infidels" for their alliance with America. He also insisted that women should work all day at home, and he used his radio station to broadcast his beliefs. Fazlullah became enormously popular in Swat—people thought of him as a "Robin Hood" figure, restoring power and dignity to good, common Muslims. Malala and Ziauddin were disturbed by Fazlullah's popularity.

This opening scene is shocking in the way Malala blends childish details with the harsh realities of the Taliban's arrival (the mention of Twilight *is especially unnerving). Like Ziauddin, Fazlullah is a charismatic and popular speaker and broadcaster, who uses his access to the media to influence a huge number of people. And yet Fazlullah uses his influence to advance his own fundamentalist agenda, rather than to bring freedom and education to the people who listen to him. Fazlullah is also careful to slowly adjust his listeners to his fundamentalist agenda. It's much easier for people to grow accustomed to gradual changes than radical ones, and so learn to accept even great inhumanities as "normal."*

As Malala grew up, Fazlullah continued to inspire the people in Swat. He called for increasingly severe changes in Swat society: closing down all beauty parlors, banning barbers, and forbidding women from walking outside in the evening. When American health workers arrived in Mingora offering polio vaccines, he encouraged Muslims to refuse their help, arguing that the vaccines were part of an American conspiracy to make Pakistanis infertile. Fazlullah also called for all women to wear their headscarves (**burqas**) at all times. At his schools, Ziauddin didn't enforce this rule. His friends encouraged him to speak out against Taliban laws. Ziauddin wrote a letter to the newspapers, arguing that the Taliban were misinterpreting the Quran. He was then disappointed to see that the editor placed his letter in an unpopular section of the newspaper where few people would read it, and also included Ziauddin's name and address. Nevertheless, Ziauddin's friends congratulated him on speaking out against the Taliban.

Fazlullah's measures aren't overtly violent—at least not yet. Yet they're highly repressive, and send a clear message to women in Pakistan: they're second-class citizens. This is especially troubling when one considers that Islam, historically speaking, was one of the most egalitarian of the world's religions, assigning an equal position to women in marriage and property law. Ziauddin's bravery is clear in this section: though he must recognize that he's putting himself in danger, he speaks out against the Taliban's ideology.

CHAPTER 10: TOFFEES, TENNIS BALLS, AND THE BUDDHAS OF SWAT

Malala begins the chapter by noting that the Taliban "took our music, then our Buddhas, then our history." She elaborates that the Taliban destroyed the Buddhist statues and monuments where Malala used to play as a child. In 2007, they obliterated a Buddhist statue that had been standing in the Swat valley since the 7th century. The Taliban also banned various childish games that it considered to be against the Quran. To Ziauddin's amazement, almost no one spoke out against these injustices, and people were willing to submit to the Taliban's rules. Ziauddin, by contrast, continued to write articles and op-eds for the newspapers, and use his popularity and charisma to speak out against the Taliban.

One reason the Taliban are such a dangerous enemy is that they are the ultimate combination of "church and state." Thus they justify all their political actions with religion, and so basically bully and coerce other Muslims into stepping in line with their fundamentalist views. The Taliban's destruction of the Buddhist statue is a different kind of horror from their violence and oppression—it is an attack on culture and history itself. The statue was older than any human, but it has been destroyed by human ignorance and hatred.

Malala notes that all of Pakistan seemed to be going mad in the early 2000s. The Taliban ordered all women to wear their **burqas** at all times. Groups of women covered with burqas would break into Western restaurants and music stores and destroy everything there. As Musharraf became more vocal in his support for the United States, the country became more extreme in its political and religious views, and there was even a plot to blow up Musharraf's convoy.

The country is basically turning on itself, and this self-division echoes in the attitude of Pakistani women toward the Taliban. Amazingly, millions of women join the Taliban in attacking Western stores and restaurants. They seem to accept the Taliban's interpretation of Islam, and so even consider themselves *inferior beings, ones best suited to martyrdom.*

By 2007, when Malala was ten years old, the situation in Pakistan had escalated to the point where it was feared that Taliban soldiers would take over the capital city of Islamabad. On July 12—Malala's birthday—a large group of Taliban supporters, including many women, marched through Islamabad, declaring war on Pakistan's government. There were suicide bombers throughout the country, many of whom were women. These women claimed that Fazlullah had taught them that it was noble to martyr themselves. In response to the constantly escalating violence in the country, Musharraf decided to step down as president. Surprisingly, the United States arranged for his replacement to be Benazir Bhutto, Musharraf's old political rival. The plan was for Bhutto and Musharraf to cooperate with one another and help the US. Ziauddin was certain that this deal would fail, since Musharraf and Bhutto despised one another.

The government's measure to restore order in the country—installing Benazir Bhutto as the new president—seems destined to fail, both for the reasons that Ziauddin names and because we've seen enough evidence already that the country is in chaos. People are willing to suffer and even die for their cause—indeed, thousands of women are willing to blow themselves up in order to advance the Taliban cause. These acts of destruction are at once impressive and terrifying, and offer a horrific reminder that devotion to a cause need not be a virtue. Malala is highly devoted to the causes of equality and freedom—and the women who blow themselves up in the streets are just as devoted to their cause of radical Islam.

On October 18, 2007, Benazir Bhutto returned from a long period of exile. Malala and millions of other Pakistanis watched television footage of her arrival. Suddenly, to everyone's shock, there was an enormous explosion in Bhutto's bus. 150 people were killed, but amazingly Bhutto wasn't one of them, since she'd left the bus only moments before. Militant Islamists, Malala explains, had engineered the bombing.

Bhutto's assassination attempt is a mark of how chaotic Pakistan has become in only a few years. The American involvement in Pakistan has given the country a jolt—a reminder of the Russians' involvement in Afghanistan only fifteen years previously. The people of Pakistan are justifiably wary of Westerners as dangerous invaders—and the only other option seems to be the Taliban.

Shortly after the failed attempt on Benazir Bhutto's life, the Pakistani national army arrived in Swat. Musharraf—still a powerful force in the government—sent 3,000 troops to Swat to protect the people from the influence of the Taliban. Every night, Malala heard the sounds of gunfire and explosions. Within only a few weeks, much of the Pakistani army had defected to the Taliban's side. Musharraf responded by sending more soldiers to the area—this was somewhat successful, though Ziauddin warned that the Taliban would "return with a vengeance."

The Taliban, we've already seen, are far too powerful to be scared off by only a few days of fighting with the army. The Taliban they have thousands of devoted members willing to lay down their lives, and it is an ominous sign that many of the Pakistani soldiers actually switch sides and join the Taliban, instead of fighting against them. At this point the Pakistani people are basically choosing between different evils: there is no good option.

On December 27, 2007, Benazir Bhutto held a rally in which she claimed that she would fight the forces of extremism and militancy in Pakistan, especially the Taliban. As Bhutto's car drove through the crowd, a suicide bomber suddenly blew himself up by the car, and a sniper simultaneously shot at Bhutto. Either because of the gunshot, the bomb, or both, Bhutto had been murdered. Malala was heartbroken when she learned of the assassination, as she had thought of Bhutto as a defender of women's rights. Afterwards, Musharraf blamed the Taliban for the shooting, something which—very unusually—the Taliban denied. To Malala's horror, many of the mullahs in her community took the position that Bhutto's death was a good thing: she'd been profaning the Quran. Ziauddin told Malala that she would have to learn to interpret the Quran herself.

Bhutto's assassination is a tragedy in many respects. It marks the death of a brave and peaceful politician who, by Malala's account, fought for women's rights and democracy in Pakistan, but it also suggests a more personal tragedy for Malala: she's lost an important role model, a symbol of what women could achieve. This is very discouraging, but Malala continues to struggle to do good—in this case to defend Islam against the extremists corrupting its teachings.

CHAPTER 11: THE CLEVER CLASS

This was a dark time in Malala's life: the country was in chaos, and she felt unsafe in her own town. She didn't feel comfortable wearing her school uniform, since the uniform was a sign that she was being educated, and thus, in the Taliban's eyes, dishonoring Allah. Nevertheless, Malala began high school. She continued to do well on her exams, usually defeating her rival, Malka-e-Noor. She had trouble with mathematics, but excelled at writing and theater. She wrote an amusing sketch based on *Romeo and Juliet*. Malala notes that the sketch was popular, in no small part because laughs were few and far between at the time.

Here we see that the Taliban have, in some ways, been successful in their goals: they've used terrorism to inspire fear and anxiety in millions of people, showing them that they're in danger of losing their lives if they persist in attending school. At the same time, Malala refuses to give up on her education as Tor Pekai did. She continues attending school, encouraged by both her father and mother. Selfless as ever, she uses her intelligence and quick wit to bring happiness to others.

Across Pakistan the Taliban started blowing up schools for girls. When Malala heard about this she was horrified, unable to believe that anyone could do such a thing. At one point in 2008, a girls' school was blown up almost every day. In February, Malala was sitting in her kitchen when she heard an explosion: a suicide bomber, she later learned, had blown up a chunk of the Haji Baba High School, not far from Malala's school. Malala asked Ziauddin if he was frightened, now that the Taliban violence had reached his home. Ziauddin replied that they had to remember their courage and refuse to give in to the Taliban's intimidation.

At times Malala is tested in her brave decision to continue going to school. On these occasions, Ziauddin plays an invaluable role in encouraging her to continue learning. It's easy to forget that Malala is only a small child here (not even ten years old at the time). One might even conclude that Ziauddin is wrong to force his child to continue attending school: he should try to save Malala's life by forcing her to stay home from school every day. But Ziauddin's love for education is so great that he refuses to cave in to the Taliban's demands.

In response to the escalating violence in Swat, Ziauddin joined with a group of elders who wanted to challenge Fazlullah's interpretations of the Quran. Although Ziauddin was far younger than the other men in this group, he was chosen as a spokesperson, since he was known to be an eloquent and courageous man. In the coming months, Ziauddin made a series of popular speeches denouncing Fazlullah. He accused Fazlullah of destroying Swati culture and ruining Pakistani lives. Ziauddin encouraged the common people of Swat to resist Fazlullah's influence, often reciting the famous Martin Niemöller poem, "First they came for the communists, and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a communist…" Malala worshiped her father for his bravery and eloquence.

While it could be argued that Ziauddin endangers Malala's life to encouraging her to go to school, it's equally apparent that he's trying to protect her from the Taliban with every speech he delivers. By criticizing the Taliban in the most withering terms, Ziauddin reduces the number of new recruits to which the Taliban have access, and thereby makes it more difficult for them to continue terrorizing the country. As always, Ziauddin uses art and literature to stress his points. This is especially poignant because the Taliban fear any kind of creativity or free thought, and yet at this point it often seems that guns are stronger than poetry.

At school, Ziauddin organized a peace march, in which most of the girls agreed to participate. A local television station stopped by the march and asked to interview the students. Malala, along with many of her classmates, answered questions from reporters. Malala later realized that this was a bold move for the station: Pakistan was under great pressure to depict the Taliban in a positive light, and interviewing the girls whom the Taliban threatened made the Taliban seem inhumane. In one interview, Malala said, "How dare the Taliban take away my basic right to education?" Malala's passionate statement later appeared on televisions across Pakistan. Ziauddin told Malala that he was very proud of her.

We see that Ziauddin's bravery has paid off: he's inspired other people, such as the radio broadcasters in this section, to speak out against the Taliban as well. It's unnerving that the media are being "pressured" into supporting the Taliban—their right to free speech is being infringed upon in an overt way. This is also an important section because it marks the beginning of Malala's career in the public spotlight. Thus it introduces a new element to the memoir—that of Malala dealing with herself as a public persona, and struggling with the power and temptations of fame.

On October 7, 2008, Malala heard explosions not far from her home. These turned out to be bombings at the Sangota Convent School for girls, a famous institution that had educated women for nearly a century. Following the bombing, Ziauddin gave interviews in which he denounced militant extremists with particular furor. By the end of the near, the Taliban had bombed nearly 400 schools for girls across the country. Following Bhutto's death, the government had fallen under the control of President Asif Zardari, Bhutto's widower. While he continued his wife's opposition to the Taliban, life in Swat continued to deteriorate.

At this time in Pakistan's history, the government becomes increasingly divorced from the realities of Pakistani life. There's a sense that it doesn't matter who's in power, whether it be Bhutto, her husband, or Musharraf—in any case, the Taliban will continue killing innocent people. This way of looking at Pakistan, of course, discounts the role of people like Ziauddin, who use their power and influence to oppose the Taliban.

Ziauddin allowed his relatives from other parts of Pakistan to stay with him in his house. As a result, Malala's home was suddenly very crowded. She quarreled with her visiting cousins and her brother, Khushal, almost constantly. At the end of 2008, Fazlullah's deputy made a sudden announcement: Ziauddin's girls' school would close. He warned women to avoid going to school after January 15. Malala didn't take this threat seriously, because she saw her father's bravery, but many of her friends believed that their lives would be in danger if they continued to attend school.

Ziauddin is often an idealist, but, as we've already seen, he's a realist when he has to be. He's not willing to allow young girls to die because of his beliefs—and in this sense, he's entirely different from Fazlullah and the other Taliban leaders. Though it causes him great pain to close down his own school, Ziauddin has no choice but to give in to the Taliban's threats of violence—he has to protect his children's lives before he can advance the causes of equality and free education.

CHAPTER 12: THE BLOODY SQUARE

In 2009, Malala is 12 years old. This is the year in which, by her own reckoning, she begins actively fighting for justice and equality. Yet as January 2009 begins, the violence in Swat becomes even more apparent. The Taliban begin killing Swati civilians and leaving their bodies in the middle of town. They murder a woman named Shabana, a popular dancer and singer in Malala's town. Shabana was a symbol of Swati art and music, Malala thought—by attacking her, the Taliban are voicing their opposition to women's rights, but also to freedom and creativity. Malala has a hard time understanding how the Taliban could represent themselves as good Muslims while also threatening to kill all those who aren't Muslim. It's impossible to intimidate someone into becoming Muslim, she maintains.

In the previous chapter, it seemed that violence in Pakistan had reached a peak in the death of Benazir Bhutto. Now, it seems, the real violence is only beginning, as women are killed in increasingly gruesome ways. While the Taliban defend these actions as necessary aspects of Islamic law, it's hard not to see them for what they really are: sexist, reactionary attacks on women who assert their power and authority in the public sphere. Malala reminds us that this is the opposite of what Islam really teaches.

There is remarkably little response to Taliban atrocity in Pakistan, because people are afraid that they themselves will be killed. Some of Ziauddin's friends in Islamabad organize a conference about religious freedom, but almost no one turns up, either to speak or listen. Ziauddin continues to write articles criticizing the Taliban. His wife worries about what will happen if the Taliban come to hurt him, and she begins sleeping with a knife under her pillow.

Ziauddin has always counted on a close network of loyal friends, and now he's sad to see that many of his allies have caved to the Taliban. They don't wish to attend Ziauddin's summit because they fear for their lives and the lives of their families. Even Tor Pekai, a peaceful, quiet woman, begins taking precautions against the Taliban—their influence is everywhere.

Because of the uncertain atmosphere in Pakistan, there are many conspiracy theories. Some believe that the government of Pakistan is secretly encouraging the Taliban. Ziauddin believes that the Taliban have "unseen support," but he dismisses the idea that the government is working alongside them. To distract herself from her anxiety, Malala reads *A Brief History of Time* by Stephen Hawking. She is only eleven years old, she notes, but already wants to go back to a simpler, earlier time.

We haven't heard much about Malala personally in a while, and we don't know how she'll react to the chaotic violence she's been describing. It's inspiring and even a little refreshing to find that Malala, while frightened by the Taliban's actions, turns to books for comfort. She continues to do exactly the thing the Taliban hate and fear the most: educate herself.

CHAPTER 13: THE DIARY OF GUL MAKAI

In early 2009, Ziauddin receives a call from his old friend, Abdul Hai Kakar, a BBC reporter. Abdul wants Ziauddin to help him find a young schoolgirl who could write about her experiences under the Taliban. When Malala hears that Ziauddin was looking for a suitable candidate, she volunteers herself. Ziauddin agrees, and Malala begins writing a regular diary. She uses the pseudonym "Gul Makai," which means "cornflower," since Abdul warns her that it might be unsafe to use her real name.

Although Malala has given radio broadcasts before, her decision to keep a diary represents her struggle to find a voice for herself and to "come of age" in the act of opposing the Taliban. For the time being, Malala is a long way from the defiant young woman who continues opposing the Taliban even after they shoot her. At this point she uses a false name, rather than saying "I Am Malala."

Malala writes her first diary entry on January 3, 2009. She talks about her anxiety, and reports a dream she had, in which the Taliban arrived by helicopter. Afterwards, Malala's words are published online. In the following months, Malala writes about a great number of topics. She criticizes the requirement that all women wear a **burqa**, arguing that women should be allowed to choose their own clothing. Students at Malala's school begin talking about the diary, without realizing that Malala is its author. The BBC publishes Malala's diary and translates it into English. Despite Malala's efforts to convince others to stand against the Taliban, there are now only ten students left in her class.

As was sometimes the case with the descriptions of Ziauddin's rise to fame and prominence, Malala's international fame happens so quickly that it's difficult to tell exactly how *it occurred. While it's true that many in the international community were looking for an insider's account of life in Pakistan, it's almost magical how quickly Malala's writing becomes internationally known. In a way, this is the most realistic way for Malala to portray her rise to prominence: to an eleven-year-old girl, this event* would *seem to happen overnight, as if by magic.*

On January 14—according to the Taliban, the last day Ziauddin's school will be allowed to run in peace—Ziauddin is in a bad mood. He knows that he'll be forced to shut down his school, since nobody will want to risk their lives to study. Around this time, he receives an offer to participate in a documentary about Afghanistan, produced by the *New York Times*. Ziauddin meets with the American journalist Adam Ellick. During these meetings, Ellick strikes up a friendship with Malala, whose English is good enough to hold a conversation with him. Ellick decides that he wants to focus his documentary on Malala's experiences in Afghanistan. Ellick arranges to film a scene in which Malala sadly walks by her school. After filming this scene, Malala begins to cry—she can't bear the thought of not being able to go to school anymore.

While it could be objected that Malala's involvement in the documentary is somehow artificial—she's performing for the camera instead of being herself—Malala quickly refutes this argument. The tears that she sheds while walking past her school are real, not play-acted, as she can't bear the thought of not being able to learn for the rest of her life. The fact that her first international fame comes from an American, however, contributes to much of the criticism Malala faces now. Many in Pakistan claim that she is a "puppet" of the West, and argue that America uses her now-famous suffering as a justification for its continued violence and imperialism.

Malala continues to publish her diary. She argues that the Taliban's fear of education is unfounded. While the Taliban thinks that education will lead to "Westernization," she argues, the truth is that education isn't regional at all: "Education is education." She also receives a message from Shiza Shahid, a student from Stanford University, who was impressed by Malala's appearance in Ellick's documentary. In the future, Malala notes, Shahid would be an important ally to her father.

Malala uses her diary to tell "her story," but in fact, she also uses it to do much more. She argues that education can't be dismissed as a cultural thing—it's a universal human right, a fundamental part of being human. Here, as before, it's easy to forget that Malala is only 11 years old—her maturity and sophistication of thought would put many older writers to shame.

In February, Malala visits Islamabad, accompanied by her father and Adam Ellick. Ellick buys her American books and DVDs. Malala notes that Islamabad has been devastated by the Taliban as well, and people live in constant fear of a bombing. When Malala returns to Mingora she realizes, as if for the first time, that she won't be going to school any time soon. This realization is crushing to her.

As Malala grows up, she gains more knowledge of Pakistan itself: she gets a better feeling for its cities, the differences between its regions, etc. It is a strange experience coming of age in a war-torn country, especially when one is in the spotlight like Malala is.

CHAPTER 14: A FUNNY KIND OF PEACE

In early 2009, the schools in Swat reopen. Because he's a boy, Khushal is still allowed to attend classes, but he values education less highly than Malala, and so he says he wants to stay home with Malala. Malala is furious with this—she insists that Khushal is lucky to be able to learn. Malala stays at home and educates herself by reading books, including *The Alchemist* by Paul Coelho.

Khushal isn't a major presence in the book by any means, and is mostly a convenient hook on which Malala can hang her ideas about the importance of education. But he also shows how the patriarchy is harmful to both men and women—when boys are told that they are naturally superior, they develop a sense of entitlement, and so can lazily squander the privileges they're given.

Malala's spirits lift when Fazlullah rethinks his policy on women's education. Ziauddin's protests have been more effective than Malala imagined: across Pakistan, people are criticizing Fazlullah for banning women's education. In response, Fazlullah agrees to lift the ban for girls who are ten years old or younger. Malala pretends to be younger than she really is in order to continue going to school. Several of her friends do so as well.

Ziauddin isn't as powerless as he's seemed to be lately. Again we're given little information about how exactly Ziauddin's protests resulted in a compromise with the Taliban. Instead Malala emphasizes the point that protests and demonstrations can effect positive change in politics.

Swat has reached a point where there are Taliban soldiers everywhere. 70 percent of the valley is under Taliban control, and when Malala walks through Mingora, she can't help but see Taliban. On the night of February 19, 2009, there is a breakthrough in government-Taliban relations. A peace agreement is arranged between the government and the Taliban. Under the terms of the agreement, there will be a ten-day truce, and the Taliban will release some of the prisoners they've kept.

Ziauddin's compromise with the Taliban coincides—perhaps not coincidentally—with the compromise between the Taliban and the government of Pakistan. This sheds some light on why the Taliban have agreed to let girls attend school once again—they're losing followers, and need to cave in on some of their demands.

In the midst of the ten-day truce, Malala gives an interview to a famous Pakistani reporter, Musa Khan Khel. Ziauddin has arranged for the interview using the connections he made through Adam Ellick. In the interview, Malala talks about her experiences growing up in a war-torn area. Shortly afterward, on February 22, 2009, there is important news: a permanent ceasefire has been announced. Schools will reopen with all girls properly covered by **burqas**, the government will pay reparations to the families of war victims, and there will be no more suicide bombers. Malala is thrilled with this news, though she learns that the American government is disappointed—it believes that Pakistan's government has "given in" to the Taliban.

Malala already seems to conduct herself with a level of confidence that many grown men don't possess. Perhaps this is a result of her coming of age in a war-torn country—next to the threat of a bombing, the prospects of interviewing with a famous reporter don't seem particularly nerve-wracking at all. And of course, part of Malala's calmness is a function of her own innate maturity and poise, qualities which no one, including Ziauddin, could teach her. As a general rule, Malala seems to respect the importance of compromises—unlike her fundamentalist opponents, she doesn't think in terms of absolutes.

In the months following the ceasefire agreement, there are occasional flare-ups of violence. A woman is attacked by a Taliban soldier for shopping for makeup unaccompanied. Another woman manages to film the entire incident, and the footage is later broadcast across the country, to enormous outrage. Malala is outraged, too, though she's a little irritated that this incident sparks so much anger, while the Taliban's ban on education sparked relatively little. The Taliban remain in Swat, and one day a soldier threatens to hurt Malala's mother if she doesn't wear her **burqa**. Malala's mother reluctantly agrees to wear the burqa in the future. One of Ziauddin's friends summarizes the problem with Pakistan: "there cannot be two swords in one sheath." Both the government and the Taliban continue to wield power over the people of Pakistan—there can't be two groups in charge.

The attacks on women in Pakistan grow even more brutal, and Malala's feelings on the matter are very telling: we realize that she regards the right to education as every bit as important as the right to life and freedom. The dilemma that Pakistan faces is essentially the dilemma of the "unstable state." A state is often defined as a human institution that successfully claims a monopoly on the legitimate use of force in a territory. Because there are two forces vying for a monopoly on the use of force in Pakistan, the people don't know whom to obey, and so the country is torn apart along ideological lines.

There are demonstrations and marches throughout Swat, organized by the Taliban. People march in support of the Quran, criticizing Western education and culture as "corrupt" and "wicked." Taliban officials speak before crowds of thousands, calling democracy contrary to the wishes of Allah. Malala begins to believe that Pakistan has become a Taliban state.

The downside of the government's compromise with the Taliban is that it has now recognized the Taliban as a legitimate political entity, in addition to a terrorist organization. As a result, the Taliban has a national platform, and so an easier time advancing its fundamentalist beliefs.

In the following months, Malala realizes that the United States was right to condemn the deal between Pakistan and the Taliban. By winning some of its demands using violence and intimidation, the Taliban has decided that it can get away with anything, provided that it uses violence. Soon there are riots in Swat, and bombings throughout Islamabad. Malala learns that President Obama has shipped 21,000 new troops to Afghanistan to fight the Taliban. Nevertheless, he has stated publicly that Pakistan has a greater threat, since it controls nuclear warheads.

The Taliban's actions in the weeks following the compromise with the government are horrifying. Obama's refusal to ship troops to Pakistan is a signal of the uneasy relationship the US has with the country. America recognizes that Pakistan is potentially a major threat, but it also wants to keep Pakistan as an ally and support its government in opposing the Taliban.

In May 2009, the Pakistani army sends soldiers to Swat to drive the Taliban away. There is constant gunfire near Malala's home. Malala is terrified, but Ziauddin insists that the safest thing to do is to remain in the village. Nevertheless, a loudspeaker announces that soldiers will be "clearing the town" soon—the safest thing to do, the loudspeaker advises, is leave immediately.

For the time being, Ziauddin keeps his family in the Swat Valley, and he seems to have a good point: people are safer in their houses than outside, where the Taliban can attack them without impunity. Yet the danger in the Swat Valley has also become so great that it seems like the best course of action is to leave entirely.

CHAPTER 15: LEAVING THE VALLEY

In May 2009, Ziauddin makes the difficult decision to take his family out of Mingora. The area has become too dangerous for a family to live in. Malala is particularly heartbroken with the news of leaving—she loves her home. On May 5, the family leaves together: Malala, her siblings and parents, her grandmother, her cousin, his wife, and their child. Before leaving, the family says a prayer to Allah, asking for protection and guidance. Afterwards, they leave Mingora in cars provided by their neighbor Safina's parents and some of Ziauddin's friends.

Malala's connection to her community is never clearer than in this section, when she's forced to say goodbye to it. She's not even a teenager at the time, but she's forced to endure far more danger and adversity than the typical adult. And yet she seems remarkably calm—partly because she turns to Islam for guidance and comfort. An especially powerful part of Malala's book is the fact that she fights radical Islam not with Christianity or secularism, but with moderate, sincere Islam.

Malala and her family leave Mingora by car. The streets are crowded, and Taliban soldiers push between the cars, searching for women not wearing their **burqas**. After hours of driving, the family leaves the town and heads for Mardan, the nearest major city. In Mardan, there are camps set up for refugees. Amazingly, Malala notes, 75 percent of the people who came from Swat were sheltered by families in Mardan. Ziauddin plans to take his family to Shangla, the village where he grew up. This requires him to drive to Abottabad, then Besham, then Shangla. Malala spends nights sleeping in a car, sleeping outside, and sleeping in cheap hotels. A man tries to attack Malala's mother, but she defends herself and scares the man off. Malala gains new respect for her mother after this incident.

Even in moments like this, we recognize that Pakistan is still full of good, generous people. Here, for instance, the people of Mardan generously offer up their homes to the refugees who come into their town from Swat. In part, this is because of cultural norms (we've already seen how important hospitality is in Pashtun culture, for instance), but it's because of the natural decency of many Pakistani people—they help other people out of the goodness of their hearts, not because they expect anything in return.

After weeks of travel, Malala's family reaches Shangla, where they reunite with cousins, grandparents, and friends. The family in Shangla is surprised that Ziauddin has brought his family there, since it's likely that the Taliban will invade Shangla next, forcing him to uproot his family once again.

Ziauddin seems curiously short-sighted in this section, and his decision to bring his family to Shangla is fundamentally an optimistic one: he thinks that he'll be able to return to Mingora soon enough.

In the following weeks, Malala settles into her new life in Shangla. She gets up early to walk to school. At school, she finds that people distrust her because she's a woman—at her old school in Mingora, this simply didn't happen. Malala continues to give interviews with radio stations, since her father remains an influential man. Malala also reunites with Moniba, who also left Mingora on May 5.

It's remarkable that both Malala and Ziauddin continue with their political projects even when they're refugees. This is a testament to their own intelligence and initiative as well as to the generosity of their friends and family.

On Malala's 12th birthday, nobody—not even Ziauddin—remembers the occasion. Malala is hurt, but she understands why: everyone is extremely busy, trying to decide what to do next. Malala remembers how happy she was on her 11th birthday, a day, which now seems long ago.

Malala isn't even a teenager, but she's capable of great maturity and mental insights—like seeing past her own wants and needs to focus on the bigger picture.

CHAPTER 16: THE VALLEY OF SORROWS

The chapter begins three months after the events of the previous one. Malala has been away from her home, Mingora, for months—but now she and her family are driving back to Mingora. The prime minister of Pakistan has announced that the Taliban have been cleared out of Swat, making the area safe once again. As Ziauddin drives, Malala sees the ruins of her home: houses she used to visit have been blown apart, and the beautiful gardens outside each house have become overgrown with weeds.

While there are no Taliban left in Mingora (or so it seems), the Taliban have done plenty of damage during their time there. Mingora is in ruins, and all the places where Malala played as a child have been destroyed. This is a harsh, devastating way for a child to come of age, yet we can sense that Malala is growing up simply by seeing the ruins of her old playgrounds.

When Malala and her family arrive back in their home, they check to see if they've been robbed. To their enormous relief, their home has been left virtually undisturbed. Malala is happy to find that the books she bought in Islamabad are still in her room. Inside the Khushal School, Malala is disturbed to see cigarette ashes, bullet casings, graffiti, and the corpses of goats. Clearly, the Taliban has treated the school as a target. Ziauddin is surprised to find a letter inside the school, sent by a Pakistani soldier. In the letter, the soldier criticizes the people of Swat for allowing the Taliban to take over their lives.

While it's traumatic to see the ruins of her community, it's a stroke of good fortune that Malala's home has been left virtually unchanged. Her books—the first things she checks for—haven't been touched, let alone ruined. It's very telling that Ziauddin finds trash and debris from both the Taliban and the Pakistani military: as we'll soon see, they're not nearly as different as they'd like to pretend.

Malala tries to adjust to her new life in Mingora. Although the Pakistani army now keeps Mingora stable, she finds that things aren't much different than they were when the Taliban dominated Mingora. Soldiers leave the bodies of dead Taliban soldiers in public as a threat—much as the Taliban soldiers did with the bodies of their own enemies, months before.

Although the Pakistani government is seemingly committed to helping the Americans fight the Taliban, we see that it's effectively no different from the Taliban—it forces its citizens to live in a state of fear.

Malala begins school once again in the fall of 2009. She is overjoyed to be learning once again. She learns that most of her friends have stayed with their families across Pakistan, however. She's also saddened to learn that one friend lost her father in an explosion in another city in Pakistan. Malala discovers that most of her classmates know she wrote the BBC diary, as she referenced events that occurred in Mingora, and she's the only one who could have written so eloquently.

Clearly Malala is already recognized by her classmates as an eloquent writer, speaker, and activist, as they deduce that she's the only one who could have written the BBC diaries. This recognition feels just as important as Malala's growing international fame—she is still as closely linked to her community as ever.

Shiza Shahid, Ziauddin's friend from Stanford, returns from Stanford to live in Islamabad. She invites girls from the Khushal School to visit Islamabad and talk about their experiences with the Taliban. Malala goes to Islamabad, along with Moniba, Malka-e-Noor, and many other students. Malala arrives in Islamabad, accompanied by her mother, on August 14. There she explores the parks and buildings of Islamabad, which she finds beautiful. She tries many things for the first time, liked going to an English-language play, and even samples food from McDonald's. Most importantly, Malala meets women who are in positions of power: doctors, writers, journalists, etc. Malala finds these meetings especially inspiring.

Malala's trip to Islamabad is something of a pilgrimage for her: an intense, life-changing journey. In Islamabad Malala discovers that it's possible to have a thriving Pakistani community in which women are empowered and have careers. Indeed, this thriving community stands in stark contrast to the war-torn regions of the Swat Valley where women are repressed: all other things being equal, empowering women seems like the better strategy for a successful society. Malala's journey to Islamabad also contrasts markedly with her months as a refugee. Whereas that period challenged her faith in education and women's rights, her trip to Islamabad restores her convictions.

While Malala is in Islamabad, Shiza introduces her (along with the other schoolgirls) to Major General Athar Abbas, the commander of the Pakistani army. Malala asks General Abbas a difficult question: where is Fazlullah, and why can't Abbas bring him to justice for his crimes? Abbas takes more than fifteen minutes to answer this question, and when he's finished, Malala has no idea what he's said. Moniba asks Abbas who will rebuild the cities of Pakistan after the wars with the Taliban end. Abbas replies in an evasive, boilerplate way, leaving Moniba and Malala unsatisfied. On Malala's final day in Islamabad, she and her friends give speeches at the Islamabad Club about life under the Taliban. Moniba gives an emotional speech, and before she finishes, she bursts into tears. In all, Malala's trip to Islamabad makes her realize that Pakistan is a vast place, full of opportunities for women.

As Malala grows older, she gains more confidence in her abilities as a political leader. One consequence of this is her realization that proper politicians—of the kind she meets in this scene—aren't particularly mature or competent at all. Indeed, many of them are more or less unconcerned with the well-being of their constituents, and their goal is to maintain their power and—much like the superintendent who asked for a bribe from Ziauddin years before—to make money for themselves. Here we see that Malala is not alone in being an intelligent, eloquent young girl from Swat—Moniba too has a passion for justice and skill at public speaking.

When Malala returns to Mingora, she finds that Ziauddin has a major problem: he has no income to pay the teachers at the Khushal School. Malala suggests that Ziauddin talk to General Abbas. Ziauddin realizes that this is a good idea. Malala sends an email to Abbas, and in response he sends the Khushal School over one million rupees, enough money to pay all the teachers for more than three months. Ziauddin is overjoyed by this turn of events.

Throughout the book thus far, Ziauddin has used his friends and connections for Malala's benefit. Here, however, the tables turn in a noticeable way, as Malala uses her *connections to General Abbas to help her father, and ultimately keeps her father's school open for three more months.*

Malala is grateful to General Abbas for his donation to the Khushal School, but she continues to find fault in the way he runs the military in Pakistan. In Mingora, people are bullied and intimidated by the army, just as they were under the Taliban. Malala and her father give interviews in which they criticize the army for failing to bring the Taliban leaders to justice. Malala becomes increasingly interested in journalism after spending time giving interviews and making radio broadcasts.

Malala is happy to use her political connections for the betterment of her family and her community, but this doesn't meant that she's willing to compromise on her beliefs by working with corrupt politicians. Thus, she has no reservations about accepting General Abbas's money and also *criticizing his inattentiveness to the Swat.*

As 2009 comes to an end, Malala does well on her school exams, coming in first (and narrowly edging out Malka-e-Noor). The first half of 2010 is uneventful, compared with the years preceding it. In July, Malala turns 13 years old. Around this time, monsoon floods begin in the Swat Valley, threatening the homes of thousands of people. In the past, the trees in the valley formed a natural barrier against the floods—now, just as Ziauddin had warned years ago, the trees have been chopped down, and floods are a serious danger. Bridges are destroyed, electric power lines collapse, and buildings flood. There is a general feeling that Allah is punishing the people—first with an earthquake, then a flood. Some people even suggest that Americans have engineered the flood and earthquake using military technology.

As we've already seen, natural disasters and crises bring out both the best and worst in people. Here, we see some of the "worst." Instead of accepting that the crisis in question is a random event, they conclude that the US government is trying to destroy Pakistan. While wilder things have happened (with American involvement, to boot), it seems immoral to turn to conspiracy theories in such a time, as doing so seems like an alternative to actively helping people—choosing revenge and hatred over compassion and the difficult work of rebuilding communities. This passage also shows the danger of mixing religion so closely with politics—the Taliban can twist any event to make it seem like Allah is supporting their cause.

Following the floods, violence escalates. Taliban soldiers, still secretly living in the valley, blow up more schools and kidnap people they judge to be dangerous to Islam. Several of Ziauddin's friends are murdered for protesting the Taliban in print. Malala is frustrated and frightened by the lack of progress in the valley. She resolves to become a politician when she grows up—someone who can bring progress to her country.

For Malala, the crisis brings out her desire to lead others—to be their representative, and to use her talents to bring them happiness and peace instead of violence. There's no law that says that Malala has to respond to crisis in this way—indeed, most of the people around her respond to the same events with fear or anger.

CHAPTER 17: PRAYING TO BE TALL

When Malala is 13, she stops growing—suddenly, she's one of the shortest girls in her class. As she becomes more conscious of her shortness, she begins to lose some of the confidence that made her a good public speaker and interviewee.

Despite her reputation as a living saint, here Malala reminds us that she's also just a teenager with many universal teenaged problems and difficulties.

A new television series, *Beyond the Call of Duty*, becomes popular in Swat. The program is supposed to consist of real-life stories of soldiers in the Pakistani army, most of whom are stationed in Swat. Many people come to Ziauddin's house to watch the program in the hopes of gaining information about their missing loved ones. Many of Ziauddin's guests are women, wondering if their husbands are alive or dead. Throughout Pakistan, Ziauddin tells Malala, there are thousands of missing persons as a result of the wars between the government and the Taliban.

Through times of war and peace, Ziauddin's house remains a gathering place for people in Mingora. For Ziauddin, hospitality is clearly a basic duty. It's also important to note that Ziauddin tells Malala about the missing persons in Pakistan. He doesn't try to lie to her or "spare her" because she's young or because she's a girl. This is probably part of why Malala seems so mature while still so young—her father has always treated her as an equal.

In November 2010, a woman named Asia Bibi, a Christian, is sentenced to death for arguing about Islam with a group of Muslims. Because there is a strict "Blasphemy Law" in Pakistan (which prevents anyone from criticizing the Quran), Bibi is sentenced to be hanged immediately. Journalists across Pakistan speak out against this sentence, and call for Bibi to be pardoned. Many others praise the Blasphemy Law, however, and argue that Bibi should be sentenced to death. Ziauddin receives death threats in the mail. Malala is horrified—Pakistan is "going crazy," she thinks.

Up to this point, Ziauddin has been kept out of real danger by his reputation and his generosity to the people in his community. Even though some of his views are unpopular, he's known to be a good man. That these defenses no longer work—Ziauddin is in danger of losing his life—signals that Pakistan is, as Malala puts it, "going crazy." The order of society is breaking down, and people are turning against one another with frightening speed.

As the year goes on, it becomes increasingly common for people in Malala's town to blame America for all their problems. People point out the drone attacks occurring in nearby towns, and say that innocent civilians are being murdered. A likely CIA operative named Raymond Davis shoots and kills two Pakistani men in Lahore, and is sent to jail afterwards. In the ensuing political crisis, America demands that Davis be released immediately, while Pakistan insists that Davis is a dangerous criminal, and a spy. Protests against Raymond Davis take place across the country. After weeks of negotiation, Davis is released. This makes the Pakistani government look weak in the eyes of its people. To make matters worse, an American drone bombs a Pakistani village, killing dozens of innocent people.

On the face of things, it seems harmless (and even justified) to blame America for Pakistan's problems—Pakistani people, Malala notes, love conspiracy theories. But here Malala suggests that the impulse to reduce everything to a conspiracy theory is immoral in some ways—it's a way of reacting to tragedy that replaces *genuine empathy and helpful action. Ziauddin, for example, has no time for conspiracy theories, as he's too busy helping his neighbors: giving them food, money, and shelter. Meanwhile the Pashtuns who criticize American imperialism (with good reason, as the US drone strikes kill many innocent people) are often too busy condemning the West to help their neighbors in any meaningful way.*

In the fall of 2010, Osama bin Laden is captured and killed by American soldiers. It's announced that American intelligence tracked down bin Laden by following one of his couriers, whose wife was from Swat. It's initially assumed that Pakistan's government was involved in the operation, but the American military quickly announces that it tracked down bin Laden alone.

The assassination of Osama bin Laden was a major event in American history, or at least was announced as such by the American government. It's still not entirely clear how much influence bin Laden had over al Qaeda at the end of his life, so it can't be known how many lives were saved by his death. Nevertheless, his death was an important symbolic moment for America, as the man who murdered thousands of New Yorkers was finally punished with death himself.

In the aftermath of bin Laden's death, Pakistani intelligence is embarrassed. As the director of the CIA says, ISI agents either knew about bin Laden's location near Abottabad and did nothing about it, or they didn't know—in short, they're either enemies of the US, or they're incompetent. Malala finds it amazing that bin Laden was able to hide in Pakistan for so long. Many Pakistanis believe that Americans killed bin Laden years ago, and were waiting for an opportune time to embarrass Pakistan. It's also widely noted that Pakistan spends billions of dollars on its military, and yet couldn't protect its borders from the American helicopters that flew onto bin Laden's property. The US government, for its part, feels betrayed by Pakistan: after years of sending it foreign aid, it had to kill bin Laden on its own.

After bin Laden's death there's a lively debate in the international community about the way the US handled the incident. The overall effect of this debate is to harden relationships between America and Pakistan. Malala suggests that this only worsens the situation in Pakistan: US foreign aid is in jeopardy of being cut off, and American drone strikes persist, and may even be on the rise. Instability has been good for the Taliban so far, as they first rose to power in the instability following 9/11. Thus, bin Laden's death doesn't bode well for Malala, her family, and the women of Pakistan.

In October 2011, Malala receives some exciting news: she's been nominated for the KidsRights award in Amsterdam. KidsRights is an international children's advocacy group, based in Europe. Malala's name was passed on to KidsRights by the great South African leader Desmond Tutu, one of Ziauddin's heroes. In the end, Malala doesn't win the award—unlike most of the other nominees, she admits, she has merely spoken out against the Taliban, rather than using money and organizing to enact real change.

Malala's earliest honors are just nominations, not proper awards. But it's an undeniably great achievement to be nominated for anything, let alone a humanitarian award, by a man as great as Desmond Tutu, who is one of the two or three people most responsible for ending apartheid in South Africa. Malala is humble when she doesn't win the award—she remembers the poise and calmness she first discovered after losing the speaking contest many years ago.

Shortly after her nomination, Malala is invited to an educational gala in Lahore. There, she makes an impressive speech about the value of education. A few weeks later, it's announced that Malala has been awarded Pakistan's first National Peace Prize, awarded to someone who embodies the struggle for peace. Malala attends an awards ceremony in December, where she receives half a million rupees and a medal. At the ceremony, Malala meets Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani, the political leader of Pakistan. She takes this opportunities to give Gilani a list of demands: a women's university in Swat, rebuilt schools, etc. As Malala talks to Gilani, she senses that he's not taking her demands seriously. Privately she resolves to use politics to make these changes herself when she's older.

It's an important sign that Malala's first major award is given to her by the Pakistani government itself. Although Malala has found great fault in her culture's attitude toward violence and women's rights, she's still endowed with a deep love for her homeland. Here, at the beginning of her career on a global stage, Malala is pleased to discover that Pakistan appreciates her as well. Yet Malala is too motivated and too intelligent to rest on her laurels—even as she accepts her award, she notices Gilani's unsatisfying responses to her questions, and her desire to change Pakistan grows more intense than ever.

2010 ends on a sad note for Malala. Her Aunt Babo, the eldest sister of her mother, dies. Babo had tried to treat her diabetes by visiting a doctor who promised to cure it overnight. In the end, the doctor injected Babo with lethal chemicals, killing her. Ziauddin insists that Babo's story proves that women need to learn to educate themselves and take care of themselves.

Ziauddin's interpretation of Aunt Babo's death is, for Malala's purposes, the only one she needs to hear. At this critical time in her life, Babo's death offers a grim reminder of the urgency of Malala's political mission.

Malala has won a great deal of money in only a few months: more than a million rupees. She uses this money to rebuild schools in Swat, and to start an educational foundation whose goal is to provide free education for homeless children. Malala resolves to not "rest on her laurels," and decides to continue looking for new ways to help those who are suffering.

Because of her poor upbringing, Malala is always concerned about money, and as a dutiful child, she wants to use her winnings to help her father with his schools. It's inspiring to see Malala always thinking ahead—she'll never rest, we can sense, until she's accomplished all of her goals.

CHAPTER 18: THE WOMAN AND THE SEA

As the chapter begins, Malala's Aunt Najma is crying. She and Malala, along with the rest of Malala's immediate family, are sitting on the beaches of the Arabian Sea. Malala and her family have come to the seaside town of Karachi to visit Najma. Although Najma has lived in Karachi for thirty years, she has never seen the ocean, since she's required to be accompanied by a man and to wear a **burqa** at all times. As Malala watches her aunt weep, she wonders to herself how it's possible for an entire to society to repress half of its population.

Malala's experiences with her Aunt Najma are just as moving as the story of her Aunt Babo. While Babo's life was brought to a sudden, horrific end because of men's sexism and cruelty, Najma is condemned to live out her entire life under the influence of this same sexism: she's not even allowed to enjoy the simple pleasure of walking along the beach. This example makes the oppression Malala faces seem especially real and poignant.

The year is 2012, Malala reveals. Malala has traveled to Karachi to appear on television—a school in Abottabad has been named in her honor, and journalists want to speak to her. Malala traveled by plane to reach Karachi—the first time in her life she's traveled in such a way. Karachi, she notes, is one of the largest cities in the world. It's an important port for Pakistan, and a place where hundreds of different languages are spoken. There is also a great deal of violence in the city, as a result of its diversity.

Malala has been capitalizing on her awards, but this doesn't mean that she's abandoned her political convictions. On the contrary, she's using her fame cleverly and creatively, building influence and connections for herself, which she'll use to enact real change in Pakistan—not the flashy, superficial change that Pakistan's politicians seem to specialize in.

In Karachi, Malala attends an assembly held in her honor, where she's applauded by an audience of thousands. She visits schools in the city, including several which will be named after her. Children sing for her, and she receives an oil portrait of herself. Malala also visits the tomb of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan. This is an especially important part of her visit, because the tomb is decorated with Jinnah's speeches, in which he claims that Pakistan should protect people's freedom of speech and religion. As Malala explores the tomb, she's reminded of the foolishness of the Taliban: instead of worrying about the proper interpretations of the Quran, she thinks, Pakistanis should concentrate on practical issues like fighting poverty, and promoting education.

Malala's awards are mostly important to her insofar as they represent money and prestige, which she'll be able to translate into education and women's rights. One notable exception is the award she receives in Karachi, as a part of this involves a visit to the tomb of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, one of her idols. Malala began her book by quoting from Jinnah, and it's a mark of how far she's risen in life that she's now visiting Jinnah's tomb on her own. Even while she's at Jinnah's tomb, however, Malala doesn't think of herself at all—instead she thinks of how Jinnah's example can encourage her to work harder and achieve more.

During her visit to Karachi, Malala meets a reporter named Shehla Anjum, who tearfully warns Malala that the Taliban have threatened to kill her. Ziauddin is shocked by this news, as he didn't think the Taliban would stoop so low as to threaten a thirteen-year-old girl. He insists that Malala abandon her political activism for a time, but Malala promptly refuses to do so. She's committed to supporting women's rights and women's education, and if she backs down now, the Taliban will have won a victory.

Considering all the violent acts we've read about so far, it's remarkable that Ziauddin hasn't asked Malala to abandon her political activism before this moment. To be fair, Ziauddin has taken many precautions to protect his daughter, like encouraging her to use a pseudonym when she wrote her diaries. Here, we see how selfless Malala has grown since the arrival of the Taliban in Pakistan: she cares not at all for her own safety.

Malala and her family return to Swat, still shaken by the news that the Taliban wants Malala dead. Ziauddin speaks to the police in Mingora, who suggest placing Malala under surveillance to protect her at all times. Malala and Ziauddin say that they don't need this protection, at least not yet. Nevertheless, Malala becomes paranoid about walking outside at night. She's also disheartened to learn that she's come in second place in her exams for the year—months of collecting awards and traveling have distracted her from her own education.

The chapter ends on an ironic note. Although Malala has spent the better part of the last two years using her influence to fight for education, she's been neglecting her own education, and her grades are slipping. While this ending for the chapter is almost humorous, there's a serious point here: Malala is still growing up, and is now often neglecting her own life in her enthusiasm to improve the lives of others.

CHAPTER 19: A PRIVATE TALIBANISATION

It is April 2012, and Malala is on a school trip to Marghazar, a green valley near Mingora. Malala walks with her friend Moniba. They walk near a tranquil river, and playfully splash each other with water. Malala compliments Moniba for her beautiful skin.

Although Pakistan is in a state of disarray, Malala and her friends continue to enjoy any moments when they can relax and just be kids. These are also important for us as readers, as reminders that our narrator is still a young teenager.

The day after her field trip, Malala has a disturbing talk with her father. Ziauddin has found an anonymous note, addressed to "Muslim brothers." The note—one of many that have been circulated recently—criticizes Ziauddin's schools for being "vulgar" and "obscene." It singles out the field trip to the Marghazar as an example of the school's obscenity. The note concludes by urging people to "ask the manager of the White Palace Hotel" for more information about "what these girls did." Ziauddin realizes that the manager has no information about the girls whatsoever—the note is a bluff, designed to make its readers assume the worst of Malala and her classmates.

Again we see the deviousness and trickery of the Taliban. Instead of telling the truth about the girls at Malala's school, the Taliban are forced to make up lies about them and rely on the power of suggestion. This is a sign of the pettiness and cruelty at the heart of the Taliban—they're so desperate for power that they're reduced to writing nasty notes. Malala, meanwhile, is gaining her own power and influence, collecting awards and using them to improve the school system.

In the days following the circulation of the anonymous notes, Malala's classmates are terrified to attend school. Ziauddin makes a brave speech in which he encourages them to continue with their studies—nevertheless, Malala can tell that he's secretly afraid of Taliban attacks himself.

As Malala grows up, Ziauddin remains her role model, but he ceases to be an idol. While he's still a highly impressive man, he's hardly infallible—here, for instance, Malala is able to recognize, fairly easily, that he's frightened.

As the year goes on, the school's attendance shrinks. Ziauddin continues to organize activities for his remaining students: debating competitions, painting projects, etc. Malala turns 15 in July—meaning that, at least according to Islamic tradition, she's an adult. On August 3, Ziauddin receives a call from a journalist named Mehboob. Mehboob is the nephew of Ziauddin's old friend, Zahid Khan, who was attacked by the Taliban in 2009. Mehboob tells Ziauddin that Zahid has been shot by the Taliban, but is miraculously still alive. Ziauddin is moved by the news of the attack on his old friend's life. He's also frightened, as the attack reminds Ziauddin that the Taliban want to kill him, as well as Zahid Khan. In the following weeks, Zahid Khan slowly recovers in a hospital. After he's released, he bravely continues to denounce the Taliban, refusing to let them intimidate him into silence.

Here, after hundreds of pages, we begin to approach the place where the book started. We've been given signs throughout the book that the Taliban hurt those who disagree with them, and try to intimidate their enemies into silence. Now that Malala has become one of the most prominent opponents of the Taliban in the entire country (and now that she's legally an adult) she's an obvious target for the Taliban—so obvious, indeed, that we wonder why Malala didn't realize this sooner. Presumably, she counted on the Taliban respecting women and children—in retrospect, a dubious thing to count on.

A boy named Haroon—a year older than Malala—greets Malala one day and tells her that he loves her. Malala tells Ziauddin about Haroon, and Ziauddin becomes very angry. He calls Haroon's father, and warns Haroon to stay away from Malala.

In a moment of bathos*—the sudden transition from "high" content to "low" content—we shift from matters of life and death to a silly discussion of a boy who had a crush on Malala.*

CHAPTER 20: WHO IS MALALA?

In the late summer of 2010, a math teacher at Malala's school, Miss Shazia, tells Ziauddin that she's had a nightmare. In the nightmare, she saw Malala walking around with one of her legs badly burned. Miss Shazia thinks that this is a sign for Ziauddin to give food to the poor (a common Pakistani remedy for a bad "premonition"). Ziauddin gives money to the poor, but Miss Shazia finds the gesture unsatisfactory. Although Malala's considers Miss Shazia's anxiety a little comical, she begins having bad dreams as well—she can sense that something bad is going to happen to her.

By this point, we're well aware that Malala will be shot, but it's also unclear whether or not she believes in prophecies or superstitions. She dismisses this particular prophecy, but in such a way that makes very clear that she thinks some *prophecies are possible. Or perhaps Malala herself recognizes that she's going to be attacked by the Taliban, even if she has repressed this realization.*

Malala, convinced that danger is coming her way, begins praying more often. It's absurd, she notes, that the Taliban think she's not a Muslim, when she's actually a very pious Muslim. Malala continues studying for her exams. In October 2012, she's feeling nervous about her upcoming exams, as last year she came in second to Malka-e-Noor.

Again we're reminded that Malala is still a teenager who must study for exams, and feels nervous about competing with classmates. She may have lofty goals, but she also has ordinary, day-to-day responsibilities.

Malala's exam season begins. Her first exam is in physics, and she performs well on it. Her next exam is in Pakistan studies, and she struggles with her essay question. On the third day of exams, Malala wakes up as usual, bickers with her siblings, and gets on the bus to school. While she's riding the bus, two men stop the bus and one of them climbs aboard. He demands to know "who is Malala," but then he easily identifies her since she isn't wearing a **burqa**. Strangely, the last thing Malala remembers before she's shot in the head is the list of chores she's supposed to complete by the end of the day.

Malala's day is a disorienting blend of the ordinary and the extraordinary. She finishes her exams and does fairly well, and also endures a shot to the head from a Taliban assassin. In a fitting encapsulation of the contradictions of Malala's life, her last thoughts before being shot are of her chores—a detail so strange it must be the truth. She's a good, obedient daughter, as well as an advocate for women's rights and a powerful political "threat."

CHAPTER 21: 'GOD, I ENTRUST HER TO YOU'

As the chapter opens, Malala has just been shot by a Taliban soldier. The bus driver, Usman Bhai Jan drives the bus as quickly as he can to the Swat Central Hospital. The news of Malala's shooting spreads very quickly, and within only a few minutes, a local has called Ziauddin with the news that his daughter's school bus has just been attacked. Ziauddin—not yet aware that Malala was shot—rushes to the nearby hospital, where he's crushed to find that his own daughter was one of the Taliban soldier's victims.

In this part of I Am Malala, *Malala is describing events that she did not, properly speaking, witness. She has reconstructed these events with the help of her family members, her classmates and the various other witnesses to her shooting.*

Malala has lost a great deal of blood, and there is a large bandage over her head—she's unconscious. Nevertheless, she has survived the Taliban soldier's attack. Ziauddin tearfully embraces her, and calls her a brave and beautiful daughter. Seeing Malala in the hospital, Malala later realizes, was the worst thing that ever happened to Ziauddin. Ziauddin was always extremely close to Malala, so to have come so close to losing her forever must have been devastating.

Even when she thinks back on her shooting, it's very telling that Malala thinks of the pain she caused her father, rather than the pain she endured herself. Malala is seemingly so naturally selfless that even when she thinks about her brush with death—an event about which it seems morally defensible to be selfish—she can only think of her family.

While Malala lies in her bed, still unconscious, the doctors tell Ziauddin about Malala's injuries. Miraculously, the soldier's bullet didn't damage Malala's brain at all. Two other students, Shazia and Kainat, were also injured by the soldier's attack, although their wounds are very slight—indeed, Kainat didn't realize she'd been injured until several hours after the incident. Ziauddin doesn't leave Malala's bedside for even a minute.

We learn that two of Malala's classmates were also injured by the Taliban soldier. It's a powerful reminder that violence and intimidation always have unintended consequences that weaken one's. We've seen this in both the Taliban's suicide bombings and the US drone strikes—both of which kill all sorts of innocent people—and here we see it again in the shooting.

Malala describes her mother's reaction to the news of her daughter's attack. At the time when she heard the news, she was having a reading lesson, and struggling with basic words. At first, she was told that Malala had been shot in the foot. Immediately she went to see Malala's grandmother, and together they prayed to Allah for many hours. As the news of Malala spread, more women came to her grandmother's house to pray. When Tor Pekai learned of the true nature of Malala's injury, she was horrified, but didn't get to visit Malala. This was the case because her friends told her to wait for more information, since it was possible that Malala was dead, and would be moved quickly. The most painful moment for Tor Pekai came when a classmate of Malala's came to her house to drop off her keys, which she'd dropped on the bus. Tor Pekai screamed, "I don't want my keys, I want my daughter!"

Tor Pekai has been remarkably absent from the book so far. She is clearly a loving mother and a major force in Malala's life, but she's simply not as important in Malala's campaigns for justice, education, and equality as Ziauddin is. Where Ziauddin can offer Malala connections, advice, etc., Tor Pekai cannot. Perhaps because of this, it's all the more powerful when Tor Pekai yells that she wants her daughter. She may not be as articulate as her husband, but she loves Malala just as much, and has clearly passed on a passion and outspokenness to her daughter.

Malala circles back to describe her injury in more detail. After being shot, Malala is rushed to the intensive care unit, where a man named Colonel Junaid, who introduces himself as a neurosurgeon, tries to find the bullet in Malala's body. Ziauddin is initially reluctant to entrust Malala to Junaid, because he seems young and inexperienced. Later, however, Malala learns that he is one of the finest doctors in the country, with more than a decade of experience. To Junaid's surprise, the bullet is lodged in Malala's shoulder, suggesting that Malala was leaning forward when the Taliban soldier shot her. The neurosurgeon orders CT scans and tests for brain damage. These tests determine that the soldier's bullet has narrowly missed Malala's brain.

The aftermath of Malala's shooting is a convoluted manipulation of politics as well as medicine. It's a minor miracle that the soldier's bullet didn't hit Malala's brain directly (though she'll undergo some major surgery nonetheless), yet even so, it's not clear how long Malala will have to stay in the hospital, or where she'll be taken next. Even though we have a decent idea how this story will end (Malala is writing it, after all), she still maintains some suspense.

In the evening of Malala's first day in the hospital, Tor Pekai and Malala's brother Atal arrive at the hospital. When they see Malala, they both begin to weep. They wait as Colonel Junaid orders more tests. He determines that, in spite of the fact that the bullet missed Malala's brain, it's likely that it caused splinters of bone to lodge in her brain, causing shock. Malala will require extensive surgeries to correct this serious problem. Colonel Junaid makes the decision to conduct the surgeries immediately, rather than move Malala to another hospital—a decision that ultimately saves Malala's life.

Despite his youth, Colonel Junaid shows himself to be a highly competent surgeon—indeed, he saves Malala's life almost single-handedly. It's strangely appropriate that the surgeon responsible for saving the life of Malala—a young, precocious crusader for women's rights—is also young and precocious. It's also important to note that it is only Malala's fame that garners her this expert medical attention—the thousands of others killed by the Taliban didn't have such luck.

Colonel Junaid proceeds with Malala's brain surgery. He uses a saw to cut away a small portion of Malala's brain. This will allow her brain to swell in response to the shards of bone. For the next several hours, Ziauddin and Tor Pekai wait for news. Eventually, Colonel Junaid emerges from the operating room, saying that Malala will be all right. For the next three months, she'll have to recover, but there will be no brain damage.

We begin to see where the story is going: Malala will spend the next three months recovering from her injuries. Although the Taliban soldier was aiming to kill Malala, he's only set her back three months—a hilarious feeble achievement, especially considering the fact that he's also made her internationally famous as a martyr.

Unbeknownst to Malala at the time, the Taliban almost immediately claim responsibility for shooting her. They insist that they attacked her because of statements she made the previous year about admiring Barack Obama—not because of her support for women's education. The Taliban declare that anyone who opposes them will be shot, just like Malala.

As the book goes on, the Taliban seem increasingly clumsy and incompetent. They now claim that they only killed Malala because of her statements about Obama—as if they realize that by shooting her, they only strengthened her influence regarding other causes.

Following her surgery, Malala is visited by dozens of government officials and important journalists. General Kayani, the army chief, tells Malala that the entire nation is praying for her. Kayani arranges for Colonel Junaid to send the CT scans of Malala's brain to the best medical facilities in the world, ensuring that Malala will receive impeccable treatment. Shortly afterwards, two British doctors, Fiona Reynolds and Javid Kayani (no relation to the army chief), arrive at the hospital. Kayani, working with the British government, has arranged for them to examine Malala.

At times, it seems that the entire nation has turned against Malala because of her advocacy for equal rights. But at other times—now, for instance—it's clear that Malala has broad, loving support from the people of Pakistan. It's the same innate goodness that we glimpsed in the aftermath of the refugee crisis in the Swat Valley. Just as strangers took in refugees out of the goodness of their hearts, so many of the people of Pakistan support Malala.

Doctor Reynolds and Doctor Kayani examine the medical facilities that Colonel Junaid has set up to treat Malala. They're not impressed, and they point out to Junaid that Malala's blood pressure needs to be monitored constantly. While they acknowledge that Junaid's surgery was a complete success, they warn that Malala is not getting enough oxygen, and thus runs the risk of brain damage. Doctors Reynolds and Kayani raise the possibility of moving Malala to a better medical facility, possibly in another country.

Reynolds and Kayani introduce a political element into Malala's treatment. Although Colonel Junaid is a doctor, and thus is tasked with giving Malala the best treatment possible, the possibility of moving Malala to better facilities in a foreign country will have to be evaluated in political as well as medical terms.

As Malala slowly recovers, Ziauddin refuses to leave the hospital. Nevertheless, he also continues to communicate with journalists and politicians in order to denounce the Taliban. While Malala is recovering, he receives further tragic news: a young woman named Arfa Karim, the youngest Microsoft-certified professional in the world, has died of a heart attack at the age of 16. Karim had spoken alongside Malala in support of education, and was a good friend of Ziauddin's. The news of her death devastates him.

Even when the entire nation is gathered around the TV for news of Malala's survival, Malala notes that there are plenty of other people much more deserving of the nation's sympathy. Only one of these (out of many hundreds) is Arfa Karim. Malala is selfless, even when she has every right to indulge in some selfishness.

CHAPTER 22: JOURNEY INTO THE UNKNOWN

In the hours following Doctor Reynolds and Doctor Kayani's visit, Colonel Junaid refuses to make any of the changes they recommended. Partly as a result of his inaction, Malala's condition deteriorates. She develops a condition called DIC (disseminated intravascular coagulation), which results in her blood not circulating properly, endangering her life. Her kidneys are beginning to fail. Dr. Fiona Reynolds volunteers to remain behind to ensure that Malala receives the best treatment. Reynolds strongly urges that Malala be moved to a superior army hospital in Rawalpindi. Ziauddin agrees to allow Malala to be moved, though he's worried that she won't be able to handle the necessary helicopter flight.

While none of the people mentioned in this section bring politics into the conversation—they're only talking about what would make the most medical sense for Malala—we can sense that politics is always looming overhead. Taking Malala out of the country would mean taking her out of the hands of Pakistani politicians, and placing her among Westerners—in other words, in the care of people whom the people of Pakistan have learned to hate in recent years.

Malala is taken to Rawalpindi by helicopter. She's barely conscious. Ziauddin notes that the Taliban could be planning another attack on his daughter's life—nevertheless, Malala is taken to the new hospital without any problems or delays. Soldiers guard the hospital at all hours of the day and night, making another Taliban attack impossible.

Malala continues to receive the best treatment possible in Pakistan, and this includes the best defense and surveillance. Even as she struggles to stay alive, Malala is still in danger from another Taliban attack, and so she requires armed guards at all times.

While Malala is placed in intensive care, Ziauddin worries about the danger to his sons, Khushal and Atal. Ziauddin has received threats to his sons from the Taliban before—threats that he'd dismissed as ludicrous at the time, but now takes very seriously. Meanwhile, politicians all over the world, including Barack Obama and Ban Ki-moon (the UN Secretary General), unite to condemn the Taliban's attack on Malala. In Pakistan, however, many newspapers continue to condemn Malala. They call her an American puppet, and even say that she deserved to be shot.

It's a mark of how much things have changed in only a few hours that Ziauddin now takes seriously the threats against his sons. Malala barely mentions her siblings in I Am Malala, *but it's entirely possible that the Taliban would try to hurt them as well in an attempt to intimidate Malala and Ziauddin into silence. This is a sign of the Taliban's cowardice—they'd rather shoot children than reason and argue with their opponents.*

As Malala proceeds with her recovery, Dr. Reynolds informs her mother that Malala may spend the rest of her life with a weak right arm and leg, as well as a speech impediment. If these things are to be avoided, she'll need intensive physical therapy. She recommends to General Kayani that Malala be taken overseas—this is, without a doubt, the best way for Malala to get the best treatment, she insists. General Kayani is reluctant to send Malala to the United States, especially after the Raymond Davis crisis. Reynolds suggests that Malala be sent to Birmingham, England, the home of one of the world's foremost hospitals for gunshot victims.

General Kayani is the first person to explicitly talk about politics in conjunction with Malala's medical treatment, but he's certainly not the first to think of it. Kayani is afraid that bringing Malala out of the country will discredit Pakistan. It's a little sickening that so much time is being wasted discussing which hospital transfers will make Pakistan "look good," but Malala (cynically but realistically) suggests that this is how international politics usually work. Things rarely get done because they are morally right—they have to be good for the country's interests as well.

An intense, politicized conflict breaks out over the decision of where to move Malala. General Kayani refuses to let Malala's movement to England be paid for by the Royal Air Force, or any other foreign military institution. In general, the Pakistani government is highly reluctant to accept help from Western powers, particularly America and the UK, since they want to "save face." As the days drag on, Ziauddin and Tor Pekai have no idea that these arguments are occurring.

In addition to the time being wasted by General Kayani's deliberations and political decision-making, information is also being denied to Malala's parents. Ziauddin and Tor Pekai have an obvious right opt know how their daughter is doing and where she's going to be taken, but General Kayani's stalling ensures that they receive no such information.

After days of tense negotiations, the United Arab Emirates offer to fly Malala to the United Kingdom, using a civilian aircraft. General Kayani accepts this offer, since it will enable Malala to get the best care possible, and also won't cause Pakistan to seem overly reliant on the Western world. Unfortunately, the U.A.E's offer doesn't extend to Malala's family. Only Ziauddin is allowed to accompany Malala to England. Ziauddin refuses to abandon his wife and sons, particularly at a time when they're in danger of Taliban attacks. While Dr. Kayani urges Ziauddin to travel to England with Malala, Ziauddin staunchly refuses. As a result, Dr. Reynolds is appointed Malala's temporary guardian in England.

In the end, General Kayani allows Malala to be taken out of Pakistan. He doesn't completely discount Malala's well-being (he doesn't want her dead, in other words), but he also has "higher" priorities than keeping her alive. It's painful that Malala can't be transported to Birmingham, England alongside her family, but the fact remains that this represents the best medical treatment available to her. In this uneasy interim period, Malala is given a new guardian—a Westerner.

Furious and greatly saddened that he's not accompanying Malala to England, Ziauddin remains behind with his family. He approaches General Kayani about traveling to England to visit Malala. General Kayani tells him that this is possible—though he and his family will need to fill out many documents to obtain the necessary travel papers. Ziauddin submits the proper forms, assuming that he'll have a visa momentarily. But as the days drag on, it seems less and less likely that he and his family will be given visas to travel to England.

Once again, political maneuvering ensures that Ziauddin and Tor Pekai are kept in the dark for as long as possible. Although a mother and father have an obvious right to know if their child is alive or dead, and to visit this child in the hospital, General Kayani violates this right, putting his own political aims first. It's rather impressive that Malala is willing to point this out in her memoir: she doesn't shy away from criticizing governments, even her own.

CHAPTER 23: A GIRL SHOT IN THE HEAD, BIRMINGHAM

Malala wakes up in Birmingham, England, on October 16. The first thing she thinks is, "Thank God I'm not dead." The first person she talks to is Dr. Kayani, who speaks to her in Urdu. Dr. Kayani explains that she's in England, and that her parents are still in Pakistan. Malala finds this news enormously distressing. A Muslim chaplain named Rehanna visits Malala and calms her down somewhat by reciting Quranic verses.

In Birmingham Malala is instantly disoriented, but the doctors there have made some effort to make her feel at home: they've brought a chaplain who shares Malala's religion. It's painful for Dr. Kayani to explain to Malala that her parents are still in Pakistan, and again Malala seems more concerned about her family than herself.

On Malala's second day of consciousness after her shooting, she learns more about her surroundings. She's in the Queen Elizabeth hospital, a far cleaner, more sophisticated building than the one where she'd been in Pakistan. She finds it difficult to speak, so she communicates at first with an alphabet board, and later with a pen and paper. Dr. Reynolds visits her, and gives her a white teddy bear as a present. She tells Malala that she should name the bear "Junaid," for reasons that will become clear to her later.

We know that it was Colonel Junaid who saved Malala's life, more than any other single person, but Malala won't discover this until later. Clearly she has a long way to go before she could be considered "recovered" from her shooting: in the meantime, she'll have to communicate by pen and paper.

As Malala becomes increasingly conscious, she asks two questions: "Where is my family?" and "Who is paying for this?" The doctors assure Malala that her family is safe in Pakistan, and will visit her soon. They say that the government of Pakistan will pay for Malala's treatment. Malala is nonetheless terrified that Ziauddin could be dead. She continues to believe that he's trying to find a way to pay for her treatment himself. Dr. Kayani calls Ziauddin, and gives the phone to Malala. Though she can't speak, she's overjoyed to hear his voice.

The first questions Malala asks by writing on her pad are very telling: both are fundamentally about other people, and both are very practical. Malala is always thinking of her family—she values them and loves them more than anything else—and she's also very realistic and practical. It's for this reason that Malala can't bear the thought of costing her parents money, hence her second question.

Back in Pakistan, Ziauddin continues to worry about his daughter's well being. Pakistani government authorities inform him that Malala's condition is improving, and he's furious that they have more information about Malala than he does. Privately, Ziauddin is also angry with the Pakistani government for lying about the Taliban. The government had previously claimed that there were no more Taliban soldiers in Swat—but it seems that the government knew about the Taliban presence in Swat and did nothing. In spite of his anger, Ziauddin tries to remain calm. He talks with Dr. Reynolds constantly, and she tells him that Malala is making a slow recovery.

Ziauddin is understandably upset with the Pakistani government: had the government been more honest and forthright in dealing with the Taliban, Malala might not have been shot in the first place. Ziauddin has been critical of the Pakistani government for a long time, but now, with Malala in the hospital, his criticism takes on a tragically personal dimension.

In England, Malala communicates mostly with her pen and paper. She asks, "Who did this to me?" and Dr. Reynolds informs her that the Taliban shot her. Malala is worried, and wants to know if her family is all right. Reynolds insists that they are. Slowly Malala recovers control of her voice. After five days, she's able to talk to Dr. Reynolds. With Rehanna, she has conversations about women's rights, education, and the perception of Muslims in the Western world. Malala, now in control of her own voice, talks to her parents over Dr. Kayani's phone. Ziauddin is greatly concerned about her health, but Malala tells him that she's recovering.

Malala continues to advance the causes of women's rights and education, even if it's only in the most minuscule of ways, by talking with another person about these issues. She's slowly improving, thanks to Birmingham's expert medical attention. We might consider her time in this hospital a kind of "rebirth." She's rising from the ashes of her assassination attempt, preparing to return to the global stage stronger than ever.

In Pakistan, Tor Pekai becomes increasingly worried that the Pakistani government isn't making any arrangements for them to travel to England. She threatens to go on a hunger strike if they're not given news of their transportation to England soon. Tor Pekai's threat is surprisingly effective, and officials have her and Ziauddin moved to Islamabad overnight. In Islamabad, however, Tor Pekai is disappointed to learn that she's no closer to flying to England than she was before. Later, she learns that the interior minister, Rehman Malik, is the one causing the delay. Rehman wants to fly to England along with Malala's parents, so that he can preside over a press conference from Malala's hospital. He also wants to ensure that Malala's family doesn't seek political asylum in England, which would be highly embarrassing for Pakistan.

The political maneuverings of the Pakistani government continue, even after Ziauddin persists in denouncing them on the radio and in his writings. In Pakistan's defense, however, almost any other government (including the United States) would be concerned about these same issues of political asylum and preserving national image.

In all, it takes ten days for Ziauddin and Tor Pekai to fly to England. In the meantime, Malala enjoys talking with Dr. Reynolds, but can barely wait to see her parents. She watches television and begins her physical therapy. It takes her hours of concentration to take her first steps, but the doctors assure her that she'll regain full motor control in due time. Malala also receives flowers from hundreds of well-wishers, including Beyoncé, Angelina Jolie, and the Archbishop of Canterbury. One bouquet is simply addressed to "The Girl Shot in the Head, Birmingham"—Malala's fame is so great that the bouquet has made its way to her anyway.

In stark contrast to what the Taliban intended, Malala's near death does not intimidate the Taliban's enemies into silence. Instead, it creates new enemies for the Taliban all around the world. Many of the world's most powerful people, including movie stars, politicians, and religious authorities, unite in their support for Malala—thus implicitly condemning the Taliban for attacking her. When Malala was nearly killed she was a national figure, but after being "reborn" in Birmingham," she's becoming a global icon.

As Malala waits for her parents to arrive, she realizes that she's been spared for a reason: to fight for education and free speech across the entire world. In a way, she concludes, the Taliban have helped her mission, rather than hindered it: they have made her campaign global. Gordon Brown, the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and the UN special envoy for education, has instituted a petition in Malala's name ("I Am Malala"), demanding schooling for all children of the world. Malala is overjoyed with these measures. Looking back, she thinks of this time in her life fondly, but she had no idea that she wouldn't be going back to Pakistan.

Malala has become globally famous, but she doesn't bask in her glory, even when she's still in the hospital. Instead, she immediately uses her fame to advance the causes of equality and education, supporting a UN bill even more ambitious than anything Malala had supported in Pakistan. Previously Malala had supported education for women in Pakistan, but now she's moved forward to support education for all human beings on the planet.

CHAPTER 24: THEY HAVE SNATCHED HER SMILE

Malala's parents arrive in England and travel to Birmingham. Malala is moved to a large room with windows, and she's able to see the natural beauty of England for the first time. When Malala reunites with her parents, she can't help but weep. In the 16 days since she last spoke to her parents, she's traveled to four hospitals across thousands of miles. Ziauddin and Tor Pekai are equally emotional. Malala is also glad to see her brothers, who've traveled to England as well. Malala notices that her parents look tired and haggard, and they even have grey hairs. Her parents, for their part, are visibly distressed to see the state Malala is in. She has limited motor control, and can barely move half of her face. Ziauddin mourns that the Taliban "have snatched her smile." Malala tries to comfort her parents by insisting, "I'm still me."

Malala's reunion with her parents is extremely touching, all the more so because it's taken so absurdly long. It's inspiring, then, to see Malala rise above the pettiness of her government's delays by saying, "I'm still me." This echoes the title of the book, "I am Malala." Despite the adversity she's experienced, Malala remains a passionate advocate for women's rights and education. She's still herself, and has only grown more confident and self-assured in her convictions and identity.

Malala's parents stay with her at the hospital for four days. On the fourth day, a group of politicians arrives at the hospital, including Rehman Malik, William Hague (British Foreign Minister) and Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed (Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates). The politicians aren't allowed to visit Malala, but they meet with Ziauddin. They tell him that the Taliban soldier who shot Malala is Ataullah Khan. The plan to shoot Malala, Malik claims, was devised in Saudi Afghanistan. Malik has put a million-dollar bounty on Khan. Ziauddin also learns from Malik that Malala's bus driver, Usman Bhai Jan, has been arrested and placed in police custody—not because he's thought to be guilty, but because the police want him to identify possible suspects. When Malala learns this, she's very upset. It's outrageous, she thinks, that an innocent man should be arrested while the culprit remains free. Finally, Malik tells Ziauddin that the United Nations has designated November 10 as "Malala Day."

For better or worse, Malala is a political figure. The downside of this reality is that she's hampered in everything she does by the political maneuverings of the leaders of the countries she's associated with, while the upside of this is that Malala is now capable of using her fame and prestige to support meaningful political changes, like the UN bill. Malala is also able to criticize the government of Pakistan to a greater degree than she had before. Thus she's comfortable saying that it's absurd that the Pakistani government hasn't captured her assassin by now—the fact that they haven't is a sign of the government's pettiness and incompetence.

On November 11, Malala undergoes a crucial surgery that will give her control of the paralyzed half of her face. The surgery is a success, although Malala spends the next few months doing facial exercises to regain motor control. Following her surgery, she begins reading for the first time in weeks. With her parents she sings Quranic verses. She also recites a *tapa*, a type of traditional Pashtun saying. The original *tapa* is: "If the men cannot win the battle, O my country, then the women will come forth and win you an honor." Malala proposes changing this *tapa* to: "Whether the men are winning or losing the battle, O my country, the women are coming and the women will win you an honor."

Here Malala demonstrates her ambition, her maturity, and her intelligence. It's a bold move to rephrase the words of the Quran (extremely bold in Pakistan—to the point where I Am Malala *has been banned largely because of this section), but Malala has always believed that she has every right to interpret the Quran according to her own moral instincts. In a sense, this scene represents Malala's true coming-of-age. She's finally given up any traces of cowardice and meekness: she's taking control of her own life and her own beliefs, relying on her own sense of morality first and foremost.*

Over the next month, Malala spends long hours at the gym, regaining control of her arms and legs. On December 6, she makes a major breakthrough in her leg-control, and celebrates by walking out of her hospital for the first time. Following this event, she begins receiving visitors. These include Asif Zardari, the current president of Pakistan. He makes it clear that Pakistan will pay Malala's medical bills and also arrange for an apartment for Malala's parents in the center of Birmingham. Zardari offers Ziauddin a position as an education attaché for the nation of Pakistan. Ziauddin eagerly accepts this position, both because he's attracted to the work and because it will enable him to live in England as a diplomat, thereby spending more time with his daughter. Gordon Brown also asks Ziauddin to be his education advisor at the UN. Ziauddin accepts this position as well, after Zardari ensures him that there's no conflict.

In the aftermath of Malala's recovery, her family takes up residence in England—exactly what General Kayani had been afraid of. Yet the government of Pakistan manages to improve the situation by convincing Ziauddin to accept a job with the Pakistani government. In this way, everybody wins: Ziauddin and his family don't seem to be abandoning Pakistan, because Ziauddin still has a salaried Pakistani job. Meanwhile Ziauddin and his family get to keep living in England, where the school system and medical facilities are better. It should also be noted that the English government behaves in exactly the same way as the Pakistani government: they offer Ziauddin a job to prove to the rest of the world (and their own citizens) that Malala's family is on their *side.*

The year 2013 begins on a happy note for Malala and her family. Her father is happy with his new position, and her mother and siblings are enjoying their life in England. Malala talks to her friends in Pakistan, who tell her that they still keep a seat for her in class. Malala is recovering her strength slowly, but she still has more surgeries in her future.

As we end the book, Malala is still recovering from her injuries, and looking forward to returning to Pakistan someday. She can't move back yet (for medical and safety reasons), but she never even considers abandoning her home altogether.

Malala concludes the chapter by saying, "We human beings don't realize how great God is." God, she argues, has given humans the ability to think, to love, and to communicate. She thanks Allah for the doctors who saved her life, for her miraculous recovery, and for giving her the strength to carry on with her political work. Although her story has become world-famous, she admits, she always feels as if she's the humble servant of the people she wants to help.

Malala ends her book with an inspiring prayer to God—another reminder that she is an incredibly humble person. Although she's won every honor given for humanitarian work (including the Nobel Peace Prize), she refuses to think of herself as "special"—on the contrary, she regards herself as nothing but the servant of other human beings. This prayer is also important as a contrast to the radical Islam of the Taliban. Through her words and character, Malala shows the true nature of her faith.

EPILOGUE: ONE CHILD, ONE TEACHER, ONE BOOK, ONE PEN

The epilogue begins in Birmingham, in August of 2013. Malala explains that her family has moved from the apartment Asif Zardari set up for them to a rented house. Nevertheless, everyone in Malala's family is highly conscious of being far from home, and all their possessions are back in Swat. Malala's family eats well in Birmingham, though Tor Pekai feels guilty about being so well fed when there are starving children in Pakistan. Malala notes that her mother is very lonely—she finds it difficult to make friends with English-speakers, and spends long hours on the phone talking to her friends in Mingora.

Malala's new life in England isn't perfect. Gone are the carefree descriptions of her "goofing around" with Moniba—instead, she's become a global celebrity, famous to everyone, including her classmates. It's difficult for anyone to be famous, let along such a young woman. It remains to be seen how Malala will adjust to her global spotlight, but so far she seems to remain as humble and focused as ever.

Malala's father has adjusted to life in Birmingham somewhat more successfully than Tor Pekai, but he misses his school in Pakistan. He spends much of his time attending—and sometimes speaking at—panels on education. He travels through Europe and praises Malala for her bravery and talent.

Ziauddin finds it easiest to adjust to life in England. Unlike the other Yousafzais, he's used to being well-known and closely scrutinized by others, and he's also thrilled with the opportunities available to him in the UK. As a humanitarian, he's given access to larger budgets and programs with more influence.

Malala attends school in Birmingham. She finds it easy to keep up with the information in her classes, and loves being able to use computers and electronics, but continues to struggle with physics. Like her mother, she's often very lonely. Her Birmingham classmates recognize her as an important activist, whereas her Mingora friends thought of her as a close friend. She communicates with Moniba via Skype, and tells her that England is a peaceful place, where women have considerable rights, and there's no violence between the government and the military.

Malala doesn't neglect her own education in the process of fighting for the educations of others. She celebrates the UK for its commitment to feminism and egalitarianism, but she certainly doesn't find it perfect, and doesn't consider it home. One of the most difficult aspects of Malala's new life is her separation from her friends—especially because it's difficult to make new close friends, as her classmates consider her a celebrity and politician.

The man who shot Malala is believed to be Ataullah Khan, a Taliban soldier who has claimed responsibility. This man hasn't been apprehended yet. Malala continues to have flashbacks to her shooting. One of her worst flashbacks occurred while she was in Abu Dhabi, preparing to make her pilgrimage to Mecca (a requirement for all loyal Muslims). As she walked through a mall, looking for a **burqa** to buy, she sensed that one of the hundreds of men around her was preparing to shoot her. Afterwards, when Malala was finishing her pilgrimage to Mecca, she was shocked to see that the Kaaba—the most sacred place on Earth, according to Islamic tradition—was surrounded by piles of garbage.

The sight of the Kaaba covered in garbage is a poignant symbol for Malala: it suggests the state of Islam in Pakistan. True Islam has been polluted and tarnished by the bad examples of jihadists and Taliban soldiers—those who interpret the Quran to support their own violence, oppression, and terrorism. It's suggested that Malala's is the real Islam: a religion that honors its holy sites while also promoting peace, patience, and compassion.

Malala notes that her world has changed enormously. She's received dozens of awards from around the world, and has even been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, making her the youngest person ever to be nominated for a Nobel Prize. Although she's always happy to receive an award, Malala treats her awards as reminders of how much work she has left to do before all the people of the world receive the education they deserve. This realization influenced the speech Malala delivered at the United Nations on her sixteenth birthday. In this speech, Malala encouraged the children of the world to be strong and have hope.

Malala doesn't bask in her global fame—instead, she uses it to fight for children's rights, now speaking from the most prestigious podiums in the world. We are reminded again of just how incredibly young Malala still is.

Since Malala's rise to global fame, she's been praised by many. Nevertheless, there are those in Pakistan and Afghanistan who still attack her character. They suggest that she's guilty of a "teenage lust for fame." Malala doesn't listen to these attacks—she believes that her critics are so cynical because they've been trained to expect as little as possible from politicians and other leaders.

Malala is celebrated by millions of people, but not by everyone. There are still those who criticize her and even condemn her. As long as there are people in the world who refuse to listen to Malala simply because she's a teenage girl, Malala's work is not done.

One of Malala's most surprising experiences since her relocation to Birmingham came in the form of a letter. The letter was from a Taliban soldier, Adnan Rashid, who had attempted to kill President Musharraf in 2003. Rashid tells Malala that he was shocked to hear of her shooting, and wishes that he could have warned her beforehand. Still, he argues that the Taliban have targeted Malala because of her attacks on Islam, not because of her support for free education. He adds that the Taliban will surely forgive Malala, provided that she returns to Pakistan and wears a **burqa**. Although many advise Malala to write an open letter back to Rashid, she refuses to do so—Rashid has no right to tell her how to live, she thinks.

Even within the Taliban, there are those who regard Malala's shooting as a hideous crime. This is reassuring—it reminds us that even the Taliban can't force themselves to believe that it's always permissible to hurt women. Malala handles her letter from Adnan Rashid very cleverly, but also with dignity. Instead of giving him a national platform from which to criticize her, Malala refuses to have a conversation with him altogether, and reasserts her own convictions.

Malala wonders what she will do in the future. She often says that she wants to return to Pakistan, but her father, in particular, encourages her to stay, recover, and educate herself at English schools. Malala grudgingly admits that Ziauddin is right—she should be taking full advantage of her time in England, reaping the benefits of education that she praises so highly. Then she'll be able to use her training to better defend the rights of the uneducated and the impoverished in the future.

It's clear enough what Malala plans to do in the future. Instead of exploiting her global celebrity, as she's accused of doing in Pakistani newspapers, Malala will use her celebrity as a weapon. For Malala, the ultimate goals are education, women's rights, and global equality, and she's willing to use her success and celebrity to help fight for these goals.

While Malala resides in England, the situation in Pakistan continues to deteriorate. Schools are blown up and women are murdered for throwing away their **burqas**. There are other problems as well, as US drone attacks continue to kill Pakistanis. But in spite of the violence afflicting Pakistan and the Swat Valley in particular, Malala continues to love her home.

Malala has barely attacked the United States' foreign policy in this book. She's pointed out in unambiguous terms that US drone strikes are barbaric and result in the deaths of innocent people, but otherwise she's largely held her tongue—perhaps for strategic reasons. Malala still needs the help and support of the powerful American government in furthering her mission for equal rights, so she can't alienate them too much. Perhaps in the long run, however, Malala will use her power to criticize American foreign policy as well as Pakistani policy on women's rights—but only time will tell.

Malala looks in her mirror. She remembers how once, she'd asked Allah to make her a few inches taller. Instead, she realizes, Allah made her "as tall as the sky," giving her an international platform from which to express her views. Allah, she concludes, has given her an incredible gift, one she intends to use: she'll lobby world leaders for free education. The book concludes, "I am Malala. My world has changed but I have not."

In this triumphant ending, Malala answers the question the Taliban soldier angrily asked her on the day of her shooting. By proudly taking control of her name, her identity, and her faith, Malala makes it clear that she'll use her fame to advance the causes of women's rights and free education for all people. Violence and intimidation cannot silence her: her passion for justice makes her too strong to be silenced.

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