



Text:

Malala My Story of Standing up for Girls' Rights

By Patricia McCormick



Plot: (to support the teaching sequence)	<p>Malala - My Story of Standing up for Girls' Rights, is a biographical account of Malala's campaign for young girls in Pakistan to have access to education during times of political instability. Malala, born 1997 in the Swat Valley, in Mingora, in the northwest of Pakistan, was a school aged girl, who enjoyed playing games outside with her friends and getting an education at school. As the Taliban began to takeover the Swat Valley region and assert their ideology about the role of women and girls, many of the girls at Malala's Khushal School, were beginning to stay at home. In 2009, the Taliban's closure of girls' schools came into effect. Together with her father's passion for school at which he was the Principal (caretaker, cleaner and everything else), and her own passion to learn, they began to make a stand for what they believed. Her father by writing to the newspaper, travelling to the capital to appeal to the government for help, and meeting with journalists. Malala's own campaign began at the age of ten, by making speeches in school assemblies, one of which was filmed by a local TV crew, district assemblies, and writing a diary for the BBC to recount her daily experiences as a girl trying to receive an education despite daily bombings in her city and the Taliban's threats, using the pen name Gul Makai. Malala also volunteered to be featured in a <i>New York Times</i> documentary about education in Pakistan. At every opportunity, she spoke publicly for peace and every child's right to an education.</p> <p>In October 2012 Malala was targeted by the Talibam and shot while returning home from school. Remarkably, she survived the bullet wounds to her head and after being taken to a specialist hospital in Birmingham, in the UK, she made a full recovery. Unable to return home, her family came to join her in the UK where she continued her studies and her campaign for education for all, including setting up the Malala Fund, a charity aimed at enabling girls in the Swat Valley and beyond to access to education. And, on her sixteen birthday, she addressed the United Nations to speak to high-ranking officials from all over the world</p> <p>Malala has received recognition and various awards for her relentless campaign, including being the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.</p>		
Genre:	Non-fiction, autobiography	Tense:	Primarily written in the past tense. As a memoir, it chronicles event it that have already happened in the author's life. However, the book also contains elements written in the present tense. This stylistic choice allows Malala to describe her feelings and reflections in the moment, creating a sense of immediacy and urgency.
Structure:	<p>Autobiographies tell the story of a person's life by that person. The book is a first-hand account told in Malala's own words. It is an adaptation of her full memoir, <i>I Am Malala</i>, written for younger readers. Patricia McCormick is a critically acclaimed author who helped Malala write this adaptation of her original memoir for a younger audience, ensuring the content is accessible and appropriate for the intended age group.</p> <p>Direct Storytelling: The narrative is structured as a personal account, with Malala sharing her memories of growing up in Pakistan, her passion for education, and the threats she faced from the Taliban.</p> <p>Emotional/A Connection: By hearing the story in Malala's own voice, readers can better connect with her courage, fears, and unwavering determination.</p> <p>A Child's Perspective on Conflict: The first-person narrative provides a powerful and personal look at how political and extremist events affected a child and her family.</p>	Theme/s :	<p>The Transformative Power of Knowledge: Malala realises that she can use her words and education to improve the world.</p> <p>Education is a Universal Right: Having been denied an education by the Taliban, Yousafzai advocates for the right of children to go to school. She shows how education is key to empowering individuals and building a prosperous future for society.</p> <p>The Fight for Equality and Women's Rights: Yousafzai's journey is rooted in her observation of and direct experience with gender-based discrimination. Challenging Inequality – the book subtly introduces younger readers to the concept of gender inequality by showing that boys are often given more opportunities than girls. Yousafzai's childhood wish to erase war and draw girls and boys as equals reflects her deep-seated desire for fairness. Girls' Voices Matter – as she grows up, Yousafzai realizes that by speaking out for girls' education, she can use her voice to demand equal rights and make a tangible difference.</p> <p>Courage and Resilience: Yousafzai's story is a powerful testament to the human spirit's ability to withstand and overcome adversity. Speaking Out Against Fear – the book shows how she and her family spoke out against the Taliban despite the intense dangers and threats they faced. Hope in the Face of Despair – the narrative maintains a hopeful and optimistic tone, even when discussing serious topics like poverty and suppression. This conveys the message that small actions can lead to big change and that hope can be maintained in difficult times.</p> <p>The Strength of One's Voice: The book emphasises the power of one's own voice and words, and the power of individual action. After the attempt on her life, her voice is amplified on a global stage, joined by many other who believe in her cause. Her voice becomes a "chorus" of voices and shows that collective action can be even more powerful.</p> <p>The Importance of Hope: Yousafzai's story emphasizes the importance of optimism and a positive outlook. Her story isn't just about what happened, but about what is possible. Envisioning a better world & Turning dreams into reality.</p>

Familiarity of content:	Young readers may identify with the ideas of bravery, determination, having aspirations and standing up for what is right. The autobiography covers events from her life when she was aged 11-16 years. Growing up as a young Pakistan girl during a time when the Taliban, with their extremist views, were beginning to dominate the Swat Valley, Malala campaigned for better access to education for girls.	Perspective :	Written from a first-person perspective. The narrator is Malala Yousafzai herself, who tells her own story directly to the reader. This perspective is evident in the use of first-person pronouns like “I” and “my”. This intimate point of view allows the reader to experience events, thoughts, and emotions as Malala does.
Other language choices:	<p>Simple & accessible language – the author’s language choices are intentionally accessible and age-appropriate to make complex issues understandable. She balances conveying the gravity of her experiences with an inspiring, hopeful tone. The clear and simple language makes her story of courage, protest and recovery from a shooting accessible to readers as young as seven. For example, the narrative avoids overly complex vocabulary and sentence structures, ensuring children can focus on the story’s events and themes.</p> <p>Use of metaphor –</p> <p>Autobiographical and direct narrative – Written from a first-person perspective, the book provides a personal and direct account of Malala’s life. This makes the narrative more intimate and relatable for young readers. She recounts her story in her own words, connecting her personal experiences to the broader fight for girls’ education.</p> <p>Inclusive and unifying tone – the language is designed to feel inclusive, inviting readers to join her cause. For instance, in her speeches, she has often repeated phrases like “I am Malala” to connect her individual story with the collective struggle of many. In her writing, this sentiment translates into a call for collective action, emphasizing that the fight for rights belongs to “every woman, every boy, and every girl”.</p> <p>Contrasting images – vivid contrasts highlight the injustice she experienced and frame her mission. This rhetorical strategy is especially clear in her speeches but also comes through in her writing. For example, she compares the simplicity of giving a book to the difficulty of building a school, or the ease of providing guns versus the struggle to establish peace. This juxtaposition helps young readers understand the core conflicts she faced without being too graphic.</p> <p>Emphasis on hope and possibility – her language consistently returns to themes of possibility and determination. She encourages readers to believe that they too, can make a difference through small actions. The writing focuses on the power of education as the solution, framing it not just as a right, but as the most powerful “weapon” against injustice.</p>	Background Knowledge:	<p>Aba – affectionate Pashto term meaning “father”.</p> <p>Allah – the Arabic word for “God”.</p> <p>Al-Qaeda – a militant Islamist organisation.</p> <p>Badal – a term that means revenge.</p> <p>Burqa – a garment or robe worn by some Muslim women to cover their bodies in public.</p> <p>Curfew – a restriction meaning citizens stay indoors for certain hours of the day.</p> <p>Dyna – open-backed van or truck.</p> <p>Fedayeen – devotees of Islam.</p> <p>Haram – a word to express that something is prohibited in Islam.</p> <p>Holy Quran – the Muslim holy book.</p> <p>IDP – internally displaced person (someone who has had to flee their home within their country).</p> <p>Imam – the name given in Islam to a local preacher.</p> <p>Islamabad – capital city of Pakistan</p> <p>Jani – a term of endearment meaning “dear one”.</p> <p>Madrassa – school for Islamic instruction.</p> <p>Mufti – Islamic scholar.</p> <p>Mullah – an informal name for an imam or a religious leader.</p> <p>Nobel Peace Prize – a highly prestigious award chosen by a committee for people recognised as promoting peace for “the greatest benefit to mankind.”</p> <p>Pashto – the native language of the Pashtuns (where Malala’s parents were born)</p> <p>Pisho – cat, kitten.</p> <p>Purdah – relating to the segregation or seclusion of women from men and wearing of the veil.</p> <p>Radio Mullah – a local radio station.</p> <p>Ramadan – a time of inner reflection during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar; observed by fasting every day from sunrise to sunset.</p> <p>Shalwar Kamiz – traditional outfit comprising of a loose tunic (<i>kamiz</i>) and trousers (<i>shalwar</i>).</p> <p>Swat Valley – a region in northwest Pakistan where Malala lived.</p> <p>Talib – historically, a religious student, but has come to mean a member of the Taliban militant group.</p> <p>Taliban – an Islamic fundamentalist movement believing in extreme interpretations of Islam.</p> <p>Terrorism – use or threat of violence to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives.</p> <p>Urdu – the national language of Pakistan.</p>
Tier 2 & 3 Vocabulary :	<p>Tier 2 – activist, advocating, all-district assembly, ambition, anonymous, announcement, approval, blessing, borders, campaign, ceremonies, citizens, commemorate, competitive, conference, conservative, courage, critical, curfew, democracy, deprived, destined, defeated, devotee, devotion, dignity, dismissed, disobeyed, district, documentary, elders, entrust, exodus, falsehood, forbidden, freedom, generations, government, humble, honoured, insisted, journalist, lectured, miraculous, mission, neighbourhood, official, organisation, opportunity, philosophers, podium, politics, population, prophet, protest, qualified, quoted, refugee, religious leader, resolution, routines, rumours, sacred, sacrifice, sirens, specimen, superstitious, terrorism, triumph, underprivileged, violence</p> <p>Tier 3 - Aba, Allah, Al-Qaeda, Arabic, badal, burqa, dyna, Dhu al-Hijah, Eid al-Azha, Eid al-Fitr, fedayeen, haram, Holy Quran, Internationally Displaced Person, imam, Islamabad, Jani, madrasa, mufti, mullah, Muslim, Pashto, pisho, purdah, Ramadan, shalwar kamiz, Shangla, scholar, tailboard, Talib, Taliban, Urdu</p>	Diversity:	Malala was a school-aged Muslim girl from Pakistan at the time of the events that she describes. She now lives in Birmingham, in the UK, where she received her medical treatment. Along with her family, she took residence in Birmingham and they have since made it their “second home”.
Media & other links:	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hx0ajieM3M&t=53s https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIqOhxQ0-H8&t=2s	Links to previous texts:	<p>Y3 – Lila and the Firework Maker’s Daughter</p> <p>Y4 – The Boy at the Back of the Class</p> <p>Y5 – Kaspar the Prince of Cats</p>