

## The girl they couldn't silence

### Level 2 • Intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

Can you answer the following questions?

- Where are the main council chambers of the United Nations?
- In which two countries are the Taliban most active?

#### 2 Key words

- Write the key words from the article next to the definitions below. The paragraph numbers have been given to help you.

culmination      campaign      determination      influence      militants      struggling

- a series of actions intended to produce political or social change \_\_\_\_\_ (para 1)
- the final result of a process or situation \_\_\_\_\_ (para 5)
- trying very hard to stop someone having power over you \_\_\_\_\_ (para 5)
- people who use extreme and violent methods to achieve something \_\_\_\_\_ (para 5)
- the refusal to let anything stop you from doing what you want to do \_\_\_\_\_ (para 6)
- the effect that a person or thing has on decisions, opinions or the way something happens \_\_\_\_\_ (para 6)

allusion      duty      extremists      drooping      petition      traumas

- hanging downwards \_\_\_\_\_ (para 10)
- serious injuries \_\_\_\_\_ (para 10)
- a statement or action that refers to something in an indirect way \_\_\_\_\_ (para 10)
- people who have beliefs or opinions that are considered to be extremely unreasonable by most people \_\_\_\_\_ (para 10)
- a legal or moral obligation \_\_\_\_\_ (para 13)
- a document signed by many people that asks someone in authority to do something \_\_\_\_\_ (para 14)

- Mark the main stressed syllable on each word, e.g. campaign.

- Which of the key words can be both verbs and nouns?

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#### **Malala delivers defiant riposte to Taliban militants as UN hails 'our hero'**

*'They thought that the bullet would silence us. But they failed,' says Malala, 16, at UN to push campaign for girls' education*

**Ed Pilkington in New York**  
**12 July, 2013**

- 1 When the Taliban sent a gunman to shoot Malala Yousafzai in October 2012 as she rode home on a bus after school, they knew what they wanted: to silence the teenager and kill off her campaign for girls' education.
- 2 Nine months and countless surgical operations later, she stood up at the United Nations on her 16th birthday on Friday to give a defiant reply. "They thought that the bullet would silence us. But they failed," she said.
- 3 It was an unusual 16th birthday. Instead of blowing out candles on a cake, Malala sat in one of the main council chambers at the United Nations in the central seat usually reserved for world leaders.
- 4 She listened quietly as Ban Ki-moon, the UN secretary-general, described her as "our hero, our champion"; and as the former British prime minister and now UN education envoy, Gordon Brown, said what he called "the words the Taliban never wanted her to hear: happy 16th birthday, Malala".
- 5 The event, named Malala Day, was the culmination of an extraordinary four years for the girl from Mingora in Pakistan. She was thrust into the public glare after she wrote a blog for the BBC Urdu service describing her experiences of struggling to get an education under the rising power of Taliban militants.
- 6 By 11, she was showing exceptional determination, calling personally on the US special representative to Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke, to use his influence against the Taliban's efforts to stop education for girls. By 14, she was on the radar of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who suggested her for the International Children's Peace Prize, and, by 15, she became the youngest Nobel Peace Prize nominee in history.
- 7 But all this global attention came at a price. Death threats followed, and, on 9 October 2012, following a meeting of Pakistani Taliban leaders, the gunman was sent to silence her.
- 8 Multiple operations in Pakistan and the UK followed the attack on the bus, including the fitting of a titanium plate on her left forehead and a cochlear implant to restore her hearing. She now lives with her family in Birmingham and does what the Taliban tried to stop her doing: she goes to school every day. "I am not against anyone," she said in the UN chamber, having taken this day out from the classroom. "Neither am I here to speak in terms of personal revenge against the Taliban or any other terrorist group."
- 9 Malala responded to the violence of the Taliban with words against bullets. "I do not even hate the Talib who shot me. Even if there was a gun in my hand and he stood in front of me, I would not shoot him."
- 10 She spoke confidently, with only an injured eye and a slightly drooping left side of her face to hint at such fresh traumas. There was one other allusion to the horror of her past: she wore a white shawl belonging to a woman who was also targeted by extremists but who, unlike Malala, did not survive: Benazir Bhutto, the former prime minister of Pakistan.
- 11 "The extremists are afraid of books and pens," the teenager continued. "The power of education frightens them. They are afraid of women. The power of the voice of women frightens them."
- 12 She talked about the attack in June on a hospital in Quetta, capital of Baluchistan, and killings of female teachers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. "That is why they are blasting schools every day – because they were and they are afraid of change, afraid of the equality that we will bring to our society."
- 13 And she gave her own opposing interpretation of Islam to the Taliban's. "They think that God is a tiny, little conservative being who would send girls to hell just because they go to school. The terrorists are misusing the name of Islam and Pashtun society for their own personal benefits. Islam is a religion of peace, humanity and brotherhood. Islam says that it is not only each child's right to get education but their duty and responsibility."
- 14 Such ability to say what normally remains unsaid – to give voice to young people who are normally silenced – has created its own response. The "Stand with Malala" petition, demanding education for the 57 million children around the world who do not go to school, has attracted more than four million signatures – more than a million were added after Malala's speech.

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First published in *The Guardian*, 12/07/13

**Make a note of all the hard facts you can find in the article about Malala.**

This image shows a single sheet of aged, yellowed paper. It features ten horizontal blue lines spaced evenly down the page. A single vertical red line runs parallel to the left edge, creating a narrow margin. The paper has a slightly textured appearance with some minor discoloration and faint smudges, characteristic of old documents. There is no handwriting or printed text on the page.

**Complete the table below with the following information.**

- Find five other people mentioned in the article.
- What do/did they do?
- What connection do they have to this news story?

name	position	connection

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#### 5 Expressions

Find these expressions in the article. Talk about how they are used and what they mean.

1. kill something off
2. be on someone's radar
3. be thrust into the public glare
4. come at a price
5. give voice to someone

#### 6 Discussion

- How do you feel when you read the story?
- Do you think Malala's ambition of education for all children will ever become reality? Why? Why not?

#### 7 Webquest

Read the quotes from Malala's speech at the UN below. Then listen to the speech online.

"We realize the importance of our voice when we are silenced."

"One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world.  
Education is the only solution. Education first."

"This is what my soul is telling me: be peaceful and love everyone."

"There was a time when women social activists asked men to stand up for their rights,  
but this time we will do it by ourselves."

"So today, we call upon the world leaders to change their strategic policies in favour of peace and prosperity."

"Let us shield ourselves with unity and togetherness."

"We realized the importance of pens and books when we saw the guns.  
The extremists are afraid of books and pens."

"We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back."

"[Extremists] are afraid of change, afraid of the equality that we will bring into our society."

"Malala Day is not my day. Today is the day of every woman,  
every boy and every girl who has raised their voice for their rights."

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#### KEY

#### 1 Warmer

- New York City
- Afghanistan and Pakistan

#### 2 Key words

##### a. and b.

- campaign
- culmination
- struggling
- militants
- determination
- influence
- drooping
- traumas
- allusion
- extremists
- duty
- petition

##### c.

campaign, influence, petition

#### 3 Comprehension check

**Answers should include:** her surname (Yousafzai); her nationality (Pakistani); her home town (Mingora); her age (16); where she lives now (Birmingham, UK); when she was shot (in October 2012); where she was shot (on a bus in Pakistan); why she was shot (to silence her and kill off her campaign for girls' education); who shot her (the Taliban); what awards she was nominated for (the International Children's Peace Prize and the Nobel Peace Prize).

#### 4 Further comprehension

name	position	connection
Ban Ki-moon	UN secretary-general	He made a speech in honour of Malala at the UN.
Gordon Brown	UN education envoy (former UK PM)	He wished Malala happy birthday at the UN.
Richard Holbrooke	US special representative to Pakistan	Malala asked him to help her to combat the Taliban.
Desmond Tutu	archbishop (of Cape Town; now retired)	He nominated Malala for the International Children's Peace Prize.
Benazir Bhutto	former PM of Pakistan (assassinated)	Malala was wearing her shawl during her speech.

#### 5 Expressions

- stop, get rid of or destroy something
- be noticed by someone
- be pushed into a position where you get attention from the media, especially when you don't want it
- include disadvantages
- give someone the right or opportunity to express their opinions and influence what happens

#### 7 Webquest

**Teacher's note:** Malala's UN speech can be watched in full online. It is 17 minutes long. If time is short, you could set this task as homework.

Students might also like to read these follow-up articles on the *Guardian* website.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jul/12/malala-idol-un-speech-pupils>  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jul/17/taliban-letter-malala-yousafzai>