

The girl they couldn't silence

Level 3 • Advanced

1 Warmer

Can you answer the following questions?

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

2 Key words

Find key words in the article that fit the definitions below. The paragraph numbers have been given to help you.

1. a clever reply _____ (title)
2. given a particular name or description _____ (para 5)
3. the final result of a process or situation _____ (para 5)
4. a place that is affected by many problems _____ (para 5)
5. people who use extreme and violent methods to achieve something _____ (para 5)
6. a big effort to achieve something, especially by a company or government _____ (para 6)
7. making you feel excited or confused, especially because everything is changing very fast
_____ (para 7)
8. used as an insult for people who have no religious beliefs or who have religious beliefs that are different from yours _____ (para 7)
9. offensive behaviour and language _____ (para 7)
10. serious injuries _____ (para 10)
11. a statement or action that refers to something in an indirect way _____ (para 10)
12. express thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively _____ (para 14)

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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 made clear their intention: 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 deliver a defiant riposte. "They thought that the bullet would silence us. But they failed," she said.
- 3 As 16th birthdays go, it was among the more unusual. 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, uttered what he called "the words the Taliban never wanted her to hear: happy 16th birthday, Malala".
- 5 The event, dubbed Malala Day, was the culmination of an extraordinary four years for the girl from Mingora, in the troubled Swat valley of Pakistan. She was thrust into the public glare after she wrote a blog for the BBC Urdu service describing her experiences 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 to combat the Taliban's drive against education for girls. By 14, she was on the radar of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who put her forward for the International Children's Peace Prize, and, by 15, she became the youngest Nobel Peace Prize nominee in history.
- 7 But such dizzying global attention came at a price. Death threats followed her growing recognition, and, on 9 October 2012, following a meeting of Pakistani Taliban leaders, the gunman was dispatched to remove what they called the "symbol of infidels and obscenity".
- 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: 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 her own countervailing force: words against bullets. "I do not even hate the Talib who shot me. Even if there is a gun in my hand and he stands 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 unstated 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 to tell the tale: 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 cited 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 of going 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, rather it is their duty and responsibility."
- 14 Such ability to articulate what normally remains unarticulated – to give voice to young people normally silenced – has generated its own

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response. The “Stand with Malala” petition, calling for 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 having been added shortly after Malala’s speech.

15 At the start of her speech, Malala said: "I don't know where to begin my speech. I don't know

what people would be expecting me to say." She need not have worried.

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3 Comprehension check

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

[illegible]

4 Further comprehension

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 and discuss 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

- What emotions do you think the story evokes in the journalist?
- How do you feel when you read the story?
- Concerning Malala and the campaign to provide all children with an education, what do you predict will happen in the future?

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

- riposte
- dubbed
- culmination
- troubled
- militants
- drive
- dizzying
- infidels
- obscenity
- traumas
- allusion
- articulate

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>