

Malala

Every school year, regardless of the grade, I get blindsided by the same question, who do you admire? Each and every time this question sneaks up on me and gets me stumped. Like a robot following instructions, I go through the same train of thought of, well, I can't use my parents since I have already used them, can't use Ellen DeGeneres for the sixteenth time, can't use Oprah Winfrey, it can get really difficult. Eventually, I found that I would write about someone that I didn't really admire just to get the necessary points, which can become quite boring and tedious. So, it is with great pleasure that I, after many years of soul searching, can announce that I have found a compassionate and amazing person worth writing about. Her name is Malala.

Malala Yousafzai, the youngest ever Nobel Peace prize recipient, is a woman's rights activist from Pakistan. She grew up in Mingora, Pakistan, where she attended the school her father ran, known as "Khushal Public School". Her family did not have normal or traditional views towards women, especially her father, whom believed that Malala, and every other female deserves to be respected and treated fairly, as well as have the right to get a proper education. This enabled Malala to stand up for her beliefs, and speak out against the Taliban, whom wanted to decimate all female education. As the Taliban began to take reign of the Swat Valley, the consequences were felt greatly. They threatened the public, warning them to keep their daughters at home as they are to not have an education, and eventually escalated into outright bombing the schools and places of education. These terrifying acts seeded feelings of fear and despair in the select families who chose to ignore the warnings and actions performed by the Taliban, causing the population count at schools to dwindle to almost nothing. But this did not frighten Malala and her Father away, instead it fueled the fire within them, making them do amazing and reckless things, like publicly speak out against the Taliban and advocate for their rights. Malala became the face of woman's rights in Pakistan, and gave hope to those who needed it most. Although they received death threats steady, and were followed on numerous occasions, they didn't stop. But in the back of their mind lived a fear, fear that one day someone would kill them. But nothing happened, they lived in relative peace. But that all ended on October 9th, 2012.

After a long and successful day at school, Malala decided to take the second bus, which left later than the first. She and her schoolmates piled onto the bus and chatted away as they were whisked away towards home, but suddenly, an unknown man stepped out and forced the bus to stop. He then proceeded to board the bus and demanded that Malala indentified herself. No one said anything, but their looks gave it away, the man then raised his gun, and shot two bullets at her. One passed relatively safely through her left hand, while the other plummeted through the left side of her head, burrowing down into her neck. After being flown to Peshawar in critical condition, a surgeon removed a piece of her skull, allowing her brain room to swell. Afterwards she was taken to Birmingham, England, to seek western medicine. She awoke paralyzed, but through hard work and enormous support from around the globe, she managed to get better. She went on to write a book called "*I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban*", which sparked my interest in her and everything she stands for.

Malala has sparked conversation about children's literature, and has shown us how to be courageous and fearless. Every morning I moan when my alarm goes off for school, which is something I now realise I take for granted every day. I didn't realise how lucky I am till I read her book. Her stories of hardship and standing up and facing the odds for something she believed in gave me chills, which is why she is the person I admire most.

By: Tristan MacEachern