

Why Malala Yousafzai Matters

In these days, when American political partisans are obsessed with making sure their political team wins, and when Justin Beiber's hair is the subject of thousands of well-read articles on Google, politics and celebrity are momentarily overshadowed elsewhere by the tale of a brave Pakistani girl whose only wish was to go to school -- and is battling for her life because of it.

Yes, there are heroes in life, and they're not the politicians hyped by partisans, spinners, or government flacks; not the overpaid athletes, or self-absorbed millionaire talk show hosts. They're not the actors paid to convincingly mouth words written by others, or the cute girl or teen boy singers whose handlers peddle their sex appeal as much as their (often limited) talent.

If you look, you can see heroes every day --- not just walking among you, but walking unnoticed throughout the world. Many are young people in America's heartland, in cities and villages of countries such as Mexico, Spain, India, and beyond -- kids wise beyond their years. In Pakistan, 15-year-old **Malala Yousafzai**, the girl who risked her life to learn, has become the symbol of those young people thirsting for a better life and

Who are some everyday heroes?

Why did Malala Yousafzai risk her life?

Of what has she become the symbol?

seeking to live today, in the present century -- not in centuries past.

By age 11, Yousafzai was known of her championing education and women's rights in Pakistan's Swat Valley --- angering the Taliban who didn't want girls to go to school. She became a national figure due to her eloquence and logic in print and broadcast interviews. She wrote a blog for the BBC criticizing life under the Taliban. Desmond Tutu later nominated her for the International children's Peace Prize, and she was awarded Pakistan's first National Youth Peace Prize.

The Taliban felt she must be eliminated, so on October 9 a would-be Taliban assassin got on her school bus and shot her in the head and neck. The critically injured girl was flown to Great Britain for treatment. The Taliban again threatened to kill her and her father. Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zaradi denounced the shooting. Some Pakistani Islamic clerics issued a fatwa (a legal opinion) against the would-be assassins.

The story of a brave teen who fanatics tried to murder captured the world's attention, and what happened here is actually pretty simple.

What had Yousafzai done by age 11?

To what were the Taliban opposed?

What things had Yousafzai done?

What awards did she receive?

What did the Taliban want her assassinated?

What is a *fatwa*?

What does the author mean by "would-be" assassins?"

A teenage girl wants girls to be free to learn. Brutal fanatics who don't believe girls should learn felt threatened by her high profile, eloquence, and the wise-beyond-her-years intelligence and logic.

So they got on what is almost universally considered "a safe place for kids" -- a school bus -- to seek her out and murder her.

It's also about the need for **unmistakable consequences**.

Consequences aren't only paid by victims or the predators in acts such as this, but by those who remain silent, and enable due to their fixation on their own political agenda.

It's about drawing a line in the sand.

It's about seeking out, marginalizing and/or obliterating those who murder to try to murder their political foes.

And it's about protecting our world's future, our dreaming, high-aspiring children --- no matter where these kids live.

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Why did fanatics feel threatened?

What does "enable" mean in this paragraph?

What does the author say are "unmistakable consequences"?

Answer the following questions based on the reading:

1. The MAIN purpose of this article is to:
 - a. Criticize the Taliban for their brutality
 - b. Call upon citizens around the world to stand for democracy
 - c. Call on the world to recognize and protect the Malalas of the world.
 - d. Raise money for medical treatment for Malala

2. According to the article, what is the best definition of a hero?
 - a. Actors, talk-show hosts and athletes
 - b. Ordinary folks who stand up for what they believe in
 - c. Someone who objects to mistreatment of others
 - d. Girls who fight for the rights of young people

3. What is the main message of the article?
 - a. That the world is a scary and dangerous place
 - b. That we spend too much time worshipping celebrities
 - c. That the world must stand up to violence and oppression
 - d. That Malala is an inspiration to children all over the world

Writing about what you read:

Using the responses to the text questions, write an essay that supports this statement:

Malala Yousafzai risked her life so that she and girls in places like Pakistan could get an education. For her, it was an injustice that someone's gender would limit their opportunity in life.

Becoming a defender of social justice:

List five examples of “injustice” that you see around you in your own life.

- A) _____
- B) _____
- C) _____
- D) _____
- E) _____

USE YOUR ANSWER FROM QUESTION 4 ABOVE TO FOCUS YOU ON THE SHORT ESSAY ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

Based on what you learned about Malala’s struggle, write about one injustice that you see in your world and something you can do to change it.

In your response, be sure to:

- Clearly explain the injustice including why you feel it is so unfair
- Steps you can take to change it
- Include connections and references to Malala and her struggle.
- Have an introduction, body, and conclusion