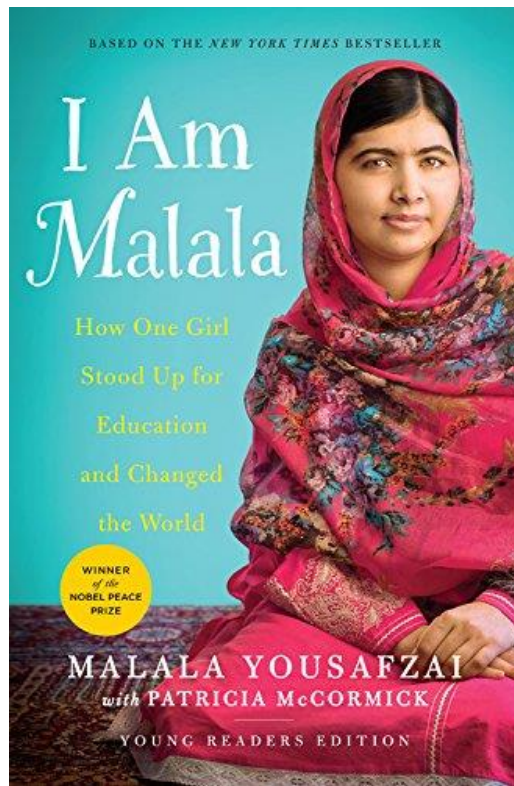


**Children and Young Adult Book Review**  
*High School*

**I am Malala: How One Girl Stood Up for Education and  
Changed the World**

Educator Reviewer: Yunying Xu  
Student Reviewer: Sara Tonks



Yousafzai, M. & McCormick, P. (2014). *I am Malala: How one girl stood up for education and changed the world*. New York, NY: Hachette Book Group.

### **Educator Review:**

This straightforward autobiography chronicles the life of Malala Yousafzai and her family's life in Swat Valley of Pakistan. Yousafzai writes chronologically about her peaceful life in the beautiful Swat Valley before the Taliban entered. She depicts her life during that time "as free as a bird" because she was able to attend school and learn along with the boys in her community.

However, one day, the peace in Swat Valley had been disrupted. Maulana Fazlullah, nicknamed the Radio Mullah, campaigned against anything he deemed un-Islamic and Western. This included the idea that woman should rarely venture from the home; when they do, they should wear a veil and be accompanied by a male relative. Women's educational rights came under threat. In addition, Taliban entered the Swat Valley and was at war with the Pakistani Army. They bombed the town and most girls remained at home in order to be safe. Malala heard stories of girls who continued going to school and were targeted and bombed by the Taliban. Gradually, Malala started to speak out by writing, "A Schoolgirl's Diary" and she entered the public sphere to fight for girls' rights to receive a public education. Her bravery made her a target of the Taliban who sent her death threats. However, these threats did not stop her fight. She said, "I am not scared of anything." One day on the way home the Taliban shot her, but she survived and was sent to Birmingham for surgery. Through her book, she continues the fight.

This book provides a voice for marginalized youth from the Middle East, who have different religious beliefs and different cultural backgrounds. These young people often do not see themselves represented in children's and young adult books. By reading this book, these young people can find representation of their voice.

The book also offers a chance for U.S. students to know what it means to live in a Middle Eastern country by presenting them the true story of Malala. This can help remove the label of "weird" or "different" of Middle Eastern students who may dress in traditional clothing, such as wearing a veil. Students will understand the culture of Middle Eastern students and gain respect for these students rather than marginalizing them.

*This book provides an option for teachers to foster discussion among students about sensitive issues. It is a great book to illustrate the complex historic, economic, geographical and political issues of the Middle East.*

Additionally, this book provides an option for teachers to foster discussion among students about sensitive issues such as war and religion. Teachers can bring up topics such as *what do you think about the Taliban* and *Why did the U.S. government send armies to Pakistan* by applying a critical lens to these culturally sensitive issues. Finally, this book can be used in cross-curricular settings in content areas such as history and geography. It is a great book to illustrate the complex historic, economic, geographical and political issues of the Middle East.

There are, however, several issues educators should be aware of when using or recommending this book. First of all, the book is not a "fun" read because it discusses the tragedies of war, being deprived of education and the suppression of women's rights. It may be difficult for young adults to remain patient while reading a book that has so many sad topics. In addition, it may be difficult for young males to connect to this story due to its focus on the life of a young girl and her fight for the right to her education.

Yunging Xu  
The University of Georgia, Athens, GA

**Student Review:**

The young adult version of *I am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai is important because it is real and it is now. Events such as Malala's fight for education for girls are not part of history books yet because they have happened within the past ten years. These issues may not be present in America right now, but they are still occurring in certain parts of the world. This book gives a first-hand account of someone actually involved in the reform movement whose life has been changed by it. I loved the truth and how it is possible to relate to the book. I also admire Malala who is brave enough to stand up for what she believes in, which I think is a very noble purpose.

I would recommend this book to anyone I come across because it is real. This is not a story to be only known by second-hand information or a vague recollection of a newscast from several years ago. I believe that people who support the social reform movement as well as the fight for equal rights for women of the world will enjoy this book. It is a hard truth to read that a young woman could be considered a threat to the Taliban and would be treated as such, but it is the truth. People who wish to learn about the world around them would enjoy the book.

Sara Tonks  
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11<sup>th</sup> Grade