

I Am Malala—Chapter Questions and Blog

Answer the questions in complete sentences on loose leaf as you complete the chapters. You must also post in the Virtual Book Club where it is noted!

Part One: Before the Taliban

Chapter 1—A Daughter Is Born

1. Explain at least three examples of how Malala’s father broke from tradition before and after she was born.
2. It is important to note that Malala’s early references to *Pashtunwali* explain a cultural code of ethics that is separate from the actual religion of Islam, even though both had tremendous influence in her formative years. She explains near the end of the chapter that “like all Swati’s I thought of myself first as Swati and then Pashtun, before Pakistani.” Explain the difference in the three terms and why she may have placed them in this order of importance.

Chapter 2—My Father the Falcon

1. In this chapter several differences were noted between the way girls and boys were treated. Some were noticed by Malala’s father, Ziauddin, as he grew up, and other differences became more extreme under General Zia’s regime. List several of these differences.
2. What is *jihad* and how did it grow to become a “sixth pillar” of the Islamic religion?
3. Explain how and why Malala’s father eventually rejected *jihad* or what became known as “militant Islam”.
4. How did Ziauddin turn his weakness into strength?

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Chapter 3—Growing Up in a School

1. What was Ziauddin’s reaction to the controversial parody “The Satanic Verses?”
2. When a bribe was expected in order to register his Khushal School, how did Ziauddin react?
3. In this chapter what personal qualities helped Ziauddin realize his dream of running his own school?

Chapter 4—The Village

1. In Malala’s description of the trip back to their home village of Barkana, what positive images seem to contrast the deep poverty of the area?
2. In this chapter Malala begins to question some of the *Pashtuni* code, particularly the treatment of women. List some examples that bothered her.
4. Why might Malala and her co- writer, Christina Lamb, have inserted this chapter about various visits to the countryside, the home village, at this point in the biography?

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Chapter 5—Why I Don’t Wear Earrings and Pashtuns Don’t Say Thank You

1. Why does Malala decide to stop wearing earrings?
2. What other part of *Pashtunwali* begins to trouble Malala in this chapter?
3. How does Malala associate her own lesson about greed with the ever-changing governmental regimes of Pakistan?
4. Summarize Malala’s first public speaking competition. What were the results and what goal did she set?

Chapter 6—Children of the Rubbish Mountain

1. What are some examples of how Malala’s family reached out to those less fortunate?
2. When Ziauddin encouraged some of the poor to come to school, Malala reports that some of the richer parents took their children out of the school, thinking it shameful for their children to mix with those from poor families. How does this example of human behavior connect with changes in education in the United States? Can you make any personal connections?
3. Even though Malala’s mother had not continued her own education, in what ways did she help further her husband’s dream of their school and the cause of education?
4. How did the Pakistanis view the events of 9/11, according to this account?

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Chapter 7—The Mufti Who Tried to Close Our School

1. Explain the difference between the Sunnis and the Shias.
2. What objections did the *Mufti* have to the school?
3. How did Americans seem to make matters worse in this time of political and religious unrest in Pakistan?
4. Why might the authors have provided so much information about the stormy religious and political background of Pakistan in this part of the book?

Chapter 8—The Autumn of the Earthquake

1. What groups were most visible and helpful after the devastating earthquake, and why was this significant to the future?
2. During the tremors after the earthquake Ziauddin insisted the family stay home in their house and go to bed, even though his wife wanted to leave. Malala attributes this to “we Muslims believe our fate is written by God.” If Ziauddin truly believed this, why was he such a political activist? Why wouldn’t he just leave everything up to God? Or was this the reason he kept going, even when he seemed to have so much opposition?
3. Why did Part I begin with the quote “Rather I receive your bullet-riddled body with honor—Than news of your cowardice on the battlefield”?

What was the real battlefield described in this section? How did Malala and her family show their honor?

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Part Two: The Valley of Death

Chapter 9—Radio Mullah

1. Explain how Malala’s diction in describing the Taliban, shows her attitude toward them.
2. In this chapter we see how Fazlullah and his illegal radio station went from friendly sermons encouraging people to adopt good habits to kidnapping and killing khans and political activists who did not agree with them. Explain how this transformation took place and how they gradually gained influence.
3. In this chapter Malala brings up an important problem: “Mullahs often misinterpret the Quran and Hadith when they teach them in our country, as few people understand the original Arabic. Fazlullah exploited this ignorance.” What parallels from world history can be drawn with this statement and the Taliban’s ability to “seduce” people to their way of thinking? (Consider the Reformation, slavery in the United States, WWII, etc.)
4. How do the events of this chapter support and emphasize the need for quality education?

Chapter 10—Toffees, Tennis Balls, and the Buddhas of Swat

1. Malala describes the Taliban as the enemies of fine arts, culture, and our history. Why did she feel this way?
2. Summarize the events between the religious militants and the military that took place in the capital city of Islamabad?
3. What hope did Benazir Bhutto bring to the country, and how was that hope quickly diminished?

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Chapter 11—The Clever Class

1. Why did Ziauddin quote the poem by Martin Niemöller? What relevance did it have to the situation?
2. How did Malala’s beliefs give her courage to speak out for peace in her country? Why do you think her father allowed her to be interviewed and speak out about such controversial topics?
3. Explain the simile Malala uses to explain the results of their speaking out for education (page 142—eucalyptus blossoms)
4. How does the title of this chapter coincide with Malala’s statements at the end of it? What theme is emerging?

Chapter 12—The Bloody Square

1. According to Malala, why did so many manual laborers join the Taliban?
2. What effect did the increasing violence and intimidation have on the citizens of Swat?
3. Explain Ziauddin’s comment that the common people were like chaff.

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Chapter 13--The Diary of Gul Makai

1. Explain why Malala began to see that the pen could be more powerful than machine guns, tanks, or helicopters?
2. Compare/contrast the Diary of Gul Makai to what you know about the Diary of Anne Frank.
3. What do you think of Malala’s statement, “Education is neither Eastern nor Western, it is human”? In what instances could education be biased?

Chapter 14—A Funny Kind of Peace

1. Why is this chapter called “A Funny Kind of Peace”? What hopes did many people have that did not come into fruition?
2. What was Malala’s assessment of the US interest in the region?

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Chapter 15—Leaving the Valley

1. Explain how the Pashtun practice of hospitality was so important in these events.
2. How was Malala’s twelfth birthday symbolic of the times?

Part Three: Three Girls, Three Bullets

Chapter 16—The Valley of Sorrows

1. Why wasn't the Pakistan army regarded as heroic after having "freed" the valley from the Taliban?
2. Explain why the trip to Islamabad gave Malala so much hope for the future.
3. Explain the natural disaster that was spoken of as another reproof from God for the music and dancing that had returned to the valley.
4. Why did Malala now want to become a politician?

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Chapter 17—Praying to Be Tall

1. Explain some of the incidents that caused Malala to think her country was "going crazy".
2. What events brought on more distrust of the US?
3. What were some of the results of Malala winning Pakistan's first ever National Peace Prize? In what ways was Malala becoming "tall"?

Chapter 18—The Woman and the Sea

1. Why did the visit with Aunt Najma have such a profound effect on Malala?
2. Explain how Malala's visit to Jinnah's mausoleum further stirred her political ambitions? What were her main concerns?
3. What happened that caused great concern and unrest for the family before they returned to Swat?

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Chapter 19—A Private Talibanization

1. What objections to the school field trip were raised in the anonymous letter? How did the “propaganda” arouse suspicions about the school?
2. Explain why Malala began to double-check all the locks in their home every night.
3. Why do you think Malala was so upset by the boy who had a crush on her?

Chapter 20—Who Is Malala?

1. What does the reader learn about Malala’s belief in God in this chapter? Was she as devout as her mother, Tor Pekai? Why or why not?
2. What indications had there been that the Taliban were still present in Mingora, even though the army had supposedly driven them out?
3. What was ironic about the actions of Malala’s mother at the time of the shooting?
4. Why do you think this section of the book began with the quote, “O Wayfarer! Rest your head on the stony cobblestone [.] It is a foreign land—not the city of your kings!”

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Part Four: Between Life and Death

Chapter 21—“God, I Entrust Her to You”

1. Summarize how Malala’s mother reacted to the shooting and what can be inferred about her.
2. What did the CT scan in the military hospital reveal that had not been detected at the Swat General Hospital?
3. Why was Ziauddin bewildered, even agitated, by all the people gathering outside the hospital?
4. What seems most absurd about the reasons the Taliban gave for targeting Malala?
5. What was the main concern of the British doctors and why?
6. What are the similarities and differences in how Malala’s mother and father reacted to the situation?

Chapter 22—Journey into the Unknown

1. What part did Dr. Fiona play in Malala’s treatment?
2. Why was it important that Malala not be taken to the US for treatment?
3. How was the problem of her transport to the UK finally solved?
4. Why did Malala’s father not accompany her to England?

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Part Five: A Second Life

Chapter 23—“The Girl Shot in the Head, Birmingham”

1. Beyond the absence of her parents, what seemed to be Malala’s main concern when she became conscious?
2. How believable is Malala’s reaction when she found out she had been shot?
3. Explain how the text illustrates all the confusion that can happen in someone’s mind when they are under sedation and medical stress.
4. What seemed to be the priority of the Pakistani civilian government and how do you know?
5. What can you infer about Malala due to her reaction to the movie *Bend It like Beckham*?

Chapter 24—“They Have Snatched Her Smile”

1. What about Malala’s medical condition most bothered her parents?
2. What was ironic about the arrest of Malala’s bus driver?
3. Why was Malala taken to the botanical gardens for her first outing and what was her reaction to it?
4. What did President Zardari do for Malala and her father?
5. Explain how Malala sums up her experience and why she was not killed.

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Epilogue—One Child, One Teacher, One Book, One Pen...

1. In the first chapter Malala's father is quoted as saying, "Malala will be free as a bird." After reading the epilogue how true is his statement? In what ways is she now free and in what ways is she not?
2. How effective have Malala and her father been in drawing attention to the right of every child to have an education?

After Reading:

1. Most of the story is told in chronological order except for the account of the shooting described in the Prologue. Why might the writers (Malala and co-writer Christina Lamb) have chosen to describe the shooting before beginning with Malala's birth?
2. In the credits Malala thanks one of her father's friends for helping with the history of the region, and her co-writer, Christina Lamb, also acknowledges several people who provided notes and guidance. How would the overall effect of the book be different were it dependent strictly on Malala's memory?