Even in the face of death threats, Malala refused to stop fighting for the right to go to school.

Vocabulary

- **oppressive**: unfair, harsh, and controlling
- **execution**: being put to death
- **outrage**: anger
- **crusade**: a fight for something that a person believes is right
- **vowed**: promised
Malala the Brave
The amazing true story of a 15-year-old girl who stood up to a deadly terrorist group

It was October 9, 2012. Malala Yousafzai, 15, was on a school bus in Mingora, Pakistan, where she lived. Suddenly, two gunmen appeared. “Who is Malala?” one of them demanded.

Terror filled the bus as the gunmen opened fire. They shot Malala in the head. They also shot two of her friends. Then the gunmen fled, leaving them to die.

The gunmen were members of the Taliban. This group believes in an extreme version of Islam that most Muslims don’t agree with. Members of the Taliban use terror to enforce their beliefs. The Taliban wanted to kill Malala. Why? Because she fought for girls’ right to go to school.

Taliban Takeover
In 2007, the Taliban took control of the area where Malala lived. Pakistan’s army tried to stop them. The Taliban reacted violently. They blew up buildings and murdered people.

The Taliban made people follow oppressive rules. Women were not allowed to go to school or work, or to wear makeup. They couldn’t even go outside without a male relative. Music, television, and movies were banned. People who broke the rules were punished by whipping or execution.

In January 2009, the Taliban ordered all schools for girls to close. Malala’s school, which her father had owned for more than 10 years, remained open. This was very dangerous. Hundreds of schools were bombed. Teachers were murdered.

For many parents, the risk was too great. More than half of the students at Malala’s school dropped out.

Malala’s Courage
Malala wanted to do something about the situation. In 2009, she began blogging for the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) website. She wrote about what life was like...
under the Taliban. People all over the world read her blog. Outrage over the Taliban grew.

Malala gave speeches on television. Her message was always the same: All children deserve the right to an education. “Even if they come to kill me, I will tell them what they are doing is wrong, that education is our right,” Malala said.

In 2011, the President of Pakistan awarded Malala the first-ever National Youth Peace Prize. Everyone knew her name. Including the Taliban.

Attacked

Even before she won the peace prize, notes began appearing under Malala’s door, ordering her to give up her crusade. But she refused to back down. That’s why the Taliban gunmen boarded her school bus on that terrible day in October 2012. They shot her as a warning to other girls.

Malala’s friends were not critically hurt. But Malala was in bad shape. The bullet destroyed her left ear and sent pieces of her skull into her brain. She was flown to a hospital in England.

In Pakistan and around the world, millions prayed for her. Protesters marched. Many of them were kids.

Last March, Malala started high school. “Today, I am wearing a uniform,” she said proudly. “It proves that I am a student. It is the happiest day. I am going to school. I am learning.”

Malala continues to be a powerful symbol of the struggle many kids face. She dreams of a world in which all children, especially girls, can get an education. In July, Malala spoke at the United Nations Youth Assembly.

“One child, one teacher, one book can change the world,” she declared. “Education is the only solution.”

—Kristin Lewis

Staying Strong

It’s been more than a year since the shooting. Malala has had several operations and continues to get better. The Taliban have vowed to go after Malala again. So, Malala’s family moved to England, where they hope they will be safe.

Malala recovers in a hospital in England.

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Show What You Know

Answer these questions about “Malala the Brave.” Fill in the bubble next to the best answer to each question.

1. What is the main idea of this article?
   A) The Taliban is a terrorist group.
   B) Malala is famous around the world.
   C) Malala stood up for her beliefs even though she was attacked for doing so.
   D) When Malala was shot, the bullet caused serious damage to her head.

2. In a photo on page 6, a child holds a sign that says “I am also Malala.” She probably means that _____.
   A) Malala is her twin sister
   B) her name is also Malala
   C) she looks a lot like Malala
   D) she also suffers under Taliban rule

3. In the section “Attacked,” the word critically means _____.
   A) seriously
   B) hatefully
   C) violently
   D) sadly

4. Which phrase from the text helps the reader understand the meaning of the word critically?
   A) “that terrible day”
   B) “But Malala was in bad shape.”
   C) “before she won the peace prize”
   D) “gunmen boarded her school bus”

5. The reader can infer that some people who read Malala’s blog in 2009 became angry because _____.
   A) the blog was breaking a Taliban rule
   B) the blog showed how terrible it was to live under Taliban control
   C) the blog showed how terrible it was to be shot
   D) they didn’t like to read blogs

6. Which statement does the text support?
   A) The Taliban never went near Malala’s home.
   B) Malala graduated from high school.
   C) No one had ever won the National Youth Peace Prize before Malala.
   D) Malala moved back to Pakistan.

Use a separate sheet of paper to answer the following questions.

7. The article says that the Taliban made people follow “oppressive rules.” Write down three examples of these rules from the text.

8. The author included the fact that Malala spoke out in July in support of education for all children. What does this information tell the reader about Malala’s attitude nine months after she was attacked?