

Right to Learn

In 2012, Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani sixteen-year-old who spoke up for the rights of girls, paid a high price for her activism. She was shot by members of Taliban, an Islamic extremist group that is fighting to control the country of Afghanistan. While riding the bus home from school, Yousafzai was shot in the left side of the head and, miraculously, survived. The attack was horrific, but it did *not* stop Yousafzai from trying to make a difference in the lives of children in the region where she lived.

In 2013, after months of surgeries and rehabilitation, Malala Yousafzai delivered a brave, heart-felt, and memorable speech to the United Nations. In this excerpt, it is easy to identify the strategies and techniques that made her speech powerful.

“Dear friends, on 9 October 2012, the Taliban shot me on the left side of my forehead. They shot my friends, too. They thought that the bullets would silence us, but they failed. And out of that silence came thousands of voices. The terrorists thought they would change my aims and stop my ambitions. But nothing changed in my life except this: weakness, fear and hopelessness died. Strength, power and courage was born. I am the same Malala. My ambitions are the same. My hopes are the same. And my dreams are the same. Dear sisters and brothers, I am not against anyone. Neither am I here to speak in terms of personal revenge against the Taliban or any other terrorist group. I am here to speak for the right of education for every child. I want education for the sons and daughters of the Taliban and all the terrorists and extremists. I do not even hate the Talib who shot me.”

Yousafzai’s speech to the UN incorporated her personal experiences, numerous rhetorical strategies, and inspirational ideas. It was celebrated for its honesty and elegance, and in 2014, Yousafzai was honored in a special way for her brave work—she became the youngest person ever to receive a Nobel Peace Prize.
