

**Third Place Winner**  
**Division I– 7-9th Grades**

*Malala Yousafzai: The Girl Who Influenced Thousands by Standing Up for Education*  
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Imagine not being able to go to school or learn new information. This is exactly what happened to Malala Yousafzai when the Taliban invaded the area in Pakistan where she lived. The Taliban said females were not allowed to go to school; however, Malala demanded her right to education. Because she put herself at risk to stand up for what she believes in, Malala Yousafzai has shown moral courage, and her actions have impacted thousands of people and continue to influence many more today.

Malala Yousafzai is perhaps one of the world's best examples of moral courage. She first wrote about her life under the Taliban using the pseudonym Gul Makai. By writing, she risked her safety and her family's because the Taliban could have discovered her true identity and would have severely punished her and her family. Although Malala soon became known around the world, she still gave speeches and interviews in support of girls' education. As her fame grew, however, the danger facing her also grew, and she was shot by a Talib man in 2012 for speaking in support of girls' education. Even though Malala recovered, she put herself and her family at risk because the Taliban could have actually killed her as well as her family. Malala knew this, but she insisted girls have a right to education. She knew she was taking enormous risks, yet she still stood up for what she believed in and currently believes in. That is why Malala Yousafzai is a great example of moral courage.

Malala Yousafzai has made and continues to make a massive impact in the world. She tells people about the power of knowledge and education in her speeches and interviews. In addition, she teaches the world to always be kind because, as mentioned in her speeches and interviews, she respects all people, including the Talib man who shot her. Malala has shown the world that people, no matter what age, can stand up for what they believe in and bring about positive changes. She has also created the Malala Fund, which is an organization that works to help girls everywhere get 12 years of quality education. She has spoken to numerous world leaders about her goal of global education for children, specifically girls, because these world leaders can help her reach it. Malala is a symbol of peace and promotes peace in her speeches and interviews. She denounces violent fighting because she believes knowledge and education are more powerful. She also believes education can cause children, especially girls, to bring positive differences into the world.

In addition to impacting the world, Malala Yousafzai has influenced me tremendously. After reading about her, I believe she would want me to use my education to bring positive changes into the world. While there are many ways I can bring positive changes into the world, the change I will work the hardest on is standing up to bullies. As with most kids, I am scared of bullies, but if Malala can risk her life to stand up for education, I can stand up to a bully and maybe make a little positive change in one child's life. Also, prior to learning about Malala, I did

not truly understand the importance of education. I used to whine about the amount of homework I would have to do, but I now remind myself that homework is beneficial since it helps me remember valuable lessons I learn in school. I look at studying for tests and quizzes as a way to attain more knowledge. In addition, I now remind my friends and family members about the importance of education. When my friends at school complain about the amount of homework we have, I tell them how fortunate we are to live in a country where we can go to school. When my younger brother says he wants to stay home from school, I say that he should go to school because education will allow him to succeed in life. Malala's story is also important to me because my Mom shares a similar one about education. Although my Mom was always able to go to school, she was sometimes falsely told she did not deserve an education. Her high school science teacher told her she could never become a doctor, which was her dream since third grade. He told her she wanted a job supposedly made for men. However, my Mom did not allow those words to stop her. She is now a general surgeon who specializes in the area of breast cancer. While my Mom's story of education is not quite the same as Malala's, there are some similarities. Both were untruthfully told they did not deserve education because they are females. Both persevered to fulfill their goals of receiving education. Lastly, both have shown me that I can accomplish my goals and make a positive impact on the world as long as I believe in myself and in my dreams.

Since Malala Yousafzai put herself at risk to stand up for what she believes in, she has shown moral courage, and her actions have affected thousands of people and continue to influence several more today. Malala has shown the world the value of education because she demanded her right to go to school despite putting herself and her family at risk. She shows all people to stand up for their rights and to injustice because she stood up for her right to education. Malala also shows all people to have respect for everyone because she has said in speeches and interviews that she respects even the Talib man who shot her. In conclusion, if all people demand their rights, stand up to the world's many injustices, have respect for everybody, and make sure all people, especially girls, have access to education, the world will be a much more loving, kind, and educated place, which will be better for everyone.