



# **Free as a Bird: The Story of Malala**

*Lina Maslo*

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**Free as a Bird: The Story of Malala** Lina Maslo

**The inspiring true story of Malala Yousafzai, human rights activist and the youngest ever winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, from debut author/illustrator Lina Maslo.**

When Malala Yousafzai was born, people shook their heads because girls were considered bad luck. But her father looked into her eyes and knew she could do anything.

In Pakistan, people said girls should not be educated. But Malala and her father were not afraid. She secretly went to school and spoke up for education in her country.

And even though an enemy tried to silence her powerful voice, she would not keep quiet. Malala traveled around the world to speak to girls and boys, to teachers, reporters, presidents, and queens—to anyone who would listen—and advocated for the right to education and equality of opportunity for every person. She would shout so that those without a voice could be heard. So everyone could be as free as a bird.

*Free as a Bird* is the inspiring true story of a fearless girl and the father who taught her to soar.

## Free as a Bird: The Story of Malala Details

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Author : Lina Maslo

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# From Reader Review Free as a Bird: The Story of Malala for online ebook

## QNPoohBear says

This charming biography of the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner is an excellent book to read with young children. It tells the story of a tiny girl placed in her father's classroom, absorbing the lessons he teaches the older students. Her love of learning carries her through to the top until it becomes illegal for girls to go to school. You know the rest! I wondered how the author and illustrator would handle the fact Malala was shot in the head. It's not spelled out or shown but rather Malala is hurt and enters a dreamlike state. I really liked that concept. It is a good metaphor or Malala's dream of peace. The biography is very basic and appropriate for ages 4+.

The illustrations are very 2D. They don't look real but at the same time, I liked the whimsical, dream-like illustrations. They were fun and made the story more appealing to the young picture book crowd.

Malala is a real inspiration for women and girls everywhere. I am sure my nieces would like this book (and have a lot of questions).

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## Linda says

Telling Malala's story must be a challenge to tell in different ways, to consider the audience. It has already been told several times, this time in a debut picture book written and illustrated by Lina Maslo. In graphic exaggerated pictures, focusing on reds and blues, Lina shows the important parts of Malala's story, from birth to her worldwide fame. There is a focus on her father's unwavering support to help his daughter (deemed bad luck at birth because she was a girl) starting with her namesake. That naming seems prophetic, for the name comes from a Pashtun heroine who died supporting soldiers with inspirational words in a battle in 1880 that Afghanis fought and won against the British. Her name is Malalai of Malwand. For young readers, this telling of Malala's story, especially when she was shot, is done thoughtfully. She is shown to have gone into a dream-like state for seven days when she woke up to find herself in England. She continued to be determined not to keep silent about girls' rights. This focus on Malala's childhood and enjoying school until it's made illegal for girls is done well. Also, the laws that keep girls from learning are explained simply. It's a great introduction to Malala for younger children or for anyone who wants a brief and enjoyable biography. Added are an author's note, a timeline, and further resources.

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## Becky B says

A simple biography of Malala, a teen who spoke up for education and women's rights and was shot by the Taliban but recovered.

This is a very simple and safe biography of Malala. (It doesn't even say she was shot in the main text, just that she slept for 7 days and woke up in a hospital after people tried to take her life.) There is further information in the back of the book. It is good and the illustrations are attractive, but I feel like everyone and their brother is writing a Malala biography these days so it is harder to get excited about another one. Our

library already has four other Malala biographies, and that's just the picture book ones! If you're looking for a very safe Malala picture book biography, this is an option. And if you're looking for a person you can find lots of books on for lower grade research, she would be a good person to pick.

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### **Kristine Hansen says**

The story of Malala told in a very simplistic form, that I think will still be a little bit disturbing for the picture book crowd so be warned.

Malala is an important story to tell though. I wish the biography at the end in the author's notes might have had something more to say than to just reiterate the text from the book itself. There's just so much more to the story, and those notes should add to the story and not just repeat it.

Overall this is a good introduction to the topic, told in a way that's easy to understand. For that I would recommend it, alongside some discussion about the things that Malala stands for.

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### **Colleen Fauchelle says**

I had to work today and this book just came in to the shop. So I read it and I will one day own my own copy. The illustrations are beautiful (I love the colour red). As soon as I started reading it I had the shivers, the Author did such wonderful job of telling this story in an easy to understand way.

What courage Malala has, we moan about our 'safe lives' and yet here is this young girl who loves learning and has a passion for other girls in her area to also learn and grow in knowledge, what we take for granted these girls have to fight for.

This story was beautiful in it's telling and food for thought for both young and old.

In the last pages there is a more in depth telling of the story with a time line of Malala's life so far.

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### **Heather Little says**

I read this story of Malala Yousafzai with my 8 yr old daughter. The topic is handled well without being too scary. There is a timeline and author's note in the back that fills in any details that maybe were too much to put in a children's book.

The only reason I gave this book a 4/5 instead of 5/5 is because it starts off setting the stage of the world Malala was born into, but for my daughter anyway, she didn't understand why. (She didn't understand why baby girls were bad luck, or why Malala's mom had to cover her face). I'm not sure how you explain that in a children's book without being cumbersome, but it did confuse her a bit. The rest of it though made sense to her and she enjoyed it.

The Taliban is referred to as "the enemy" and I think they do a good job describing how they slowly took over...first through the radio, then out of hiding, then the threats, etc...

I also appreciated the quotes from the parents at the beginning and end of the book. ;-)

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## **Jodie says**

Great introduction to the Nobel prize winner and beautiful illustrations.

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## **Julie says**

The bird and flight imagery is quite appropriate and very beautiful, particularly the acrylic and ink illustrations where Malala is dreaming and resembles a bird in flight. The book gives equal credit to her determination and imagination and that of her father, who founded schools for boys and girls and was a community leader in Mingora, Pakistan. He always believed that his daughter was "meant for the skies," and this book demonstrates how true that was based on all she endured and went on to accomplish. Lovely illustrations, a moving story, and very helpful resources in the back; these include an author's note, timeline, note on Malala's namesake Malalai of Maiwand, and further books, films, and websites for reference.

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## **Tracy says**

Thanks to the Kidlit Exchange for the review copy of this book. All opinions are my own.

FREE AS A BIRD is one of the more concise and artistic biographies of Malala Yousafzai without sacrificing accuracy. It tells of Malala's dedication to pursuing her education despite the restrictions against girls studying in Pakistan. It doesn't skip over the violence that Malala suffered from—one full spread is dedicated to a dark shadow leading to a waterfall that symbolizes Malala's seven days of dreaming while she was in a coma. The book closes by reminding us of Malala's famous words: "One child, one teacher, one pen, and one book can change the world."

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## **Kat Harrison says**

Sometimes I find that non-fiction picture book biographies miss the mark - they're either too lyrical that you don't learn much about the person's essence, or they're the exact opposite: stale and lacking energy while prioritizing the facts above craft. "Free as a Bird" by author-illustrator Lina Maslo is thankfully of the former camp. It's a lyrical, poetic text with a perfect color palate of teals, yellows, and reds that nicely tows the line between learning and loving. It's gorgeously composed and powerfully penned without being traumatic for the littlest of readers. You walk away feeling simultaneously outraged, humbled, and thankful. Pick up a copy and start a conversation. You won't be sorry.

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## **Ben Truong says**

*Free as a Bird: The Story of Malala* is a children's picture book written and illustrated by Lina Maslo. It is a book about the inspiring true story of Malala Yousafzai, human rights activist and the youngest ever winner

of the Nobel Peace Prize – in a picture book form.

Malala Yousafzai is a Pakistani activist for female education and the youngest Nobel Prize laureate. She is known for human rights advocacy, especially the education of women and children in her native Pakistan, where in some parts the Taliban had banned girls from attending school. Her advocacy has grown into an international movement that she had become one of the most prominent citizen of Pakistan.

The text is simplistic and straightforward for a child could read and understand. I appreciate Maslo taking a very difficult story and situation that made it age appropriate, yet show how courageous Malala Yousafzai is in very dangerous times. The illustrations are simply wonderful, colorful, and very apropos to the text.

The premise of the book is rather straightforward. It is a mini-biography of Malala Yousafzai from her humble birth in Pakistan to how she become an international icon who has traveled around the world to speak with children, teachers, reporters, presidents, and royalty – to just anyone who would listen and to become a voice to those that can't speak freely, because everyone could be free as a bird.

All in all, *Free as a Bird: The Story of Malala* is a wonderful children's book about an equally wonderful and powerful person in Malala Yousafzai.

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### **Maria Marshall says**

I can't recommend this book strongly enough. It is a wonderful depiction of the relationship between Malala and her father and an excellent mentor text for illustrators and authors tackling difficult subject matters. Lina Maslo masterfully introduces her unifying color scheme on the dedication page.

Because the story is based around Malala's father wish for her to be "free as a bird," Malala's blue clothing and red scarf resemble the red-headed bullfinch with blue wings.

Malala's story is one of struggle (fighting to get an education, where educating girls was frowned upon), violence (the attempt to silence her), persistence (she fought through a coma and rehab), and determination (she travels the world advocating for the education of girls/women). Notably she is the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. I love that while Lina Maslo doesn't sugar coat the story, she doesn't focus on the violence either. She allows the child to access the story on whatever level they and their parent are comfortable.

Overall, this is a tender, inspiring non-fiction book of a truly amazing young woman. This book is a celebration and a call to arms, for as her father said, "When the whole world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful."

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### **Rita says**

A picture book about Malala who was shot by the Taliban in 2012. It's such a hard topic to talk to young children about, but I think the author did a great job without making it too traumatic as well as give a glimpse of her childhood with her father. I also love the red scarf flowing on the cover.

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## Angela Blount says

Originally reviewed for YA Books Central: <http://www.yabookscentral.com/kidsnon...>

Inarguably valuable—an inspirational and world-expanding children’s book.

Having read *I am Malala* (the adult version of Malala Yousafzai’s memoir), I was eager to share a more age-appropriate version of her life’s story with my 7 and 9-year-old. Not only has she become a figurehead for promoting children’s education, but her well-spoken calmness and determination make her an ideal potential role model. My biggest concern was how a children’s picture book would handle and convey the biggest turning point in her activism: The violent and abhorrent assassination attempt against her by the Taliban.

Different children, of course, all have different tolerances and comprehension levels. This author erred on the side of caution, using a sort of fade-to-black method on the ominous pages that depict violence. Readers are simply told that Malala “slept.” Many young readers may want more explanation, but that is left for parents to fill in however they choose.

The book itself never uses the word “Taliban,” instead opting to refer to the forces opposing female education only as “the enemy.” The impression given is nebulous—a nameless, faceless shadow. I didn’t care for this approach, and in reading it to my children, chose to add in an explanation of the true name and origin of Malala’s attackers. (To be fair, a more clear and complete explanation is given at the back of the book, in the Author’s Note.) As the Author’s Note is also much more specific about the attack—plainly informing readers that Malala was shot in the head—parents may want to consider researching the type of head injury Malala sustained ahead of time, in case their children are (like mine) confused over how such a wound could be survivable.

While the book is simplified non-fiction, it still deftly captures a sense of childhood wonder. The artwork is distinct and vibrant—accenting the shifting emotional tones throughout, and paying candid tribute to Pakistani culture and tradition. It also conveys a subtle sense of dread over a difficult topic that most of its target audience is largely unaware of.

All in all, *Free As A Bird* has tremendous potential as an introductory educational tool and a gentle conversation starter. I can wholeheartedly recommend it.

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## Rupa says

“Don’t ask me what I did. Ask me what I did not do. I did not clip her wings, and that’s all.” -- Ziauddin Yousafzai, Malala’s father

Free as a bird tells the inspiring true story of Malala Yousafzai, a girl who advocates fearlessly for the right to education and equality of all people. From an early age, Malala was taught from her parents the importance of education for boys and girls. Her father, a teacher in Pakistan, abdicated for the right to education for girls as well as boys. In a society that values men over women, this became a dangerous declaration. Malala, following in her father’s footsteps, was shot by the Taliban one morning on her way to school. She recovered in England, and has since then, fearlessly fought for women’s rights to education around the globe. Along with her father, she founded the Malala fund. She is also the youngest recipient of

the Nobel Peace Prize.

A beautiful little children's book that gives a brief synopsis on her inspiring legacy. Written in accompaniment with beautiful artwork, this story is a great read for young children (especially girls!).

Genre characterization: Biography - children's book that tells the true story of the Pakistani girl, Malala Yousafzai.

How I might integrate this book into an instructional lesson: This book could be used in accompaniment of other children's books on inspirational and influential people in our world (past or present). As I mentioned previously, the third graders at my field placement are currently reading short biographies about influential people and creating book projects on them. I could use this book in the same manner for younger readers.

Writing trait:

Ideas – the main ideas of this story show the reader who Malala is and why she is considered an influential person in the world today.

Presentation – Colored pages and vivid artwork accompany the text, which is simple and brief. No more than several sentences per page.

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