Biography of Oprah Winfrey

Oprah Winfrey (1954 – ) Influential talk show host, author, philanthropist, actress and media personality. Oprah Winfrey has played a key role in modern American life, shaping cultural trends and promoting various liberal causes. Through her talk shows and books, she has focused on many issues facing American women. She has been an important role model for black American women, breaking down many invisible barriers.

Oprah Winfrey was born in Kosciusko, Mississippi. Her parents were unmarried and broke up soon after conception. Oprah had a difficult childhood. She lived in great poverty and often had to dress in potato sacks for which she was mocked at school. She was also sexually abused at an early age.

From the age of 14 she went to live with her father. Oprah says he was strict, but she was in the mood to be disobedient during her teenage years. After working her way through college she became interested in journalism and media and got her first job as a news anchor for a local TV station.

Her emotional style did not go down well for a news programme so she was transferred to an ailing daytime chat programme. After Oprah took over, the daily chat show took off and this later led to her own programme – The Oprah Winfrey Show.

The Oprah Winfrey show has proved to be one of the most successful and highly watched TV programme of all time. It has broken many social and cultural barriers such as gay and lesbian issues. Oprah has also remained a powerful role model for women, and black American women in particular. She is credited with promoting an intimate confessional form of media communication, which has been imitated across the globe.

In recent years, the Oprah Winfrey show has focused on issues of self-improvement, spirituality and self-help. Diet has also been a big issue with Oprah once successfully losing a lot of weight. Her subsequent diet book sold millions of copies.

Oprah Winfrey has promoted many spiritual books, which have focused on the aspect of taking responsibility for your life – not changing your circumstances, but changing the way you look at your life.

What I learned at a very early age was that I was responsible for my life. And as I became more spiritually conscious, I learned that we all are responsible for ourselves, that you create your own reality by the way you think and therefore act. You cannot blame apartheid, your parents, your circumstances, because you are not your circumstances. You are your possibilities. If you know that, you can do anything.

Her range of media enterprises have made Oprah one of the richest self-made women. The Forbes’ international rich list has listed Winfrey as the world’s only black billionaire from 2004 to 2006 and as the first black woman billionaire in world history.In 2014 Winfrey has a net worth in excess of 2.9 billion dollars.

Book Club

The Oprah Winfrey book club has become the most influential book clubs in the world. A recommendation from Oprah Winfrey frequently sends books to the top of the best seller lists. Many commentators agree that Oprah Winfrey exerts enormous influence. Some estimated her support for [Barack Obama](https://www.biographyonline.net/politicians/american/barack-obama.html) helped him gain 1 million votes in the 2008 election.

As *Vanity Fair* said of Oprah Winfrey:

“Oprah Winfrey arguably has more influence on the culture than any university president, politician, or religious leader, except perhaps the Pope”

Acting career

Oprah Winfrey was also nominated for an Oscar in the film – *A Color Purple*. Produced by Steven Spielberg, the epic *Color Purple* told of segregation in America’s deep south. Oprah was widely admired for her role as Sofia.

Support for Obama

From 2006 to 2008, she lent her support to the Presidential campaign of Barack Obama. Her influence and personal following played a key role in helping Obama to become the first African American to become president.

In 2013, Oprah gained a unique interview with the professional cyclist, Lance Armstrong. It was on Oprah that Armstrong finally made a dramatic confession that he had used performance enhancing drugs during his cycling career.

**Nelson Mandela**

* **Occupation:** President of South Africa and Activist
* **Born:** July 18, 1918 in Mvezo, South Africa
* **Died:** December 5, 2013 in Johannesburg, South Africa
* **Best known for:** Serving 27 years in prison as a protest against apartheid

**Biography:**

Nelson Mandela was a [civil rights](http://www.ducksters.com/history/civil_rights/) leader in [South Africa](http://www.ducksters.com/geography/country/south_africa.php). He fought against [apartheid](http://www.ducksters.com/history/civil_rights/apartheid.php), a system where non-white citizens were segregated from whites and did not have equal rights. He served a good portion of his life in prison for his protests, but became a symbol for his people. Later he would become president of South Africa.

**Where did Nelson Mandela grow up?**

Nelson Mandela was born on July 18, 1918 in Mvezo, South Africa. His birth name is Rolihlahla. He got the nickname Nelson from a teacher in school. Nelson was a member of Thimbu royalty and his father was chief of the city of Mvezo. He attended school and later college at the College of Fort Hare and the University of Witwatersrand. At Witwatersrand, Mandela got his law degree and would meet some of his fellow activists against apartheid.

**What did Nelson Mandela do?**

Nelson Mandela became a leader in the African National Congress (ANC). At first he pushed hard for the congress and the protesters to follow Mohandas Gandhi's non-violence approach. At one point he started to doubt that this approach would work and started up an armed branch of the ANC. He planned to bomb certain buildings, but only the buildings. He wanted to make sure that no one would be hurt. He was classified as a terrorist by the South African government and sent to prison.

Mandela would spend the next 27 years in prison. His prison sentence brought international visibility to the anti-apartheid movement. He was finally released through international pressure in 1990.

Once released from prison, Nelson continued his campaign to end apartheid. His hard work and life long effort paid off when all races were allowed to vote in the 1994 election. Nelson Mandela won the election and became president of South Africa. There were several times during the process where violence threatened to break out. Nelson was a strong force in keeping the calm and preventing a major civil war.

**How long was Nelson Mandela in prison?**

He spent 27 years in prison. He refused to bend on his principals in order to be released and stated that he would die for his ideals. He wanted all people of all races to have equal rights in South Africa.

**Fun facts about Nelson Mandela**

* Nelson was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993.
* July 18th is Nelson Mandela day. People are asked to devote 67 minutes to helping others. The 67 minutes represents the 67 years Mandela spent serving his country.
* *Invictus* was a 2009 movie about Nelson Mandela and the South African rugby team.

He had six children and twenty grandchildren.

**Helen Keller**

**Where did Helen Keller grow up?**

Helen Keller was born on June 27, 1880 in Tuscumbia, Alabama. She was a happy healthy baby. Her father, Arthur, worked for a newspaper while her mother, Kate, took care of the home and baby Helen. She grew up on her family's large farm called Ivy Green. She enjoyed the animals including the horses, dogs, and chickens.

**Illness**

When Helen was around one and a half years old she became very sick. She had a high fever and a bad headache for several days. Although Helen survived, her parents soon realized that she had lost both her sight and her hearing.

**Frustration**

Helen tried to communicate with the people around her. She had special motions she would use to indicate that she wanted her mom or her dad. However, she would also get frustrated. She realized that she was different and it was extremely difficult to let others know what she needed. She would sometimes throw tantrums, kicking and hitting other people in anger.

**Annie Sullivan**

Soon Helen's parents realized that she needed some special help. They contacted the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Boston. The director suggested a former student named Annie Sullivan. Annie had been blind, but had her eyesight restored by surgery. Perhaps her unique experience would allow her to help Helen. Annie came to work with Helen on March 3, 1887 and would be her helper and companion for the next 50 years.

Helen and Annie together

**Learning Words**

Annie began to teach Helen words. She would press the letters of words in to Helen's hand. For example, she would put a doll in one of Helen's hands and then press the letters of the word D-O-L-L into the other hand. She taught Helen a number of words. Helen would repeat the words into Annie's hand.

However, Helen still didn't understand that the hand signs had meaning. Then one day Annie put Helen's hand into water coming from a pump. Then she spelled out water into Helen's other hand. Something clicked. Helen finally understood what Annie was doing. An entire new world opened up for Helen. She learned a number of new words that day. In many ways it was one of the happiest days of her life.

**Learning to Read**

Next Annie taught Helen how to read. Helen must have been very bright and Annie an amazing teacher, because soon Helen could read entire books in Braille. Braille is a special reading system where the letters are made out of little bumps on a page.

Imagine trying to learn how to read if you couldn't see or hear. It's truly amazing what Helen and Annie were able to accomplish. At the age of ten Helen could read and use a typewriter. Now she wanted to learn how to talk.

**Learning to Talk**

Helen Keller learned how to talk from Sarah Fuller. Sarah was a teacher for the deaf. By resting her hand on Sarah's lips, Helen learned how to feel sound vibrations and how the lips moved to make sounds. She started off learning a few letters and sounds. Then she advanced to words and, finally, sentences. Helen was so happy that she could say words.

**School**

At sixteen years old Helen attended Radcliffe College for women in Massachusetts. Annie attended school with her and helped to sign the lectures into Helen's hand. Helen graduated from Radcliffe in 1904 with honors.

**Writing**

During college Helen began to write about her experiences being deaf and blind. She first wrote a number of articles for a magazine called the *Ladies' Home Journal*. These articles were later published together in a book called *The Story of My Life*. A few years later, in 1908, she published another book called *The World I Live In*.

**Working for Others**

As Helen grew older she wanted to help other people like herself. She wanted to inspire them and give them hope. She joined the American Foundation for the Blind and traveled the country giving speeches and raising money for the foundation. Later, during [World War II](http://www.ducksters.com/history/world_war_ii/), she visited with wounded army soldiers encouraging them not to give up. Helen spent much of her life working to raise money and awareness for people with disabilities, especially the deaf and the blind.

Terry Fox Biography

Terrance Stanley (Terry) Fox, CC, athlete, humanitarian, cancer research activist (born 28 July 1958 in [Winnipeg](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/winnipeg/), MB; died 28 June 1981 in [New Westminster](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/new-westminster/), BC). Terry Fox inspired the nation and the world through his courageous struggle against cancer and his determination to raise funds for cancer research. Not long after losing his leg to cancer, Fox decided to run across Canada to raise awareness and money for cancer research. He ran from [St. John’s](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/st-johns/), NL, to [Thunder Bay](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/thunder-bay/), ON, covering over 5,000 km in 143 days, but was forced to halt his Marathon of Hope when cancer invaded his lungs. The youngest person to be made a Companion of the [Order of Canada](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/order-of-canada/), he has inspired millions across the world, many of whom participate in the annual Terry Fox Run for cancer research.

**Early Life**

Fox was very determined from a young age. This was particularly evident in his approach to athletics, especially [basketball](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/basketball/). Although he was relatively small in grade eight (at five feet tall) and had little natural ability, Fox was determined to make his school basketball team. Hours of practice and sheer persistence paid off, and Fox was eventually chosen for his high school’s starting team. Fox also ran cross-country and played [soccer](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/soccer/) and [rugby](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/rugby/), and was co-winner of his school’s Athlete of the Year Award in grade twelve. His determination and dedication were again recognized at [Simon Fraser University](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/simon-fraser-university/), where he was chosen for the school’s junior varsity basketball team.

Diagnosis and Determination

In 1977, when he was only 18, Fox was diagnosed with osteogenic sarcoma (bone cancer), and doctors amputated his right leg 15 cm above the knee. Within weeks he was walking with the help of an artificial leg. Not long after, in the summer of 1977, Fox joined [Rick Hansen](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/rick-hansen/)’s wheelchair basketball team; he would win three national titles as part of the team.

But Fox had another goal. During his months of chemotherapy Fox witnessed the suffering of many others afflicted with cancer, and, characteristically, he was determined to do something to help. On the night before his surgery, he had read an article about Dick Traum, an amputee who had run the New York City Marathon; inspired by Traum’s example, Fox decided he would run across Canada to raise awareness and funds for cancer research. He started marathon training in 1979, using a prosthetic leg adapted for running, and ran a marathon in [Prince George](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/prince-george/), [BC](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/british-columbia/), in August of that year. By the time he began his Marathon of Hope in April 1980, he had logged over 5,000 km on training runs, and had enlisted the support of the [Canadian Cancer Society](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/canadian-cancer-society/) and companies including [Ford Motor Company](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/ford-motor-company-of-canada-limited/), [Imperial Oil](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/imperial-oil-limited/), and Adidas.

**Marathon of Hope**

Fox began his cross-country Marathon of Hope on 12 April 1980, dipping his artificial leg in the Atlantic Ocean near St. John’s, [Newfoundland](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/newfoundland-and-labrador/). He ran about 42 km (roughly a [marathon](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/long-distance-running/)) a day through the [Atlantic provinces](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/atlantic-provinces/), [Québec](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/quebec/), and [Ontario](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/ontario/). Fox was supported by long-time friend Doug Alward, who drove a van along the route, and by his brother Darrell, who joined them in [New Brunswick](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/new-brunswick/).

While media coverage was slow at first, communities such as [Grand Falls](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/grand-falls-windsor/) and [Bishop’s Falls](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/bishops-falls/), NL, came out to support him, and Fox gained increasing attention as he ran through the Atlantic provinces and Québec. By the time he reached Ontario, he was a national star, feted by thousands at appearances organized by the Canadian Cancer Society. Fox met Prime Minister [Pierre Trudeau](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/pierre-elliott-trudeau/), British actress Maggie Smith, and [NHL](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/national-hockey-league/) greats [Bobby Orr](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/bobby-orr/) and [Darryl Sittler](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/darryl-sittler/), who presented Fox with his 1980 NHL All-Star sweater.

However, Fox was forced to stop running just outside Thunder Bay, Ontario, on 1 September 1980, as the cancer had invaded his lungs. By this time, he had run for 143 days and covered 5,373 km. Although Fox vowed he would complete his cross-Canada run, he was unable to return to the road; he died less than a year later at the Royal Columbian Hospital in New Westminster, [BC](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/british-columbia/), only a month before his twenty-third birthday.

Legacy



Fox’s goal to raise one dollar for every Canadian, or about $24 million, was reached on 1 February 1981, but fundraising has continued in his name. His bravery and determination have inspired many, including [Steve Fonyo](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/steve-fonyo/), [Rick Hansen](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/rick-hansen/), and [Isadore Sharp](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/isadore-sharp/), who organized the first annual Terry Fox Run in 1981. The Terry Fox Foundation, which now organizes the annual run, has raised over $600 million for cancer research. Millions of people in Canada and around the world participate every year in the Foundation’s annual Terry Fox Run, and in 2007 the Terry Fox Research Institute was established. Many schools, buildings, roads, and parks around the country have been named in his honour. In 2004, Fox ranked second after [Tommy Douglas](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/tommy-douglas/) in the [CBC](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/canadian-broadcasting-corporation/) Television program “The Greatest Canadian.” Fox’s story has been told in books, television movies — the award-winning “The Terry Fox Story” (1983) and “Terry” (2005) — and the documentary *Into the Wind* (2010), which was co-directed by [Steve Nash](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/article/steve-nash/).

***Rick Hansen***

***The Early Years***

Rick Hansen was born August 26th, 1957 in Port Alberni and grew up in Fort St. John, Abbotsford and Williams Lake, BC. A natural athlete, he was very passionate about sports. From a young age, Rick enjoyed all kinds of sports, but he particularly loved basketball and volleyball.

Growing up in “beautiful British Columbia”, Rick was also very passionate about the breathtaking environment he called his playground. A true outdoorsman and an avid fisherman, he could often be seen on lakes and waterways near his home or on camping trips with his family.

One day, in June 1973, Rick and his friend Don Alder were returning home from a week-long fishing trip, riding in the back of a pickup truck. The truck went off the steep, winding road, and Rick and Don were thrown out of the back. Don escaped the crash relatively unscathed. Rick sustained a spinal cord injury and was paralyzed from the waist down. He would never walk again.

After seven months of rehabilitation in Vancouver, Rick returned home to Williams Lake. Slowly, he learned how to deal with his new life, found ways to keep fishing, and with the encouragement of his friends, family and particularly his volleyball coach, Rick remained  
involved in sports. He discovered a whole new world of sport, including

wheelchair basketball. Setting new goals for himself and charting a course for the future, Rick began to dream new dreams.

***An Internationally Celebrated Athletic Career***

In 1976, Rick enrolled at the University of British Columbia, and was the first person with a physical disability to graduate with a degree in Physical Education. During that time, Rick met Terry Fox and invited him to play wheelchair basketball. They shared a close friendship, a passion for sports and a commitment to making a difference.

During his studies, Rick was recruited by coach and mentor, Stan Stronge to be part of  
the Vancouver Cablecars – a well-known wheelchair basketball team. Stan was a pioneer in Canadian wheelchair basketball and led the BC team to win six national championships between 1976 and 1982.

Between 1979 and 1984, Rick turned his focus to track, winning nineteen international wheelchair marathons, the world title three times and nine gold medals at the 1982 Pan Am Games. He won gold and silver medals at the 1984 Paralympic Summer Games in Stoke Mandeville, and gold, silver and bronze at the 1980 Paralympic Summer Games in Arnhem, Holland. He also competed for

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Canada in the 1984 Olympic Games in wheelchair track, as an exhibition sport, and was the first person to break the two-hour time record in a wheelchair marathon.

Rick has inspired athletes all over the world, and continues to have a significant impact in sport. Whether it be his involvement as Chair of the Commission for the Inclusion of Athletes with Disabilities, or his tireless work to achieve full medal status for Commonwealth Games athletes, Rick

has always strived to better the circumstances for all athletes.

Rick’s contributions to sport are not limited to his own participation as an athlete. A staunch advocate for healthy living and firm believer in the power of sport, Rick has also coached many teams, including wheelchair volleyball, wheelchair basketball, volleyball, basketball and softball.

***Making A Difference in the Lives of Others***

While Rick is a celebrated international athlete, he’s also committed to making a difference in the lives of others. Combining his passions, athletic ability and vision, Rick

embarked on a journey that would make history. On March 21, 1985, he pushed his wheelchair out of

Vancouver, BC and began his now legendary Man In Motion World Tour. Fueled by two big dreams – to make communities more accessible and inclusive and to raise funds for spinal cord injury

research, Rick completed the equivalent of two marathons every day. He wheeled through all kinds of terrain, in all kinds of weather – battling scorching deserts, treacherous winter roads, gale force winds and floods. He sustained severe injuries in his shoulders, wrists and hands, suffered carbon monoxide poisoning, bouts of flu, bladder infections and, at the start of the Tour, developed sores from an improper chair fit.

Despite all of these challenges, Rick and the team persevered. Through 34 countries, Rick and his team continued the journey. They wheeled across the United Sates,  
through Britain and Europe, the Middle East, New Zealand, Australia,  
and the Far East before returning to North America, wheeling from

Miami to New York, then back to Canada.

***The Man In Motion World Tour Returns Home***

In August 1986, Rick and his team returned to Canadian soil, arriving in Cape Spear, Newfoundland, ready to begin the final leg of the journey home to Vancouver.

On May 22, 1987 – two years, two months and two days after he first  
set out on the Man In Motion Tour – thousands of people lined the  
streets of Vancouver to welcome Rick and his team home. Having  
raised $26 million for spinal cord injury research, rehabilitation and sport, the Tour had reached its goals. Rick’s journey had become a catalyst for significant change in the way people with a disability were perceived, in the realization that public buildings, streets and playgrounds could be more accessible, and in the recognition of the immense potential of the human spirit.

***The End was just The Beginning***

Upon completion of the Man In Motion World Tour, Rick realized that his work had just begun. He established the Rick Hansen Foundation and today, remains committed to making communities more inclusive, and accelerating progress towards a cure for spinal cord injuries. Under Rick’s leadership, the Foundation has generated more than $245 million for a variety of programs and initiatives aimed at furthering Rick’s commitment to creating a truly inclusive world where healthy people can contribute in a significant way.

***An Inspiration to Youth***

Understanding the significance of the support and mentorship he has received throughout his life, Rick is committed to working with young people to support the development of social responsibility and life skills. He encourages them to be the best that they can be and to believe that anything is possible if they have the courage to try.

***An Ongoing Passion for Beautiful BC and a Sustainable Environment***

Rick’s passion for fishing and the outdoors has not diminished, and he gets out on the water as much as possible. To ensure conservation of Pacific salmon and the threatened sturgeon species, he formed the Pacific Salmon Endowment Fund Society which supports the conservation and sustainable use of Pacific salmon stocks. He was also an important player in the creation of the Fraser River Sturgeon Conservation Society, an organization working to conserve and protect Fraser River white sturgeon and their habitat.

***Additional Achievements***

Over the years, Rick has received a number of awards and commendations. He was named “Athlete of the Century” by BC Wheelchair Sports Association, as well as “Canada’s Disabled Athlete of the Year” in 1979 and 1982; and in 1983, shared the Lou Marsh Award with Wayne Gretzky, as Canada’s Outstanding Athlete of the Year. Rick has been inducted into Canada’s Sports Hall of Fame, the BC Sports Hall of Fame and the University of British Columbia Athletic Hall of Fame.

Rick has received the Companion of the Order of Canada, and the Order of British Columbia; initiated National Access Awareness Week in Canada, was inducted into Canada’s Walk of Fame, is Honourary

chair for a number of provincial and national advisory councils on disabilities, and holds a number of honourary degrees from Canadian universities.

In 2010, Rick was honoured to be chosen as Co-Mayor of the Olympic Village for the Vancouver 2010

**Bethany Hamilton**

Bethany Meilani Hamilton Dirks is an American professional surfer who lost an arm in a vicious shark and surprised everyone by making a victorious comeback to professional surfing after overcoming this harrowing experience. As someone who loved surfing from early childhood, she always wanted to become a professional surfer. Since her parents were also surfers they began training her even before she turned five, and she participated in her first surf competition, the Rell Sun Menehune event on Oahu, when she was eight. Winning the competition boosted her confidence and strengthened her love for the sport. Over the next few years she effortlessly moved up the rankings in Amateur surfing competition and was blossoming into a formidable competitor on the surfing scenario. She was just 13 when a leisurely morning surf turned into a nightmare when a shark attacked her, biting off the full length of her left arm. The gutsy girl survived the attack in spite of losing lots of blood. She was deeply traumatized by the event, but decided that she would not let it thwart her professional ambitions. The determined girl returned to surfing within weeks of the incident and became a source of inspiration and hope to millions around the world.

**Childhood & Early Life**

* She was born on 8 February, 1990, on the island of Kauai, Hawaii, to Tom and Cheri Hamilton. She has two older brothers, Noah and Timmy.
* Her whole family loved surfing and her parents began teaching her how to surf even before she turned five. Surfing was in her blood and she became fascinated with the sport early on.
* Her family is very religious and has an undying faith in God. Bethany too began her relationship with God at a young age as her parents religiously taught her about God and read stories from the Bible to her.
* In 1998, she participated in her first real Surf Competition: Rell Sunn Menehune Surfing Championships on Oahu, Hawaii, and won both the short and long board divisions. Having tasted her first competitive success, Bethany was raring to become a professional competitive surfer.
* When she was just nine years old she received her first major surf sponsorships from Rip Curl and Tim Carroll Surfboards. Over the next couple of years she steadily moved up the rankings in Amateur surfing competitions by winning several events.
* **Later Years**
* On 31 October 2003, she went for a morning surf along Tunnels Beach, Kauai, with her best friend Alana Blanchard and her family. She was enjoying a leisurely day, lying on her surfboard with her left arm dangling in the water when suddenly a tiger shark surfaced from beneath the water and attacked.
* She was taken aback by the attack and was shocked to see that the shark had bitten off her left arm just below the shoulder. Alana and her father rushed to her help and soon she was transported to Wilcox Memorial Hospital.
* She had lost a lot of blood and felt numb on her way to the hospital. On the way to the hospital, one of the paramedics held her hand and assured her that God will take care of her.
* Initially the doctors told her parents that her chances of survival were very slim. But she bravely fought on against all odds and survived. She was very traumatized by this incident but did not allow it to overtake her love for surfing.
* Within weeks of the attack, she returned to surfing. While making her comeback to surfing she used a custom-made board that was longer, thicker, and equipped with a handle for her right arm. But with time she learned to use standard equipment.
* She entered a major competition on 10 January, 2004, her first one since the attack. Getting back to the competitive turf energized her and she was determined not to let her disability get in the way of her professional ambitions.
* Later in 2004 she wrote about her experiences regarding the shark attack and her miraculous recovery and comeback in her autobiography, ‘Soul Surfer: A True Story of Faith, Family, and Fighting to Get Back on the Boar’. The book became very popular and became a best-seller.
* She became a celebrity following the success of her book and appeared as a guest in numerous television shows including ‘The Biggest Loser’, ‘20/20’, ‘Good Morning America’, ‘Inside Edition’, ‘The Oprah Winfrey Show’, ‘The Ellen DeGeneres Show’, and ‘The Today Show’.
* In 2011, a biopic drama film, ‘Soul Surfer’ based on her autobiography ‘Soul Surfer: A True Story of Faith, Family, and Fighting to Get Back on the Board’ was released. The film had Anna Sophia Robb portraying the character of Bethany with Helen Hunt and Dennis Quaid playing her parents. The film was well received by the audience.

**Awards & Achievements**

* She won the ESPY Award for Best Comeback Athlete in 2004 and was also given the Courage Teen Choice Award.
* In 2005, she received the “Mildred Babe Dirdrikson-Zacharias Courage Award” from the United States Sports Academy.

**Personal Life & Legacy**

* She met Adam Dirks, a youth minister, in 2012 and formed a close relationship with him. They got married in August 2013 in a lavish wedding in front of 300 friends and family members. Currently the couple is expecting their first child, a boy, due in June 2015.

**Malala Yousafzai Biography**

Malala Yousafzai is a Pakistani school pupil and spokesperson for women’s right to education. In retaliation for her high profile campaign for education and criticism of the Taliban, she was shot in the head at close range by a Taliban gunman. She survived the gunshot wound and has become a leading spokesperson for human rights, education and women’s rights. She has received numerous peace awards, and received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 along with Kailash Satyarthi, an Indian children’s rights activist.

Early Life Malala

Malala was born (12 July 1997) in Mingora, the Swat District of north west Pakistan to a Sunni Muslim family. She was named Malala, which means ‘grief stricken’ after a famous female Pashun poet and warrior from Afghanistan.

Her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai is a poet, and runs a chain of public schools. He is a leading educational advocate himself. In 2009, she began writing an anonymous blog for the BBC expressing her views on education and life under the threat of the Taliban taking over her valley. It was her father who suggested his own daughter to the BBC. She wrote under the byline “Gul Makai”

During this period, the Taliban’s military hold on the area intensified. At times, Malala reported hearing artillery from the advancing Taliban forces. As the Taliban took control of the area they issued edicts banning television, banning music, and banning women from going shopping and limiting women’s education. Many girls schools were blown up and as a consequence pupils stayed at home, scared of possible reprisals from the Taliban. However, for a time, there was a brief respite when the Taliban stated girls could receive primary education, if they wore Burkhas. But, a climate of fear prevailed and Malala and her father began to receive death threats for their outspoken views. As a consequence, Malala and her father began to fear for their safety. Her father once considered moving Malala outside of Swat to a boarding school, but Malala didn’t want to move.

” I don’t know why, but hearing I was being targeted did not worry me. It seemed to me that everybody knows they will die one day.” *I am Malala p.188*

When her father suggested they stop their campaigns for human rights, Malala replied

“How can we do that? You were the one who said that if we believe in something greater than our lives, then our voices will only multiply ever if we are dead. We can’t disown our campaign!’ *I am Malala p.188*

People were asking me to speak at events. How could I refuse saying there was a security problem? We couldn’t do that, especially not as proud Pashtuns. My father always said that heroism is in the Pastun DNA. *I am Malala p.180*

After the BBC blog ended, Malala featured in a documentary made by New York Times reporter Adam B.Ellick. She also received greater international coverage and her identity about writing the BBC blog was revealed. In 2011, she received Pakistan’s first National Youth Peace Prize and she was nominated by Archbishop Desmond Tutu for the International Children’s Peace Prize. Her increased profile and strident criticism of the Taliban caused Taliban leaders to meet, and in 2012, they voted to kill her.

On 9 October, 2012, a masked gunman entered her school bus and asked *“Which one of you is Malala? Speak up, otherwise I will shoot at you all.”*

Malala was identified and she was shot with a single bullet which went through her head, neck and shoulder. Two other girls were also injured, though not as badly as Malala.

Malala survived the initial shooting, but was in a critical condition. Her father was convinced she would die and told the village to prepare for her funeral. Her critical organs were failing and she developed an infection. In a coma, she was moved to a hospital in Rwalpindi. Later on the 15 October she was moved to Birmingham in the United Kingdom for further treatment at a specialist hospital for treating military injuries. A couple of days later, she came out of a coma and responded well to treatment. She was discharged on January 3, 2013 and moved with her family to a temporary home in the West Midlands. Writing in her book “I am Malala” she writes.

“It was a miracle I was alive” (p.237)

She also writes about her lack of bitterness or desire for revenge.

“My only regret was that I hadn’t had a chance to speak to them before they shot me. Now they’d never hear what I had to say. I didn’t even think a single bad thought about the man who shot me – I had no thoughts of revenge – I just wanted to go back to Swat. I wanted to go home” *I am Malala p.237*

**Response to Assassination attempt**

Her assassination received worldwide condemnation and protests across Pakistan. Over 2 million people signed the Right to Education campaign. The petition helped the ratification of Pakistan’s first right to education bill in Pakistan.

Ehsanullah Ehsan, chief spokesman for the Pakistani Taliban, claimed responsibility for the attack, saying that Yousafzai was a symbol of the infidels and obscenity. However, other Islamic clerics in Pakistan issued a fatwa against the Taliban leaders and said there was no religious justification for shooting a schoolgirl.

United Nations petition

On 15 October, [UN Special Envoy for global education](https://www.biographyonline.net/women/malala.html), [Gordon Brown](https://www.biographyonline.net/politicians/gordon-brown.html), visited Malala whilst she was in hospital and launched a petition in her name – ‘In support for what Malala fought for.’

Using the slogan “I am Malala” the petition contains three demands

* We call on Pakistan to agree to a plan to deliver education for every child.
* We call on all countries to outlaw discrimination against girls.
* We call on international organizations to ensure the world’s 61 million out-of-school children are in education by the end of 2015.

*I am Malala* – petition

On 12 July 2013, she spoke at the United Nations to a group of 500 youths calling for worldwide access to education.

“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’m here to speak up for the right of education for every child. I want education for the sons and daughters of the Taliban and all terrorists and extremists.”

Her global fame and admiration in the West has caused something of a backlash in Pakistan. Many in Pakistan fear the West’s support of Malala is hypocritical given the US drone strikes on Pakistan and Afghanistan. Also, her plight highlights the unchecked militancy of the Taliban, which is a problem for Pakistan. Some in Pakistan fear Malala is promoting a Western agenda. However, on her part, Malala is dismayed by conspiracy theories in her own country and is keen to portray her native Pakistan in a good light. Her BBC blog expresses such a sentiment.

*…I immediately saw images of Pakistanis fill my screen. Not the usual rock hurling Pakistanis, irrationally shouting amidst flaming tyres, but gentle candle-lighting, beautiful Pakistanis with words of love and peace on their lips. It was UN International day of the Girl Child and the BBC chose to illustrate this with a story of what they termed a National Awakening in Pakistan, following the shooting of 14-year-old school girl, Malala Yousafzai. I was delighted at the apparent 24 hour flip from a narrative of “those Pakistanis are so barbaric they shoot their own school girls” to one of hope, resilience, and a more accurate reflection of the millions who reject such an act.* ([5 February, 2013](http://malalayousafzaibbcblog.blogspot.co.uk/2013/02/malalayousafzai-little-voice_5.html))

Further Quotes by Malala

“Today we all know education is our basic right. Not just in the West; Islam too has given us this right. Islam says every girl and everybody should go to school. In the Quran it is written, God wants us to have knowledge.” *I am Malala p.263*

“One child, one teacher, one pen and one book can change the world. Education is the only solution. Education first.”

– UN Speech, July 12, 2013

“I love my God. I thank my Allah. I talk to him all day. He is the greatest. By giving me this height to reach people, he has also given me great responsibilities. Peace in every home, every street, every village, every country – this is my dream. Education for every boy and every girl in the world. To sit down on a chair and read my books with all my friends at school is my right right. To see each and every human being with a smile of happiness is my wish. *I am Malala* p 265

“I am Malala, My world has changed by I have not.” *p.265*

In October, 2014, the Nobel committee awarded Malala the Nobel Peace Prize, the said:

“Despite her youth, Malala Yousafzai has already fought for several years for the right of girls to education, and has shown by example that children and young people, too, can contribute to improving their own situations.

“This she has done under the most dangerous circumstances. Through her heroic struggle she has become a leading spokesperson for girls’ rights to education.”

**Eminem**

**Synopsis**

Born on October 17, 1972, in St. Joseph, Missouri, rap musician Eminem had a turbulent childhood. He released *The Slim Shady* *LP* in early 1999, and the album went multi-platinum, garnering Eminem two Grammy Awards and four MTV Video Music Awards. In 2000, the rapper released *The Marshall Mathers LP*, which was noted as the fastest-selling album in rap history. More recently, in 2010, Eminem released the Grammy-winning album *Recovery*, a highly autobiographical attempt to come to terms with his struggles with addiction and experience with rehabilitation. Eminem plans to release his eighth album, *MMLP2*, in 2013.

**Early Life**

American rapper, record producer and actor Eminem was born Marshall Bruce Mathers III on October 17, 1972, in St. Joseph, Missouri. He never knew his father, Marshall Mathers Jr., who abandoned the family when Eminem was still an infant and rebuffed all of his son's many attempts to contact him during his childhood. As a result, Eminem was raised by his mother, Deborah Mathers. She never managed to hold down a job for more than several months at a time, so they moved frequently between Missouri and Detroit, Michigan, spending large chunks of time in public housing projects. "I would change schools two, three times a year," Eminem later recalled. "That was probably the roughest part about it all."

This itinerant lifestyle left a large impact on his personality. He had no close friends, kept almost entirely to himself and was treated like an outcast at each new school. "Beat up in the bathroom, beat up in the hallways, shoved into lockers," he remembered. Eminem has been scathingly critical of the way his mother raised him. Through his song lyrics, he has publicly accused her of being addicted to prescription drugs as well as subjecting him to emotional and physical abuse. However, Deborah Mathers has vehemently denied all such accusations, and in 1999 she filed a $10 million defamation lawsuit against her son. They settled the case for $25,000.

Eminem attended Lincoln High School in Warren, Michigan, where he failed the ninth grade three times and eventually dropped out at the age of 17. Despite being a poor student, Eminem always had a deep affinity for language, devouring comic books and even studying the dictionary. "I found that no matter how bad I was at school, like, and no matter how low my grades might have been at some times, I always was good at English ... I just felt like I wanna be able to have all of these words at my disposal, in my vocabulary at all times whenever I need to pull 'em out. You know, somewhere, they'll be stored, like, locked away."

As a teenage dropout, Eminem found a way to express his passion for language, as well as to release his youthful anger, through the emerging musical genre of hip-hip. He identified with the nihilistic rage of late-1980s and early-1990s rap music, and he was especially taken with N.W.A., the popular and highly controversial gangster rap crew from Los Angeles.

Although at the time rap music was almost exclusively produced by black people, Eminem, who has pale white skin and bright blue eyes, nevertheless entered into the Detroit rap scene as a frequent competitor in rap "battles"—competitions in which two rappers take turns insulting the other through improvised rap lyrics. Eminem proved highly skilled at such verbal sparring and, despite his race, quickly became one of the most respected figures in Detroit's underground rap scene.

He recalled, "I finally found something that yeah, this kid over here, you know, he may have more chicks, and he may, you know, have better clothes, or whatever, but he can't do this like me. You know what I mean? He can't write what I'm writing right now. And it started to feel like, you know, maybe Marshall's gettin' a little respect." Mathers assumed the stage name M&M, a playful reference to his initials, which he later began writing phonetically as "Eminem." This period in Eminem's life—working odd jobs to make ends meet while participating in rap battles and desperately attempting to land a record contract—was later dramatized in Eminem's semi-autobiographical film, *8 Mile*.

It was also during this period that Eminem began dating Kim Ann Scott, and in 1995 the couple had a daughter named Hailie Jade Scott. Inspired by the birth of his daughter to make a living as a rapper, in 1996, Eminem released his first independent rap album, *Infinite*. Though the album displayed flashes of his verbal prowess, biting wit and flair for storytelling, the low-budget record failed to turn a profit or attract more than local attention.

**Career Highlights**

A year later, however, Eminem released *The Slim Shady EP*, which was discovered by Dr. Dre, the legendary rapper and former producer of Eminem's favorite rap group N.W.A. After Eminem traveled to Los Angeles and became runner-up in the 1997 Rap Olympics MC Battle, Dre listened to the rapper's cassette in the basement of executive Jimmy Iovine's home. Dre was so impressed that he signed Eminem to his Interscope Records label. In 1999, after two years of working with Dre, Eminem released *The Slim Shady LP*. The heavily hyped record became an instant success and went on to sell over three million copies. Eminem's first single, "My Name Is," mixed a childish humor and energy with rampant profanity and flashes of violence—a potent and fascinating combination that felt different from anything else in rap. Marshall and Kim Mathers married later that same year.

Eminem released his second studio album, *The Marshall Mathers LP*, in May 2000. The album showed off Eminem's poetic talents as well as his emotional and artistic range. His songs vary from manically funny ("The Real Slim Shady") to heartbreakingly poignant ("Stan") to explosively violent ("Kim") to disarmingly self-critical ("The Way I Am"). *The Marshall Mathers LP* sold over 19 million copies worldwide, won the Grammy Award for Best Rap Album, received a nomination for Album of the Year and is widely considered among the greatest rap albums of all time.

Nevertheless, *The Marshall Mathers LP* also came under a firestorm of criticism for its excessive profanity, glorification of drugs and violence and its apparent homophobia and misogyny. While Eminem attempted to mitigate such criticism by maintaining that his raps simply use the rough language he has been surrounded by since childhood, and later by performing a duet with Elton John at the Grammy Awards to demonstrate his openness to the gay community, Eminem nevertheless remains widely reviled in some quarters for his offensive lyrical content.

In 2001, Eminem reconnected with several of his friends from the Detroit underground rap scene to form the group D12, recording an album called *Devil's Night* featuring the popular single "Purple Pills." A year later, Eminem released a new solo album, *The Eminem Show*, another popular and critically acclaimed album highlighted by the tracks "Without Me," "Cleaning Out my Closet" and "Sing for the Moment." His next album, 2004's *Encore*, was less successful than his previous efforts, but still featured popular songs such as "Like Toy Soldiers" and "Mockingbird."

**Dave Pelzer** is a contemporary American non-fiction writer. He has produced numerous books of autobiographical nature and most of them qualify as self-help books. His 1995 memoir, *A Child Called “It”,* based on his childhood abuse, is marked as one of his key works.

Born on December 29, 1960 in San Francisco, California, he was given the name David James Pelzer at his birth. He was the second-born among five siblings and was raised in the Daly City by his parents Catherine Roerva Christen and Stephen Joseph Pelzer. As a young child Pelzer was consistently abused by his alcoholic and mentally deranged mother. The severity of the abuse almost took Pelzer’s life on several occasions. It was not until he turned twelve that his teacher stepped in and placed him in a foster care. Social services deemed Pelzer’s abuse the most horrendous and gruesome of all such cases reported by that time in California.

Pelzer was relocated to numerous foster homes before he enlisted himself in the U.S. Air Force at the age of 18. Two years later he got married and had a son, though his marriage fell apart a few years later. He provided his services in the Gulf War as a fighter pilot. He earned the title of California Volunteer of the Year as he received the JC Penney Golden Rule Award in 1990. By that time, Dave transformed into a highly accomplished person, earning numerous prestigious titles and awards. In addition to that, he was commended by the Presidents of USA.

He penned his first book in 1995, titled *A Child Called “It”* in which he narrates his personal account of abused childhood. According to him, his mother tortured him in every possible way, physically, emotionally and mentally from age 4 to 12. His father remained deliberately negligent of the entire situation as he was an alcoholic himself. His brother Richard B. Pelzer also details his experience in the abusive household in his, *A Brother’s Journey*.

Dave Pelzer explains his purpose of writing his memoir as to address the prevailing issue of child abuse. He highlighted the fact that no matter how detrimental the effect of childhood abuse might be, if one truly wills to improve his situation and achieve a better life, one does eventually. The book received positive reviews upon its release and remained at the top spot on *New York Times Bestseller List* for several years. The secret behind its instant success was that most of his audience could relate to the subject. However, some critics remained skeptical of the memories that Pelzer so accurately incorporated in his book. Moreover, critics had seen the timing of the publication of the books, just after his parents’ death, to be highly convenient, given the story would never check out. Another critic pointed out the fact that there was not enough evidence to authenticate Pelzer’s account. In fact, his own maternal grandmother and brother had questioned the validity of his memoirs.

Subsequent to publishing his first book, in 1997 Pelzer wrote his teenage memoir, titled *The Lost Boy: A Foster Child’s Search for the Love of a Family*. The third book published, *A Man Named Dave: A Story of Triumph and Forgiveness* (2000)*,* details his life as an adult and how he finally made peace with himself as he learned to forgive his father. Attaining success as a writer, he began to write self-help books. Some of these works include *Help Yourself* (2001), *The Privilege of Youth* (2004) and *Moving Forward* (2009).