**Mini-Lesson: Voice and tone in a memoir**

**Excerpt from *I Am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai**

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When I close my eyes, I can see my bedroom.  The bed is unmade, my fluffy blanket is in a heap, because I’ve rushed out for school, late for an exam.  My school schedule is open on my desk to a page dated 9 October 2012.  And my school uniform - my white *shalwar* and blue *kamiz* - is on a peg on the wall, waiting for me.

I can hear the neighborhood kids playing cricket in the alley behind our home.  I can hear the hum of the bazaar not far away.  And if I listen very closely, I can hear Safina, my friend next door, tapping on the wall we share so she can tell me a secret.

I smell rice cooking as my mother works in the kitchen.  I hear my little brothers fighting over the remote - the TV switching between *WWE* *SmackDown* and cartoons.  Soon I’ll hear my father’s deep voice as he calls out my nickname.

“*Jani,”* he’ll say, which is Persian for “dear one.”  “How was the school running today?”  He was asking how things were at the Khushal School for Girls, which he founded and I attended, but I always took the opportunity to answer the question literally.

“*Aba,”* I’d joke. “The school is walking, not running!”  This was my way of telling him I thought things could be better.

I left that beloved home in Pakistan one morning - planning to dive back under the covers as soon as school let out - and ended up a world away.

Some people say it is too dangerous for me to go back there now.  That I’ll never be able to return.  And so, from time to time, I go there in my mind.

But now another family lives in that home, another girl sleeps in that bedroom - while I am thousands of miles away.  I don’t care much about the other things in my room, but I do worry about the school trophies on my bookcase.  I even dream about them sometimes.  There’s a runners-up award from the first speaking contest I ever entered.  And more than forty-five golden cups and medals for being first in my class in exams, debates, and competitions.  To someone else, they might seem mere trinkets made of plastic.  To someone else, they may simply look like prizes for good grades.  But to me, they are reminders of the life I loved and the girl I was - before I left home that fateful day.

When I open my eyes, I am in a new bedroom.  It is in a sturdy brick house in a damp and chilly place called Birmingham, England.  Here there is water running from every tap, hot or cold as you like.  No need to carry cans of gas from the market to heat the water.  Here there are large rooms with shiny wood floors, filled with large furniture and a large, large TV.

There is hardly a sound in this calm, leafy suburb.  No children laughing and yelling.  No women downstairs chopping vegetables and gossiping with my mother.  No men smoking cigarettes and debating politics.  Sometimes, though, even with these thick walls between us, I can hear someone in my family crying for home.  But then my father will burst through the front door, his voice booming. “*Jani!”* he’ll say.  “How was school today?”

Now there’s no play on words.  He’s not asking about the school he runs and I attend.  But there’s a note of worry in his voice, as if he fears I won’t be there to reply.  Because it was not so long ago that I was nearly killed - simply because I was speaking out about my right to go to school.