What happens?

An attack on a schoolgirl becomes a vision of continuing education and collective resistance.

The main idea

Violence cannot fully control the imagination or the collective demand for education.

1. “battle”

Method: Extended metaphor

Going to school acquires the danger and resolve of a military campaign.

2. “orchard”

Method: Natural imagery

Mental life is imagined as fertile despite an attempt to destroy it.

3. “ordinary”

Method: Adjective

The aspiration is access to everyday freedoms, not exceptional privilege.

4. “standing up”

Method: Double meaning

Physical action also becomes a political refusal to submit.

Form and structure

Free verse shifts from an external description to the girl’s direct address and a widening collective ending.

Development, voice and tone

Journey to class — Threatening. The language of combat makes an ordinary school day a situation of exceptional danger.

Attack and inner world — Resilient. The wounded mind is pictured through growing natural spaces rather than destroyed possibility.

Girl’s reply and others — Defiant and collective. One survivor’s refusal becomes a movement of schoolgirls continuing towards education.

Context

The poem responds to the attack on Malala Yousafzai and echoes the battlefield vocabulary of First World War poetry.

Comparison links

England in 1819: oppressive power and hope. Thirteen: young people exposed to institutional harm.

Recall question

How does battle imagery change its meaning by the ending?