

Polio Could Not Defeat My Brother

Tamthi Wrightson

BEFORE YOU READ:

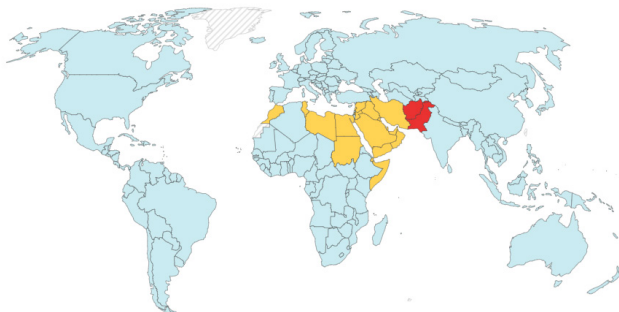
1. Share what you know about polio.
2. Think about the verb *to defeat*. What does it mean? Can you name a synonym for defeat?

Born in Vietnam

I was born in Vietnam in a big family. My mom and dad had 11 children. We lived in small house in Ho Chi Minh City. It is sunny, hot, and humid all summer long. There are a lot of shops, and the street food is very good. Since it is not far from the beach, sometimes my parents took us there.

Polio Around the World Today

Polio used to be endemic all over the world. (Endemic means it occurs regularly in a community.) Since the vaccine was developed, polio has almost been eradicated. (Read more about the vaccine in the box on p. 15.) This map shows that polio is still endemic in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Visit the [interactive map](#) to see how the world has progressed towards polio eradication from 1910 to 2023.



■ Endemic ■ Polio-free (not certified) ■ WHO certified polio-free ■ No data

<https://ourworldindata.org/polio#all-charts>

In the summer, the beautiful water is clear and peaceful. There are mountains all around.

My Brother Got Polio

I have a brother, Khan. He is one year older than me. He got polio when he was three years old. As a result, he could not walk. When he turned six, he started walking with a cane. He used his hand to support his leg because one of his legs was very weak and a lot smaller than the other leg. Whenever we went somewhere, he just sat there.

When we started school, I had to help carry his stuff for school. Sometimes, I felt like I was his parent *even though* he is one year older than me. We did not have a school bus like in the United States. We had to wake up very early to walk to school together because it took him a long time.

He Followed His Dream

Other kids often bullied him. They often pushed him to the ground and laughed at him. I would fight with those boys and try to protect my brother. He was a very smart kid, and he was in the top ten of his class. When we took swimming lessons, he beat all the kids his age. He can swim very well – *like a fish*. When he was in the 7th grade, he was able to fix small electronics, like radios, speakers, and TVs.

His dream was to be an engineer. When we came to the United States, we lived in South Dakota. Khan got a job in a small shop where they fixed TVs, computers, and other items. He continued to learn, even when he was not working. He was very good at it. Now he works in California for a medical equipment supply company, and he is a team leader. I am so proud of him. Polio could not *defeat* my brother.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. According to the author, her brother was not defeated by polio. What evidence does she share to make her point?
2. The author uses the simile *like a fish* to describe how her brother swims. Try making your own similes to describe human movement. For example, compare running, walking, eating, hopping, or some other movement to that of an animal.
3. The author says she felt like a parent to her brother *even though* he is one year older. What is the role of *even though* in that sentence? Use *even though* in a couple of your own sentences.
4. Read about the polio vaccine in the box on the right, and watch the 1:47-minute video on the WHO website.

Tamtha Wrightson is a student an ESOL student at the Arlington Public Library in Arlington, Texas. She came to the U.S. in 1992 when she was just 19 with only one carry-on piece of luggage. She became a U.S. Citizen in 1998 and eventually moved to Texas in 2005. She works as a Dental Technician and enjoys spending time with her family and traveling.



The Polio Vaccine

Polio is caused by a virus. The virus damages the nerves in the spinal cord. It can cause paralysis, trouble breathing, and sometimes death. Dr. Jonas Salk and his colleagues invented a vaccine to protect people from polio.



In this photo, a child receives the oral polio vaccine. Vaccines can be delivered by injection, by mouth, or by a nasal spray.

The vaccine delivers a tiny part of the disease-causing organism, or a weakened, non-dangerous version, so your body can learn the specific way to fight it without getting sick. The vaccine helps you not get the disease at all or a milder version of it.

Read more about it on the [World Health Organization's \(WHO\) website](https://www.who.int/) and watch a 1:47-minute video on the history of polio.

