

Name:

Class:

## Maya Angelou (1928-2014)

**Part A Directions:** Use the following websites to answer the questions below.

<https://www.biography.com/writer/maya-angelou> or <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/maya-angelou-is-born>

1. Who was Maya Angelou?

## PREVIEW

2. Give two examples of how Angelou suffered a difficult childhood.

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3. List three additional facts about Angelou.

## PREVIEW

**Part B Directions:** Read the following three poems by Maya Angelou and answer the questions on the right.

### Poem 1: Excerpt from "Still I Rise"

You may write me down in history  
With your bitter, twisted lies,  
You may trod me in the very dirt  
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?  
Why are you beset with gloom?  
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells  
Pumping in my living room.  
Just like moons and like suns,  
With the certainty of tides,  
Just like hopes springing high,  
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?  
Bowed head and lowered eyes?  
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,  
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my **haughtiness** offend you?  
Don't you take it awful hard  
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines  
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,  
You may cut me with your eyes,  
You may kill me with your hatefulness,  
But still, like air, I'll rise

1. Name a simile from the poem. What two things are being compared?

2. What is the tone of the poem? List the words/phrases that let you know the tone.

3. What is an example of alliteration from the poem?

4. Why does the speaker keep repeating the phrase "I'll rise"?

5. What is the meaning of the word **haughty**?  
(haughtiness)

## PREVIEW

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**Poem 2: Caged Bird**

A free bird leaps  
on the back of the wind  
and floats downstream  
till the current ends  
and dips his wing  
in the orange sun rays  
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks  
down his narrow cage  
can seldom see through  
his bars of rage  
his wings are clipped and  
his feet are tied  
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings  
with a fearful trill  
of things unknown  
but longed for still  
and his tune is heard  
on the distant hill  
for the caged bird  
sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze  
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees  
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn  
and he names the sky his own

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams  
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream  
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied  
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings  
with a fearful trill  
of things unknown  
but longed for still  
and his tune is heard  
on the distant hill  
for the caged bird  
sings of freedom.

1. Name an example of imagery. What sense does it appeal to?

2. Name an example of personification from the poem.

3. What is the rhyme scheme of the 5<sup>th</sup> stanza?

4. Name an example of alliteration from the poem.

5. What is the juxtaposition in this poem? Based on Angelou's personal background, what does it symbolize?

6. What is a universal theme from this poem?

**Poem 3: Woman Work**

I've got the children to tend  
The clothes to mend  
The floor to mop  
The food to shop  
Then the chicken to fry  
The baby to dry  
I got company to feed  
The garden to weed  
I've got shirts to press  
The tots to dress  
The can to be cut  
I gotta clean up this hut  
Then see about the sick  
And the cotton to pick.

Shine on me, sunshine  
Rain on me, rain  
Fall softly, dewdrops  
And cool my brow again.

Storm, blow me from here  
With your fiercest wind  
Let me float across the sky  
'Til I can rest again.

Fall gently, snowflakes  
Cover me with white  
Cold icy kisses and  
Let me rest tonight.

Sun, rain, curving sky  
Mountain, oceans, leaf and stone  
Star shine, moon glow  
You're all that I can call my own.

1. Name an example of imagery. What sense does it appeal to?

## PREVIEW

2. What word or phrase does the speaker keep repeating? Why does she do that?

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## PREVIEW

3. What is the mood of the first stanza of this poem? What words or phrases let you know?

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4. What is the mood of stanzas 2-5? How does it change from stanza 1?

## PREVIEW

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5. What does the last line of this poem really mean?

## PREVIEW

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**Part C Directions: Comparing Two or More Poems**

Choose 2 out of the 3 poems to compare and contrast. Then pick one of the following literary devices to focus on: theme, imagery, mood, tone, language, style, or influence of the author's life. Write your response in one paragraph or more (minimum of 5 sentences). Include TEXTUAL EVIDENCE from both poems to demonstrate your point.

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**PREVIEW**

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**PREVIEW**

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**Sentence Starters - For Reference Only**

**(You can model your paragraph like this one, but don't fill in the lines below.)**

**Start with a topic sentence:**

Maya Angelou's poems \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are similar in many ways.  
(title 1) (title 2)

**Body sentences:**

**PREVIEW**

\_\_\_\_\_ is apparent in both poems because Angelou \_\_\_\_\_.  
(literary device) (reason #1)  
One example of \_\_\_\_\_ from poem number one is  
(literary device)

\_\_\_\_\_. Similarly, she uses the phrase \_\_\_\_\_.  
(textual evidence) (textual evidence)

in poem number \_\_\_\_\_ which is another example of \_\_\_\_\_.  
(literary device)

**Closing sentence:**

**PREVIEW**

In both poems \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, Angelou uses \_\_\_\_\_ by appealing to \_\_\_\_\_  
(title 1) (title 2) (literary device)  
the reader's \_\_\_\_\_.  
(restate main reason)