

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?

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

3. List three additional facts about Angelou.

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)

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 5th 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?

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

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

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

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

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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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:

_____ 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:

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