

## For teachers' reference

<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/still-i-rise/>



**Maya Angelou** (born Marguerite Annie Johnson; April 4, 1928 – May 28, 2014) was an African-American author, poet, dancer, actress and singer. She published seven autobiographies, three books of essays, and several books of poetry, and was credited with a list of plays, movies, and television shows spanning more than 50 years. She received dozens of awards and over fifty honorary degrees. Angelou is best known for her series of seven autobiographies, which focus on her childhood and early adult experiences. The first, *[I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings](#)* (1969), tells of her life up to the age of seventeen and brought her international recognition and acclaim. With the publication of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Angelou publicly discussed aspects of her personal life. She was respected as a spokesperson for black people and women, and her works have been considered a defense of Black culture.

She was an actor, writer, director, and producer of plays, movies, and public television programs. From 1982, she taught at [Wake Forest University](#) in [Winston-Salem, North Carolina](#), where she held the first lifetime Reynolds Professorship of American Studies. She was active in the [Civil Rights movement](#), and worked with [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#) and [Malcolm X](#). Beginning in the 1990s, she made around 80 appearances a year on the lecture circuit, something she continued into her eighties. In 1993, Angelou recited her poem "[On the Pulse of Morning](#)" (1993) at President [Bill Clinton](#)'s inauguration, making her the first poet to make an inaugural recitation since [Robert Frost](#) at President [John F. Kennedy](#)'s inauguration in 1961.

## Lesson plan for reference:

<http://www.educationoasis.com/curriculum/LP/LA/stillIrise.htm>

**Time Required:** 90 minutes or two 50-minute periods

**Teacher Comments:** A lesson plan using the famous poem, "Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou. I created this lesson plan to expose students to Maya Angelou's powerful poem, "Still I Rise" as well as to enhance their understanding of the power of poetry. In addition, it informs students on how poetry has its own unique format, language, and poetic devices such as metaphors, similes, and personification and how these poetic conventions can add a tremendous punch to a poet's message.

This lesson conforms to the learning concept of "Thematic Learning." The major theme (Thematic Learning) of this poem is the undeniable and unbreakable strength and spirit of the African American people, past and present; however, students will begin to formulate their own identification with the poem's message by seeing beyond the cultural relevance and finding a connection to their own teenage lives, in spite of race or culture.

Many students will respond by saying that in spite of peer pressure, trends, or negative situations that they have been confronted with, they, too, have found ways to rise above the adversities that often plague those to conform to the negative standards and trends set by other teenagers.

**Goals:** Students will better understand slavery, oppression, and resiliency.

**Objectives:** The learner will annotate the poem for the poet's tone and theme and be able to identify similes, metaphors, allusions, and personification in the poem, "Still I Rise."

### **Materials:**

- Maya Angelou's poem, "Still I Rise" (see below)
- writing utensils
- Annotation Chart. [PDF file](#)

### **Procedure:**

Distribute a copy of the poem, "Still I Rise" to each student along with a copy of the annotation chart. Explain to students that poetry is best enjoyed and understood when read aloud. To give students a strong understanding of the poem's tone, it is best that the teacher read the poem first with lots of fervor and emotion. Then have a few students read the poem aloud to see if they can mirror the teacher's tone.

Put the following literary terms on the board: personification, metaphor, simile, tone, and allusion. Have students

define these terms by looking them up in their literature textbooks. Explain to students that they will be using their annotation charts to look for these poetic devices throughout the poem. Discuss how these devices help the reader understand and enjoy the speaker's message better. They will begin to search for similes, metaphors, personification, allusions (made to slavery), and the speaker's tone and place them in the annotation boxes. After students have completed their charts, they are to summarize what the poem's message or theme appears to be. Students should explain how that determination was made by using their analysis to connect the poetic devices listed in the charts.

**Assessment:**

Provide students with another poem and have them use the same techniques of annotation to identify the poetic terms they defined for Angelou's poem. Students should also write a short summary discussing the poet's message or theme.

**Special Comments:** Students should be able to understand the speaker's indomitable spirit to overcome America's shame of slavery. The teacher can give a brief overview of the slavery institution and then discuss how African Americans overcame oppression in spite of bondage.

**Useful Internet Resources:**

Still I Rise - by Maya Angelou

From the Academy of American Poets

URL: <http://www.poets.org/poems/poems.cfm?prmID=1487>

Poetry Project - Analyzing, Understanding, and Writing Poetry

Includes definitions of various poetic devices.

URL: [http://www.twainfield.net/teachers/fowler/classroom/resources/poetry\\_project](http://www.twainfield.net/teachers/fowler/classroom/resources/poetry_project)

**For analysis of the poem, please refer to**

[http://www.booksie.com/editorial\\_and\\_opinion/essay/bkaholic14/still-i-rise-by-maya-angelou:-analysis-essay/nohead/pdf/ver/8](http://www.booksie.com/editorial_and_opinion/essay/bkaholic14/still-i-rise-by-maya-angelou:-analysis-essay/nohead/pdf/ver/8) (Can't be downloaded but can be printed. Attachment 1)

<http://mizukisudo.wordpress.com/2011/11/25/still-i-rise-by-maya-angelou-poem-analysis/> (Attachment 2)

## Attachment 2      Still I Rise by Maya Angelou – Poem Analysis

**Rhyme Scheme** (With the exception of the last stanza, the rhyme scheme is A,B,C,B.)

- lies, rise
- gloom, room
- tides, rise
- eyes, cries
- hard, yard
- eyes, rise
- wide, tide
- fear, clear
- gave, slave

### **Other features**

Just like moons and like suns – simile

Comparing how she continuously raises herself up emotionally to stay strong just, like how the moon and sun rises everyday no matter what happens.

I'll rise; I rise – repetition

By repeating these words it makes the words that much more powerful and makes it stand out and also emphasises Angelou's message, which is to stay strong and to never allow anything or anyone stop you from fighting and living strong.

Does my sassiness upset you? ; Do you want to see me broken? ; Does my haughtiness offend you? ; Does my sexiness offend you?

By questioning the readers ("you"), it catches the reader's attention and is affective because it makes readers realize how many people have made the person ("I") feel and how many people may be feeling, it makes readers read the poem and take it to a more personal level.

oil wells; gold mines; diamonds – metaphor

These are often known to be expensive and valuable, and Angelou is relating these to the value of herself. She is worth just as much as everyone else and therefore she should receive just as much respect and love like others.

Shoulders falling down like teardrops – simile

Comparing how a person's shoulders drop as they lose confidence in them self and when feeling down, similar to how tears drop done one's face when upset or hurt.

At the meeting of my thighs

Expressing her sexuality of being a woman

I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide

The colour black is usually used to create a sense of fear and evil. A "black ocean" seems to describe an ocean that is full of cruelty and how things occur unexpectedly. This may be referring to how her own life is, full of horrific and unexpected events. The "black ocean" may also be describing her own race which allows readers to

understand that the poem is about racism.

### **Tone**

*Still I Rise* has a positive and strong tone throughout the entire poem. The words Angelou used also makes it seem as though the character in the poem is talking to the readers. By doing so Angelou got the readers to get more personally involved in the poem emotionally which helps to make readers realize how humans are all guilty of discriminating others in some form. The poem should be read with confidence, especially in the parts “I’ll rise and “I rise” to show the strong attitude the person (“I”) has about them self. In some lines for example “Cause I laugh like I’ve got gold mines” the tone changes almost to a point where the reader is chuckling like how it says in the poem.

**The main theme** in the poem is discrimination. This poem portrays a strong person living with a positive attitude. I chose to do this poem because although it was written in 1978, the message portrayed in the poem is very powerful and can be related by anyone even in this time period. This poem is very straightforward which makes the message that much more meaningful and affective. At some point in life everybody experiences discrimination, although it may be in different ways and extents it is a struggle that all people go through within their lifetime. This poem teaches readers that all humans have strength that lays within us that can help to overcome any obstacles. This poem also makes readers realize the importance of having pride and hope in ourselves. The line “Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave” shows the importance of having appreciation in those in previous generations for what they have done for us and what they have left. Also, the line “I am the dream and the hope of the slave” shows how Angelou believes that one person stepping up to make a difference or to have their voices heard will not only help themselves, but it also has a potential of helping those who are also suffering from the same or similar discrimination.

There are many forms of discrimination, and there is always someone in the world trying to overcome these obstacles, hence why this poem is still famous and read today. Through this poem Angelou created an inspiring message for those who were also suffering what she had suffered, racism and stereotypes due to her gender. The reason why people argue is to have their voices heard and because they are trying to make some kind of difference. Trying to have your voice heard and trying to prove your rights for yourself and for others is not easy, it requires a lot of courage and commitment, however once a person can overcome the obstacles that they face throughout their way they can create a big difference. Humans are very strong, we have so much potential that we should pride and have faith in, and we are to not allow anything to stop us from becoming a strong independent person; this strong message is portrayed throughout this poem through the eyes of a person struggling from discrimination, a struggle humans all go through and a one that everyone can relate to.