



TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LITPLAN TEACHER PACK™

for

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

based on the book by

Maya Angelou

Written by

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A FEW NOTES ABOUT THE AUTHOR  
MAYA ANGELOU

ANGELOU, Maya 1928- Maya Angelou , one of the greatest voices of contemporary black literature, was born Marguerite Annie Johnson on April 4, 1928, in St. Louis, Missouri. As a child, she lived in Stamps, Arkansas with her paternal grandmother, in St. Louis, Missouri with her mother and her mother's relatives, and in San Francisco, California with her mother. At the age of sixteen she had her only child, Guy, out of wedlock. She was married briefly to Tosh Angelos, a Greek. The marriage lasted only a few years, and they divorced in 1950. In 1973 she married Paul Du Feu, and they were divorced in 1981.

Prior to becoming an award winning author, Maya Angelou was a singer, dancer, actress, playwright, and editor for an English-language magazine in Egypt. She traveled extensively with theater tour groups, and has lived and worked in Egypt and Ghana.

Her first book, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, was published in 1970. It is her autobiography from ages three through sixteen. The book was nominated for the National Book Award in 1970, and in 1978 was made into a movie for television. This success was followed by a Pulitzer Prize nomination for her second book, *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water 'fore I Diiie*, ( poetry collection), 1971. Subsequent works include: *Gather Together in My Name* (autobiography), 1974; *Oh Pray My Wings Are Gonna Fit Me Well* (poetry), 1975; *Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry Like Christmas* (autobiography), 1976; *And Still I Rise*(poetry), 1978; *The Heart of a Woman* (autobiography), 1981; *Shaker, Why don't You Sing?* (poetry), 1983; *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* (autobiography), 1986; *Poems: Maya Angelou*, four books, 1986; *Now Sheba Sings the Song*, 1987. In 1992 Ms. Angelou read her poem "On the Pulse of Morning" at President Clinton's inaugural ceremony.

Ms. Angelou is a member of the American Film Institute, The Directors Guild of America, the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, and is on the advisory board of the Women's Prison Association. She has received honorary degrees from Smith College, Mills College, and Lawrence University. In 1976 she was named Woman of the Year in Communications by *Ladies' Home Journal*. Ms. Angelou was a writer-in-residence at the University of Kansas in 1970, a distinguished visiting professor at Wake Forest University in 1974, Wichita State University in 1974, and Californian State University at Sacramento, also in 1974.

Maya Angelou continues to write, and now lives in Sonoma, California.

## INTRODUCTION - *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*

This unit has been designed to develop students' reading, writing, thinking, listening and speaking skills through exercises and activities related to *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou. It includes nineteen lessons, supported by extra resource materials.

The **introductory lesson** introduces students to *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Following the introductory activity, students are given an explanation of how the activity relates to the book they are about to read. Following the transition, students are given the materials they will be using during the unit. At the end of the lesson, students begin the pre-reading work for the first reading assignment.

The **reading assignments** are approximately thirty pages each; some are a little shorter while others are a little longer. Students have approximately 15 minutes of pre-reading work to do prior to each reading assignment. This pre-reading work involves reviewing the study questions for the assignment and doing some vocabulary work for 8 to 10 vocabulary words they will encounter in their reading.

The **study guide questions** are fact-based questions; students can find the answers to these questions right in the text. These questions come in two formats: short answer or multiple choice. The best use of these materials is probably to use the short answer version of the questions as study guides for students (since answers will be more complete), and to use the multiple choice version for occasional quizzes. It might be a good idea to make transparencies of your answer keys for the overhead projector.

The **vocabulary work** is intended to enrich students' vocabularies as well as to aid in the students' understanding of the book. Prior to each reading assignment, students will complete a two-part worksheet for approximately 8 to 10 vocabulary words in the upcoming reading assignment. Part I focuses on students' use of general knowledge and contextual clues by giving the sentence in which the word appears in the text. Students are then to write down what they think the words mean based on the words' usage. Part II gives students dictionary definitions of the words and has them match the words to the correct definitions based on the words' contextual usage. Students should then have an understanding of the words when they meet them in the text.

After each reading assignment, students will go back and formulate answers for the study guide questions. Discussion of these questions serves as a **review** of the most important events and ideas presented in the reading assignments.

After students complete extra discussion questions, there is a **vocabulary review** lesson which pulls together all of the separate vocabulary lists for the reading assignments and gives students a review of all of the words they have studied.

Following the reading of the book, two lessons are devoted to the **extra discussion questions/writing assignments**. These questions focus on interpretation, critical analysis and personal response, employing a variety of thinking skills and adding to the students' understanding of the novel. These questions are done as a **group activity**. Using the information they have acquired so far through individual work and class discussions, students get together to further examine the text and to brainstorm ideas relating to the themes of the novel.

The group activity is followed by a **reports and discussion** session in which the groups share their ideas about the book with the entire class; thus, the entire class gets exposed to many different ideas regarding the themes and events of the book.

There are three **writing assignments** in this unit, each with the purpose of informing, persuading, or having students express personal opinions. The first assignment is to write a brief autobiography. This will give the students an opportunity to reflect on an event or events in their lives and comment on how the event has influenced them. The second and third writing assignments relate to Maya Angelou's seeking and winning the job on the San Francisco cable cars. The second writing assignment is to develop a resume. This gives students the opportunity to share information about themselves with others, and to develop a skill that can be applied in real life. In the third writing assignment, students will be asked to prepare for a job interview by composing answers to questions they think would be asked in an interview. As Ms. Angelou was the first Negro to be hired to work on the San Francisco cable cars, the students will also be put in the position of being the first of their gender or ethnic background to be applying for a particular job. The purpose in developing the answers to the interview questions is to convince the employer that the student is the best person for the job.

In addition, there is a **nonfiction reading assignment**. Students are required to read a piece of nonfiction related in some way to *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. After reading their nonfiction pieces, students will fill out a worksheet on which they answer questions regarding facts, interpretation, criticism, and personal opinions. During one class period, students make **oral presentations** about the nonfiction pieces they have read. This not only exposes all students to a wealth of information, it also gives students the opportunity to practice **public speaking**.

The **review lesson** pulls together all of the aspects of the unit. The teacher is given four or five choices of activities or games to use which all serve the same basic function of reviewing all of the information presented in the unit.

The **unit test** comes in two formats: all multiple choice-matching-true/false or with a mixture of matching, short answer, and composition. As a convenience, two different tests for each format have been included.

There are additional **support materials** included with this unit. The **resource sections** include suggestions for an in-class library, crossword and word search puzzles related to the novel, and extra vocabulary worksheets. There is a list of **bulletin board ideas** which gives the teacher suggestions for bulletin boards to go along with this unit. In addition, there is a list of **extra class activities** the teacher could choose from to enhance the unit or as a substitution for an exercise the teacher might feel is inappropriate for his/her class. **Answer keys** are located directly after the **reproducible student materials** throughout the unit. The student materials may be reproduced for use in the teacher's classroom without infringement of copyrights. No other portion of this unit may be reproduced without the written consent of Teacher's Pet Publications, Inc.

## UNIT OBJECTIVES - *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

1. Through reading *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, students will analyze characters and their situations to better understand the themes of the autobiography.
2. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the text on four levels: factual, interpretive, critical, and personal.
3. Students will practice reading aloud and silently to improve their skills in each area.
4. Students will enrich their vocabularies and improve their understanding of the autobiography through the vocabulary lessons prepared for use in conjunction with it.
5. Students will answer questions to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the main events and characters in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.
6. Students will practice writing through a variety of writing assignments.
7. The writing assignments in this are geared to several purposes:
  - a. To check the students' reading comprehension
  - b. To make students think about the ideas presented by the novel
  - c. To make students put those ideas into perspective
  - d. To encourage critical and logical thinking
  - e. To provide the opportunity to practice good grammar and improve students' use of the English language.
8. Students will read aloud, report, and participate in large and small group discussions to improve their public speaking and personal interaction skills.

READING ASSIGNMENT SHEET - *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

Date Assigned	Chapters	Completion Date (Prior to Class on This Date)
	Chapters 1-6	
	Chapters 7-12	
	Chapters 13-17	
	Chapters 18-21	
	Chapters 22-24	
	Chapters 25-29	
	Chapters 30-33	
	Chapters 34-36	



UNIT OUTLINE - *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

1 Introduction Non-fiction Assignment PV 1-6	2 Read 1-6 Orally	3 Study ?? 1-6 PVR 7-12	4 Quiz 7-12 PVR 13-17	5 Writing Assignment # 1
6 Study ?? 13-17 PVR 18-21	7 Study ?? 18-21 PVR 22-24	8 Study ?? 22-24 Writing Assignment #2	9 Writing Conferences	10 PVR 25-29 Study ?? 25-29
11 PVR 30-33 Study ?? 30-33	12 PVR 34-36 Study ?? 34-36	13 Extra Discussion??	14 Vocabulary Review	15 Writing Assignment #3
16 Movie & Discussion	17 Non-Fiction Presentations	18 Review	19 Test	

Key: P = Preview Study Questions    V = Vocabulary Work    R = Read

## LESSON ONE

### Objective

1. To introduce the *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* unit
2. To distribute books and other related materials (study guides, reading assignments)
3. To relate students' prior knowledge to the new material
4. To preview the study questions for Chapters 1-6
5. To familiarize students with the vocabulary for Chapters 1-6

### Activity #1

Ask students for a show of hands of those who have at some time in the past moved, changed schools or neighborhoods, or have gone to live with relatives other than their parents. Invite students to share their experiences as much as they care to.

You may also want to involve students in a discussion of racial prejudice, and provide some background on the prevailing racial climate in the United States at the time the book was written about (1931-1950.)

Tell students that the book they are about to read is an autobiography, written by the author about her life from the ages of three through sixteen. In this book she shares her experiences about living with various family members. She also makes observations about the disparities between Black and white lifestyles and outlooks.

### Activity #2

Distribute the materials students will use in this unit. Explain in detail how students are to use these materials.

Study Guides Students should preview the study guide questions before each reading assignment to get a feeling for what events and ideas are important in that section. After reading the section, students will (as a class or individually) answer the questions to review the important events and ideas from that section of the book. Students should keep the study guides as study materials for the unit test.

Reading Assignment Sheet You need to fill in the reading assignment sheet to let students know when their reading has to be completed. You can either write the assignment sheet on a side blackboard or bulletin board and leave it there for students to see each day, or you can "ditto" copies for each student to have. In either case, you should advise students to become very familiar with the reading assignments so they know what is expected of them.

## WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

### PROMPT

*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is an autobiography. It is the story of the early life of Maya Angelou as she remembers it. She includes character descriptions of the important people in her life, vivid descriptions of the places she lived, and details about the events that occurred. Most importantly, she offers an insight into her own reactions, thoughts, and feelings.

Your assignment is to write a brief autobiography.

### PREWRITING

Ms. Angelou covered a span of about 13 years in her autobiography. Yours does not have to be this comprehensive. You may want to focus on one particularly interesting event or on the events of an entire year. It may help you to make a timeline of the significant events in your life. Then you can choose what you want to write about.

In the Acknowledgment in the front of the book, Ms. Angelou thanks her mother and brother for their assistance in helping her remember incidents from her early life. You may want to interview people who knew you as a young child. You should prepare a list of questions ahead of time for them to answer, and also be ready to listen to them reminisce. You may want to tape record the interviews so that you can listen to them again as you are writing.

Organize the events in a chronological order so that the reader can follow the events as they occurred in your life.

You may want to reread Chapters 1 and 2 of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* to see how Ms. Angelou introduces herself to the reader.

### DRAFTING

First, write a paragraph in which you introduce an important event in your life. Make sure you include background information about the setting (year, location) and the other people involved.

In the body of your autobiography, continue telling about the event or events, adding details about the other people involved. Make sure to include observations about your own thoughts and feelings.

Finally, write a concluding paragraph in which you talk about the ways that the event/events you wrote about have influenced your life today.

### PROOFREADING

When you finish the rough draft of your paper, ask another student to read it. After reading your rough draft, he/she should tell you what he/she liked best about your work, which parts were difficult to understand, and ways in which your work could be improved. Reread your paper considering your critic's comments, and make the corrections you think are necessary.

Do a final proofreading of your paper, double-checking your grammar, spelling, organization, and the clarity of your ideas.