

POEM ANALYSIS: "Caged Bird" by Maya Angelou

LEARNING TARGET: I can use biographical information to analyze a poem.

I. Read the poem. Write down your first impressions in the space next to the poem.

Caged Bird

A free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wings
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 the 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.

II. Read the excerpt from Maya Angelou's autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Consider how the poem "Caged Bird" addresses some of the themes, events, and emotions in the chapter.

III. Answer the following analysis questions.

1.) What is the caged bird a symbol for? (Write in a complete sentence: *The caged bird is a symbol of...*)

2.) How is the "caged bird" different from the "free bird"? Use the chart below to compare and contrast their actions.

What "the free bird" does (you may directly quote the poem)	What "the caged bird" does (you may directly quote the poem)

3.) What might the following images in the poem symbolize? (Complete at least three.)

The narrow cage-

Clipped wings and tied feet-

The distant hill-

The grave of dreams-

Things unknown but longed for still-

4.) What is the central theme or message of "Caged Bird"? (Write a complete sentence: *The central theme of Maya Angelou's poem "Caged Bird" is...*)

POEM PROMPT

Write a poem about dreams.