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ESL-LA

Objective:

To introduce the poet and book writer Maya Angelou.

To look for relevant information in a text and respond to it on a personal basis.

Materials:

- Canon (internet in the classroom): website:
http://www.oprah.com/omagazine/200012/omag_200012_maya.jhtml
- Text on Maya Angelou + comprehension questions

Pre- activity

Ask students to look at the picture on the screen, and try to think about who she is. Give her a name, what she does in life... (2 mins)

Give students her real name, that she is a human rights activist. We are looking at her poem today as an introduction to the human rights theme we are going to cover in the next few weeks.

Show the clip on the internet about Maya Angelou on the Oprah show. Show the first 2 radio audio only. (10 minutes).

Ask students what kind of woman they think she is now. Show students the books that she wrote.

While activity (30 minutes)

Tell students to read the text and answer the questions.
Students hand in the questions

Post activity (20 minutes)***

First reading of Maya Angelou's "I know why the caged bird sings"

Read poem with students go over any vocabulary that would be difficult for them

- Ask them what they think the poem is about
- Ask them why they think Maya wrote this poem.
- Get them to notice the number of stanzas for the free bird and the number of stanzas for the caged bird.

Ask them to choose a stanza, and write in their notebook why they can identify themselves with that stanza.

Maya Angelou

The African American Maya Angelou was born Marguerite Annie Johnson in 1928 in St Louis Missouri, in the American South. Angelou's mother and father divorced when she was only three and she was sent with her brother, Bailey, to live with their grandmother, in Stamps, Arkansas. When Angelou was seven, they returned to live with their mother and her boyfriend back in St Louis. A few months after her arrival, Angelou experienced an ordeal that she has never been able to forget. She was sexually molested by her mother's boyfriend. Too ashamed to tell any of the adults in her life, she confided in her brother. When she later heard the news that an uncle had killed her attacker, she felt that her words had killed the man. She fell silent and did not speak for five years.

As a result of her silence, most of those around her, with the exception of her immediate family, thought that she must be stupid. But there were one or two who believed in her and encouraged her, including a white teacher, Mrs Flowers, who helped her to develop her enthusiasm for reading and language. Encouraged by Mrs Flowers, Angelou not only read and recited poetry but started to write her own poetry.

In 1952, she married a Greek sailor named Tosh Angelos. When she began her career as a nightclub singer, she took the professional name Maya Angelou, combining her childhood nickname with a form of her husband's name. Thirty years later, after several marriages and careers as a dancer, brothel-owner, civil rights activist and journalist, and having lived in Egypt and Africa, Angelou returned to America. There she decided to devote herself to writing.

Maya Angelou returned to America in 1964, with the intention of helping Malcolm X build his new *Organisation of African American Unity*. Shortly after her arrival in the United States, Malcolm X was assassinated, and his plans for a new organisation died with him. Angelou involved herself in television production and remained active in the Civil Rights Movement, working more closely with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who requested that Angelou serve as Northern Coordinator for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. His assassination, falling on her birthday in 1968, left her devastated. With the guidance of her friend, the novelist James Baldwin, she found solace in writing, and began work on the book that would become *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The book tells the story of her life from her childhood in Arkansas to the birth of her child. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* was published in and became an enormous popular success.

Maya Angelou



Instructions : Use the text to find out more about Maya Angelou. State your answers in complete sentences.

1) When and where was Maya Angelou born?

2) What is her birth name?

3) What happened in her childhood that was life changing?

4) a) Who was the one person she confided in, b) and why do you think she trusted that person to tell them what happened to her?

a) _____

b) _____

5) What was Maya Angelou's response to the death of her mother's boyfriend?

6) Why did she respond this way?

7) In addition to being a poet, what other things has May Angelou done?

8) In your opinion why do you think Maya was devastated by my the assassination of Martin Lurther King Jr. ?

9) Write one thing that surprised you about Maya Angelou and why?

10) Do you think Maya Angelou is a admirable woman? Why?

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

**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's rays and dares to claim the
sky.**

**But a bird that stalks down his narrow cage
cannot 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.**

Maya Angelou

*** Helen Karas

ESL-LA Sec 5

Objective: Get students to relate the poem to Maya Angelou's life, as well as their own.

Poem Analysis

Take attendance

Write vocab on board

Pre

Introduce by giving the world's smallest poem: "Hope? Nope!"

"I know why the caged bird sings" What do you think this poem will be about?

What does a free bird represent? In relation to Maya

What does a caged bird represent?

While

Go over each stanza

Explain vocabulary

Look at each stanza through two views: Any person and Maya

Post

Write on a sheet:

Why do you think Maya Angelou wrote this poem? 25 words

Write about a time when you felt free of being caged in. (50 words) Does this poem relate to you?

Pick a stanza and rewrite it as a description. Look at example (50 words)