

# Maya Angelou Educational Toolkit

## OVERVIEW

Teachers, parents and community organizations are encouraged to use the following online resources, video clips and selected lesson plans to educate students on the life and legacy of the iconic African-American poet, Maya Angelou.

The poems, videos, biographical sketches and articles will bring this vivid woman to life for students. They will hear her voice and watch her face as she reads her poetry and responds to interviewers. They will read what others said about her life and accomplishments. They will appreciate how she grew from a childhood of poverty in segregated communities to become a major figure in American arts and letters, and understand how her life experiences pushed her to express herself and influenced the themes she chose as well as her style of writing.

## INTENDED AUDIENCE

Due to the mature subject matter, in some materials, the toolkit is better suited for students in upper elementary through high school.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will become familiar with the works of Maya Angelou and gain a better understanding of the importance of poetry as an art form and how Angelou used her art to speak about the black experience in America.
- Students will reflect on how her use of figurative language invigorated her messages.
- Students will understand the significance of Maya Angelou's contributions to American culture.
- Students, especially young girls, will be inspired to pursue careers in the arts and use poetry as a vehicle for self-expression.
- Students will write an essay interpreting an Angelou poem and describe how it contributes to the understanding of race in the U.S. and the African American experience.

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## LESSON PLANS AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

This section offers lesson plans that are based on several of Maya Angelou's best-known poems and/or place her life and work in the broader context of African American history.

- [Maya Angelou](#), from the Teaching Tolerance project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. This site contains a detailed lesson plan for teaching students to interpret the poem "Still I Rise" from personal, social and historical perspectives.
- [Maya Angelou: Study and response to "Still I Rise,"](#) from LEARN NC, a service of the University of North Carolina School of Education. This site includes two lesson plans for grades 7–8 English Language Arts, including one that asks students to write a poem in response to what they have learned about Angelou's poem "Still I Rise."
- [Teaching Maya Angelou With New York Times](#), from the New York Times Learning Network. This site, which is designed for classroom use, has a wide range of content, including thoughtful discussions of how Angelou's life influenced her writing and her urge to write as well as lesson plans, including one titled "Everyday Voices: Finding Black History in Unexpected Places."
- [PBS NewsHour Extra: Resources to Honor the Life of Poet Maya Angelou](#) (on her death in 2014). This site includes video clips of her delivering "On the Pulse of Morning" at the Clinton inauguration, as well as a lesson plan based on the NewsHour clip and the text of "On the Pulse of Morning," which is provided.
- [Examining History with Maya Angelou's Poetry](#), from ReadWriteThink (the International Literacy Association and the National Council of Teachers of English). This extensive package is designed to help students understand how history and social issues informed Angelou's writing.
- [Phenomenal Woman: Lesson Plans to Explore the Work of Maya Angelou](#), from HotChalk This page includes several lesson plans and a video clip of Maya Angelou reading her poem "A Brave and Startling Truth."
- [How to Conduct A Journalistic Interview](#), from Scholastic This printable guide gives quick, sound tips to help students conduct successful interviews.
- [Remembering Maya Angelou](#), from Scholastic This website has short video clips of Maya Angelou talking about a range of topics, including her legacy, writing poetry, her creative voice, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It also has lesson plans, including "Spice Up Your Poetry With Figurative Language" on the elements of poetry that includes use of Angelou's poem "Life Doesn't Frighten Me."





## TEXT OF SELECTED ANGELOU POEMS

This section includes the text of several favorite poems by Maya Angelou. Video clips of her reading and remembering her poetry are available in a couple of items listed in the Additional Resources section below.

- [“On the Pulse of Morning”](#)  
Text of the poem Maya Angelou read at Bill Clinton’s 1993 presidential inauguration. (Retrieved from The EServer, a digital humanities collection based at Iowa State University.)
- [Poetry Foundation site on Maya Angelou](#)  
Includes a biography, lists of her writings, a brief guide to teaching about the poems included on the site, an extensive bibliography, and “With A Little Help from Dr. Angelou,” resources for teaching African American poetry to students at all grade levels. Also includes the text of these poems: “Still I Rise,” “Phenomenal Woman,” “California Prodigal,” “Kin,” “Awaking in New York,” “Caged Bird,” “The Mothering Blackness,” “A Plagued Journey,” “Harlem Hopscotch,” and an excerpt from “On the Pulse of Morning.”
- [Poets.org](#)  
This website of the Academy of American Poets includes a Maya Angelou biography and text of the poems “Still I Rise” and “Alone.”

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

These websites, videos, articles, biographical sketches, and primary source pieces can illustrate many aspects of Maya Angelou’s life for students, from her writing to her personal story to her striking presence as a speaker and interview subject.

- [Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise](#): a website on the documentary in the American Masters series to be aired on KERA February 21, 2017.
- [Caged Bird Legacy, LLC](#):  
This website contains accounts of Maya Angelou’s life and writing, information on her published books, numerous quotes and much more. Media clips include Angelou speaking and singing some of her poems.
- [“Growing Up Maya Angelou,”](#) article from *Smithsonian Magazine*
- [Obituary of Maya Angelou](#), from *The Washington Post*.  
This webpage includes a video clip of Maya Angelou delivering “On the Pulse of Morning” at the inauguration of President Bill Clinton as on January 20, 1993.

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- [Civil Rights: Then and Now](#): on PBS LearningMedia.  
This collection of videos, documents, and primary sources lends context to the events and leaders that defined the Civil Rights movement's first three decades (1954-1985). These resources also capture the issues and activists involved in the struggle today—those making headlines, stirring debate, and trending on social media.
- [Digital Public Library of America](#), on PBS LearningMedia  
This site includes a teaching guide and a collection of primary sources on Maya Angelou.
  - “The Primary Source Set: The Poetry of Maya Angelou” contains a collection of documents, archival photos, audio-visual clips, audio excerpts and more.
  - “Teaching Guide: Exploring the Poetry of Maya Angelou” includes discussion questions and classroom activities related to the primary resources.

### **VIDEOS AND CLIPS FROM KERA ARCHIVES**

KERA has featured several programs over the years about Maya Angelou. The videos in this archive can help bring the poet's words to life by giving students a chance to see Angelou in various contexts and hear her rich voice as she reads her poetry or responds to interviewers. Examples include:

- [This Week on Basic Black: Maya Angelou...and literary lyricism](#)
- [Charlie Rose The Week: Remembering Maya Angelou](#)
- [Chicago Tonight: Clips from and discussion of “Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise” documentary](#)
- [PBS NewsHour: Remembering Maya Angelou's iconic voice](#)

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