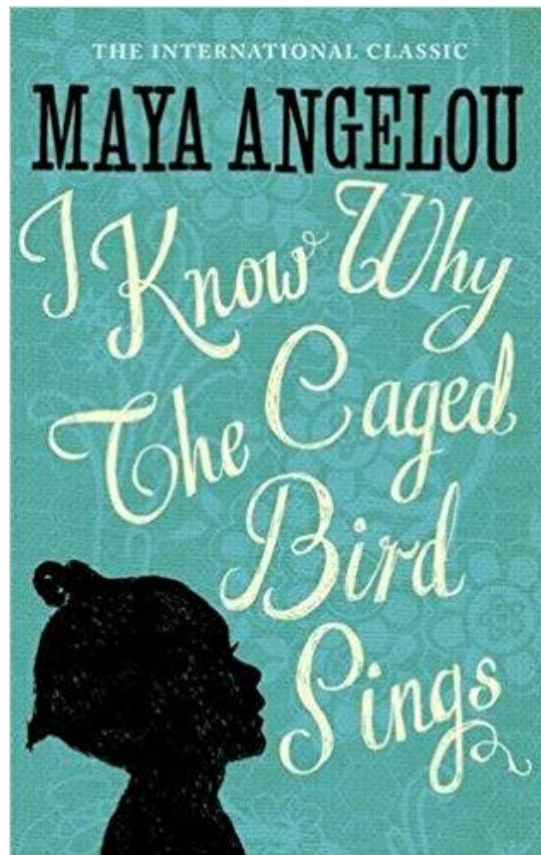


**Identity Crisis on Race and Subalternity in Maya Angelo's
*I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings***

Mrs. Sridevi and R. Renjith



Courtesy: <https://www.amazon.in/Know-Caged-Sings-Designer-Collection/dp/086068511X>

Abstract

Today the world is suffering from Identity crisis. For the present phenomena moreover, every writer has indicated towards it. The origin of identity crisis began the past colonial period. The main focus of the writers on this theme especially from the post-colonial period itself. In this abstract exceptionally documented the exposed theme identity crisis. This has brought the answer that a person who doesn't have any valuable place in a society. Among the people those who are living in a rich position. Many writers have taken this theme to explore the crisis on race. This

paper is exploring the element of identity that prevails in alienation that happened for the American poet and writer Maya Angelou. Here I have highlighted her biography that is *I know why the caged bird sings*.

Introduction

Maya Angelou was born Marguerite Annie Johnson; April 4, 1928 – May 28, 2014) was an American poet, memoirist, and civil rights activist. She published seven autobiographies, three books of essays, several books of poetry, and was credited with a list of plays, movies, and television shows spanning over 50 years. She received dozens of awards and more than 50 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 17 and brought her international recognition and acclaim.

She became a poet and writer after a series of occupations as a young adult, including fry cook, sex worker, nightclub dancer and performer, cast member of the opera *Porgy and Bess*, coordinator for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and journalist in Egypt and Ghana during the decolonization of Africa. She was an actor, writer, director, and producer of plays, movies, and public television programs. In 1982, she was named the first Reynolds Professors of American Studies at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. 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 the inauguration of John F. Kennedy in 1961.

Aspects of Her Personal Life

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 defence of black culture. Her works are widely used in schools and universities worldwide, although attempts have been made to ban her books from some U.S. libraries. Angelou's most celebrated works have been labelled as autobiographical fiction, but many critics consider them to be autobiographies. She made a deliberate attempt to challenge the common structure of the autobiography by critiquing, changing and expanding the genre.

All my work, my life, everything I do is about survival, not just bare, awful, plodding survival, but survival with grace and faith, while one may encounter many defeats, one must not be defeated.

Theme

Her books centre on themes such as racism, identity, family and travel. Angelou's use of themes especially that of racism, connects all seven autobiographies. One of her goals, beginning with *Caged Bird*, was to incorporate "organic unity" into them, and the events she described were episodic, crafted like a series of short stories, and were placed to emphasize the themes of her books.

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Sufferings

In this biography the main character is Maya Angelo, who reviled her identity crisis that happened in her childhood as well as in adult age. She lost her identity in many circumstances throughout in her life. Through her work she tried to expose how much the black people had oppressed by the white people, she had tried to expose the black peoples' identity crisis. Throughout the work we have realized the importance of identity, because once identity has its entity in universe and universe is the reflection of our identity.

Historically, singing was one of the most popular way to let out feelings and a way of expression for the slaves. Lastly, one of the metaphors that stood out was the "grave of dreams" reference. Grave of dreams seems to be a loss of hope of freedom and the chance to living the "American Dream" for the slaves. It is like saying their dreams of living life as a free person are dead and buried. Angelou does a great job of showing images to the reader (Poetry Genius). Along with metaphors and repetition, Angelou uses symbols to show the life of a slave. One of the most common symbols Angelou uses is the phrase "caged bird". "Caged bird" means exactly how it sounds, trapped. It is a symbol for the African slaves, they were birds trapped in a world where they couldn't be free. "Narrow cage" is another example of a symbolic presence in the poem. "Narrow cage" can be seen as the oppressors of the slaves, they stood in the way of their freedom and happy life. On the other hand, "free bird" is the white race that retains their freedom. The last symbol that is seen is "fat worms" which can be deciphered into opportunity and hope. Angelou writes of the fat worms being in another place, where she one day hopes to be. Angelou uses a lot of different language to give the reader a sense of the poem.

Conclusion

As a true feminist Maya Angelou resists all kinds of oppression on black people The author wants to break all the barriers of social and cultural system and depicts her problems as a black women. A black woman is women among the black people. She is oppressed thrice. The writer is further oppressed by being a black writer. Hence, she is oppressed by racism. It is a painful journey with open ending story, and many questions are left unanswered. The writer mainly concentrates on religion and education and gives expression to her bitter experiences. It is the depiction of a journey from weakness to strength.

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