

LEE & LOW BOOKS

Teacher's Guide

Rise! From Caged Bird to Poet of the People, Maya Angelou

written by Bethany Hegedus, illustrated by Tonya Engel

About the Book

Genre: Juvenile Nonfiction/ Biography and Autobiography

Format: Hardcover, \$18.95
48 pages, 9"x 10-3/4"

ISBN: 9781620145876

Reading Level: Grade 4

Interest Level: Grades 3-12

Guided Reading Level: T

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: NP

Lexile™ Measure: NP

*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Themes: Biography/Autobiography, Breaking Gender Barriers, Race, Adversity, Conflict Resolution, Overcoming Obstacles, Poverty, Pride, Respect, Persistence and Grit, Consequences, Protest, Courage, Trauma, Justice, Black girlhood, Dreams and Aspirations, Nonfiction, Women's History, Empathy and Compassion, Kindness and Caring, Heroism, Poetry, Freedom, Survival, Grief, South (U.S.), Community, Abuse, African/African American Interest

Resources on the web:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/rise>

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

SYNOPSIS

Writer, activist, trolley car conductor, dancer, mother, and humanitarian—Maya Angelou's life was marked by transformation and perseverance. In this comprehensive picture-book biography geared towards older readers, Bethany Hegedus lyrically traces Maya's life from her early days in Stamps, Arkansas through her work as a freedom fighter to her triumphant rise as a poet of the people.

A foreword by Angelou's grandson, Colin A. Johnson, describes how a love of literature and poetry helped young Maya overcome childhood trauma and turn adversity into triumph. Coupled with Tonya Engel's metaphorical and emotive illustrations, this biography beautifully conveys the heartaches and successes of this truly phenomenal woman, and is a powerful tribute to the written word.

BACKGROUND

Foreword from Colin Johnson

As a young girl, my grandmother Marguerite Johnson—better known as Maya Angelou—was raised by young parents who had difficult childhoods of their own. Vivian Baxter and Bailey Johnson didn't really know what to do with small children. Add to that discord a racial climate in America that found many African Americans using desperate measures to survive. Despite a tough life, my grandmother became courageous and compassionate, developing a great empathy for children and their journey through childhood.

Childhood is often a time when the power in life belongs to the adults around you. Empathizing with the innocent of children, my grandmother believed they deserved a good start in life but also possessed the courage to endure and thrive no matter their circumstances. The love of Grandmother Henderson, Uncle Willie, her brother, Bailey, and Mrs. Flowers helped her to grow in courage, while reading helped her understand the unlimited possibilities of life. She would later write, "Courage is the most important of all the virtues because without courage you cannot practice any other virtue consistently."

My grandmother believed that courage started with the simplicity of realizing that there are no monsters under the bed. Or, if you do have human monsters to overcome, courage was an inner virtue that could be developed early. As she moved past the pains of her own childhood and managed that pain, she came to believe: "My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style."

As you read this book with your children, I hope they will ask questions and make comments; and as you listen deeply, I hope your conversations will help them build courage that will serve them throughout their lives. – Colin Johnson

About Maya Angelou

Dr. Maya Angelou was born Marguerite Johnson in St. Louis, Missouri, on April 4, 1928. She grew up between St. Louis, Missouri and Stamps, Arkansas. Angelou had a long life and career working in many varied roles: author, poet, trolley-car conductor, historian, songwriter, playwright, dancer, teenage mother, stage and screen producer, director, performer, singer, and civil rights activist. Her most famous work is a memoir, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), which deals with her childhood and teenage years, including a traumatic incident of sexual abuse. Growing up in the South, Angelou witnessed the violence of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and segregation as a way of life. This period was known as the Jim Crow era. Not only were Black people and white people separated from one another, Black communities were disrespected, ill-treated, and sometimes brutally murdered.

After experiencing Jim Crow firsthand on a personal and societal level, Maya Angelou became an activist. She was involved in the anticolonial struggle in Africa during the 1960s: not only did she know and support Nelson Mandela in South Africa's anti-apartheid movement, but in Accra, Ghana, she was a part of an expatriate community that included W.E.B. Du Bois. Returning to the United

States, she worked with Malcolm X and Martin Luther King on racial justice issues and marched with Gloria Steinem for the feminist cause. Meanwhile, she developed an impressive literary career, beginning with *Caged Bird* and eventually encompassing seven autobiographical titles, seven collections of poems, five children's books, and two cookbooks. In 1993, she read a poem at President Bill Clinton's first inauguration, and later personally lobbied legislators on behalf of marriage equality.

Earning prestigious literary and humanitarian awards as well as over 50 honorary degrees, Dr. Maya Angelou was bestowed the 2010 Presidential Medal of Freedom by former President Barack Obama. The award is distinguished as the highest civilian honor in the United States. Dr. Angelou passed away on May 28, 2014 at the age of 86.

For more on Dr. Maya Angelou's rich life, visit <https://www.mayaangelou.com/> and <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poet/maya-angelou>.

Note on Sexual Abuse

Maya Angelou's childhood experience as a victim of sexual abuse speaks to the horrific violence Black girls still encounter regularly. Race, gender, and class leave Black girls specifically vulnerable to abuse. In 2017, the Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality conducted a study that suggested a contributing cause: the "adultification" of Black girls (<https://www.law.georgetown.edu/poverty-inequality-center/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2017/08/girlhood-interrupted.pdf>), a term used to refer to the perception of Black girls as less innocent and more adult-like than white girls of the same age. Adultification is historically rooted in the commonly held stereotype of Black girls as hypersexualized, where society attributes sex as part of the "natural" role of Black women and girls. *the-great-depression-explained*

Lynching

The reality and dangers of life in the Jim Crow South is addressed in the text, and lynching needs to be taken into account when teaching with *Rise! From Caged Bird to Poet of the People, Maya Angelou*. The Equal Justice Initiative created a "Lynching in America" lesson plan for high school and states, "The history of lynching in America is undeniably brutal and disturbing; yet avoiding this brutality disallows meaningful understanding of U.S. history" (<https://lynchinginamerica.eji.org/drupal/sites/default/files/2017-06/EJI%20-%20LIA%20High%20School%20Lesson%20Plan.pdf>). Teaching Tolerance also has resources and units on how to teach honestly and effectively about lynching (<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/teaching-americas-national-crime>). Paula Giddings, professor of Afro-American Studies at Smith College, discusses the history and origins of lynching in a video from Facing History (<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/video/origins-lynching-culture-united-states>). Please note that lynching can be triggering for students and it's critical to be cognizant of students' needs.

Note to Educators, Families & Librarians

Be cognizant of the students in your classroom or relevant setting and aware of students' living circumstances prior to reading *Rise! From Caged Bird to Poet of the People, Maya Angelou*. Would

this text be triggering for any students? Several organizations below offer guidance on navigating difficult conversations with children about abuse and suggestions on how to support young survivors. Consider providing more context and a framework for the reading of *Rise! From Caged Bird to Poet of the People, Maya Angelou* with the background section of the book.

Note from the Author

"I wish I could share that the stigma and shame around sexual abuse has diminished. It has not. Honoring that strength of unheard survivors, my favorite aunt included, as well as honoring Dr. Maya Angelou, a woman who I so strongly associate with forgiveness, joy, and deep belief who found her healing in the written word, is what led me to capture Maya's life in verse form. Below are resources for those who may be affected or who wish to support someone affected by sexual violence." – Bethany Hegedus

Abuse Resources

Childhelp: childhelp.org

A 24-hour, seven-days-a-week child-abuse hotline with professional counselors. Childhelp provides crisis intervention, information, literature, and referrals.

National Children's Alliance: nationalchildrensalliance.org

A nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide training, technical assistance, and networking opportunities to communities seeking to plan, establish, and improve child advocacy centers. The centers coordinate investigation and intervention services with professionals and agencies to create a team with a child-focused approach to sexual abuse cases.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month: nsvrc.org/saam

The month of April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. This initiative aims to shine the light on sexual violence as a first step in raising awareness about the problem.

Stop It Now!: stopitnow.org

The Stop It Now! hotline provides resources for abusers and those at risk of abusing, helping them to stop the abuse and seek help. The helpline is available for abusers, for people at risk of abuse, and for their friends and family to call for information.

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- How can reading and writing make someone's life better?
- What kinds of qualities are important for a person to have if they want to achieve an important goal?
- The main figure in the story you are going to read was born in 1928. What was happening in the United States during that time period? How is it different from now? How is it the same?
- How do you expect to be treated by others? How do you feel if people don't treat you well?
- Have you ever witnessed someone or something being mistreated? What emotions emerge?
- Why is it hard to stand up to someone more powerful than you? Can it be difficult to express your feelings?
- How would you define injustice? What are some examples of injustice that you know about?

As a hook for readers, consider showing students Maya Angelou reading her poem "Still I Rise" on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qviM_GnJbOM).

You may want to have students journal their responses to these questions or pose the final question as a KWL discussion and chart so that you can refer back to it throughout and after the reading of the book to further their thinking on the topic(s).

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

- **Book Walk:** Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, author's and illustrator's dedications, foreword, illustrations, and Author's Note at the end. Display the book and read aloud the title. If students are unfamiliar with Maya Angelou, share information from the Background section of this guide or have them do some preliminary research on their own.

- **Book Title Exploration:** Talk about the title of the book. Go over the bolded words on the cover. What do the words “poet,” “performer,” “writer,” “activist,” and “humanitarian” mean? Ask students what they think this book will most likely be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that? Discuss the cover illustration and have students talk about how the picture might relate to the title of the book.
- **Author & Illustrator:** Introduce students to Bethany Hegedus (the author) and Tonya Engel (the illustrator). You can find information in the “About the Author” and “About the Illustrator” sections of this guide. Additionally, consider introducing students to Colin Johnson, Maya Angelou’s grandson. See Johnson’s speech at Angelou’s funeral at the following link (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnwTxHoxDOY>). Bethany Hegedus and Tonya Engel are also featured in the following video (https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded_document/698/BH-Rise_Long.mp4) about the artistic creation and development behind *Rise! From Caged Bird to Poet of the People, Maya Angelou*.
- Encourage students to stop and jot in their notebooks when they: Learn new information, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or see new words.
- Have students read the quote by Maya Angelou on the back of the book. What images does the quote bring to mind?

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- how does the title fit the theme of the story?
- who is Maya Angelou and how did she become an important figure?
- how did reading influence Maya Angelou’s life?
- how did race, gender, and geography shape Maya Angelou’s experiences?
- what was Maya Angelou’s impact and how is she relevant today?

Encourage students to consider why the author, Bethany Hegedus, would want to share this story with young people.

The students can also write down some questions of their own that they think the story might answer.

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below. Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Content Specific

Looms, Sycamore, Juke Joints, Number Runners, Slaughterhouse, Talcum, Chiffon, Conga Line, Tides, Jitterbug, Lindy, Milan, Venice, Paris, Cairo, Baptist, Rafters, Pulpit, Motherland

Academic

Defiant, Regal, Limbs, Heartache, Solace, Consent, Memorizes, Rhythm, Exquisite, Grief, Teeters, Accusation, Lynching, Scholarship, Occupy, Premiere, Authority, Struts, Sways, Soar, Gravelly, Gritty, Jubilant, Joyous, Transported, Activist, Civil Rights, Threatening, Shattered, Human Rights, Compassion, Trampled, Lingered, Assassinate, Mourning, Injustice, Retreat, Vows, Memoir, Slavery, Abuse, Proclaim, Legacy

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. How does the story begin? How does the story introduce Maya Angelou?
2. Is Maya older or younger than her brother is?
3. Where are Maya and her brother Bailey traveling to at the start of the story?
4. Who do Maya and Bailey live with in Stamps, Arkansas?
5. What does Momma Henderson do for a living?
6. What are Maya and Bailey's day-to-day activities while in Stamps, Arkansas?
7. How is Momma Henderson treated in her store? Why is she treated that way?
8. How does Maya feel about living in Stamps, Arkansas?
9. How old is Maya when she moves again? Where do she and Bailey move?
10. Who do Maya and Bailey live with in St. Louis?
11. How does Maya feel in St. Louis?
12. Who is Mr. Freeman?
13. What happens to Mr. Freeman after Maya is hurt?
14. Why does Maya fall silent?
15. How is Maya different the second time she moves to Stamps, Arkansas versus the first time?
16. Who is Mrs. Flowers?
17. What is the role of books in Maya's life?
18. How does Maya find her voice again?
19. Why does Momma Henderson send Maya and Bailey to live with Mother Vivian?
20. What are the jobs Maya holds in San Francisco?
21. Who is Maya's child?
22. In what cities does Maya perform?

23. What other writers and activists does Maya form a community with?
24. How does Maya react to Malcolm X's and Martin Luther King Jr.'s death?
25. Does Maya choose silence or to speak out after Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. pass away? Why?
26. Why is January 20, 1993 important?
27. How old is Maya when she dies?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What is the significance of the title *Rise! From Caged Bird to Poet of the People, Maya Angelou* mean to you after reading?
2. How do Momma Henderson and Mother Vivian influence Maya's life?
3. Why is it significant that Momma Henderson owns a general store? What was life like for African Americans during this time period, particularly African American women?
4. When the author writes, "hate and love, love and hate: the seesaw of the South," what do you think this means? What is the significance of the seesaw? Consider the illustration as well; what does the scale represent?
5. How does being a Black girl affect Maya's childhood? What obstacles does she face because of the color of her skin?
6. When Maya "calls out Mr. Freeman's name as the one who hurt her," what does "hurt" mean?
7. How does Maya cope with her feelings after being hurt by Mr. Freeman?
8. Poet and activist Audre Lorde once wrote, "Your silence will not protect you." How does Maya's story relate to Lorde's statement? In what ways does Maya struggle with silence and expressing herself?
9. What is the significance of the caged bird? Consider the illustrations that depict a cage and/or bird throughout the book. What does the cage represent? What does the bird represent?
10. Why is Maya scared of her voice?
11. What characteristics of books make Maya excited about reading and writing?
12. What financial struggles does Maya face and why?
13. What motivates Maya to be an activist?
14. What are some of the different ways in which Maya is an activist?
15. What evidence in the book demonstrates Maya's persistence and passion?
16. What is the role of community and friendship in helping Maya become who she is?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. **Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion.** You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. What do you think the author and Maya's message to the reader is? Think about possible motivations behind Hegedus's intentions to write the book and Maya Angelou's own writing. What do you think each writer wanted to tell young readers?
2. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to your own life? What do Maya's experiences, thoughts, and feelings mean to you? Have you fought for anything you believed in that was meaningful to you, like Maya? What are ways you express yourself after an emotional event?
3. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *Rise! From Caged Bird to Poet of the People, Maya Angelou*? Why did you make those connections?
4. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to what you have seen in the world or on the news? Why did *Rise! From Caged Bird to Poet of the People, Maya Angelou* make you think of that?
5. How has reading *Rise! From Caged Bird to Poet of the People, Maya Angelou* impacted your understanding of freedom? What are some other ways people define freedom? How would you define freedom?
6. Racism results in the mistreatment and isolation of people based on their race and the color of their skin. Have you or someone you know ever been treated differently based on race or the color of one's skin? How did you feel experiencing this or witnessing it? How did you react? What can we do to confront this kind of discrimination?
7. Momma Henderson, Uncle Willie, Bailey, Mrs. Flowers and others serve as inspirations to Maya at different points in the story. What does community mean to you? Think of the people in your life who you look to for guidance and support. How do these people support and help you? How have these people helped you overcome obstacles and challenges?

ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.

3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
 - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about why Maya Angelou is an important figure and why they admire her.
5. Have students illustrate a goal or dream of their own.
6. Have students give a short talk about what they think Maya's message is.
7. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.
8. Link concepts of persistence, such as Maya continuously seeking to find ways to read, to the student's learning of a new language.
9. Complete frequent checks of understanding.
10. Read aloud a sentence and have students repeat the sentence after you, pointing to each word as they speak.

Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. Maya's grandmother experienced racism and prejudice because of her race. How do you respond to racism or discrimination, when you experience it yourself and/or when you see it happening to others?
2. In what ways was Maya able to be persistent and resilient to reach her ultimate goal? Show evidence from the book.
3. Which illustration in *Rise! From Caged Bird to Poet of the People, Maya Angelou* best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it is. How does it portray that emotion?

4. How did Maya deal with being hurt by Mr. Freeman? How did people in Maya's life support her when she needed help? What did you learn about dealing with violence and pain from Maya's experience?
5. Choose an emotion that interests you: happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, frustration, hope, perseverance and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *Rise! From Caged Bird to Poet of the People, Maya Angelou*.
6. Mama Henderson sends Maya and Bailey away the second time after a young man is murdered in Stamps. Was Mama Henderson afraid for Bailey? Why? How does a racially-motivated murder affect the entire community?

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3; Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9; Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3; Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9; Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Conduct a unit on other biographies written in verse.** What do students notice about the poetry that is used to convey this person's life? How do the authors' poetic styles compare? How do the illustrations add to the story and the description of the person's life? How does the author use figurative language to write about the person's legacy (http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson79/figresource.pdf)? Why do you think the author chose to write the biography in verse and how does it compare to the other titles? Other Lee & Low biographies in verse include *I and I Bob Marley* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/i-and-i-bob-marley>), *Cool Melons—Turn to Frogs! The Life and Poems of Issa* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/cool-melons-turn-to-frogs-the-life-and-poems-of-issa>), *Love to Langston* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/love-to-langston>), *The Pot that Juan Built* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-pot-that-juan-built>), *How We are Smart* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/how-we-are-smart>) and *Martí's Song for Freedom/Martí y sus versos por la libertad* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/marti-s-song-for-freedom-marti-y-sus-versos-por-la-libertad>). Have students share their findings in a written format of their choosing.
- **As a follow-up activity, using what students learned from the biography study, have them select an artist of color and write their own biography in verse.** What did they learn about figurative language from the biographies that they can demonstrate in their own writing? What kind of resources did the authors collect about the person and how did students choose the information that they wanted to share with their readers? Students can then present their biographies during a writing celebration.
- **Challenge students to explore the characters more deeply with writing tasks that require perspective-taking:**
 - Have students think about what Momma Henderson and Maya or Bailey and Maya were thinking after Maya decided to stop speaking. Have students discuss in small groups about how their dialogues are different and reflect on how different family members would have responded to Maya's silence.
 - Students can think about how Maya and Momma's perspectives change over the course of the book. What are the different factors that cause their perspectives to change?
- **The rich, varied, and poetic language used in *Rise! From Caged Bird to Poet of***

***the People, Maya Angelou* provides an opportunity for students to develop their vocabulary skills in authentic contexts.** Challenge students to learn and practice using the academic and content-specific words listed in this teacher's guide:

- Before reading: Provide students with a list of the vocabulary words to sort into categories (e.g. very familiar, somewhat familiar, unfamiliar).
- During reading: Have students make note of the vocabulary words as they encounter them in *Rise! From Caged Bird to Poet of the People, Maya Angelou*. They can underline, highlight, or keep a log. Have students predict what the words mean based on context clues.
- After reading: Have students work in pairs to look up the definitions of the "unfamiliar" words on their combined lists. Were their predictions correct? Post the new vocabulary words on your word wall. Have students discuss how these words contributed to the overall feeling of reading the book.
- **Have students read "An Interview with Maya Angelou" and then write a response in reaction to the interview** (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-guest-room/200902/interview-maya-angelou>). What was it like to read an interview with Maya Angelou as opposed to reading a picture-book biography of Maya? What did they learn from reading the interview as opposed to reading the picture book? Students can create a graphic organizer and use columns to compare what it was like reading a primary source document, such as an interview, versus a picture-book biography. Encourage students to think about writing a nonfiction article about Maya versus a picture-book biography. How would those processes look different? Students can share their findings with a partner, small group, or the whole class.
- **As a follow-up activity, tell students to imagine they will be interviewing Maya Angelou for a local newspaper or talk show.** Ask students to develop a list of five interview questions they want to ask that they didn't learn from reading the previous interview. What do they want to learn about the Civil Rights movement, writing, forms of expression, and so on? Lead a class discussion, creating a combined list of questions and then narrowing that list down to ten questions.
- **Have students read this quote from the Foreword: "Courage is the most important of all the virtues because without courage you cannot practice any other value consistently."** Have students identify whether they agree or disagree with that statement and write about why they take that position. Students can use evidence from the text in *Rise! From Caged Bird to Poet of the People, Maya Angelou* to support, or not support, their statement.
- **As a follow-up activity, have students watch Maya Angelou's "Love Liberates" and "Be a Rainbow in Someone Else's Cloud" through Oprah's Master Class specials** (<http://www.oprah.com/own-master-class/dr-maya-angelou-love-liberates-video>) (<http://www.oprah.com/own-master-class/dr-maya-angelou-be-a-rainbow-in-someone-elses-cloud-video>). What were their takeaways from watching these videos? What does Maya mean when she says "love liberates" or "be a cloud in someone else's rainbow?" What lessons does she have

to share, and what did students learn from how her mama treated and loved her? How does it inspire them to live their own lives and interact with their families? Students can share their findings in writing and with a partner, small group, or whole class.

- **Engage in an African American Women's History unit.** Have students read *Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hammer* (<http://www.candlewick.com/cat.asp?browse=Title&mode=book&isbn=0763665312&pix=y>), *In Her Hands: The Story of Augusta Savage* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/in-her-hands>), *Catching the Moon: The Story of A Young Girl's Baseball Dream* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/catching-the-moon>) and *Zora Hurston and the Chinaberry Tree* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/zora-hurston-and-the-chinaberry-tree>), which are all biographies of African American women who faced obstacles because of racism and sexism. As students reflect on each story, ask them to compare how a clear goal helped these women conquer hardship along the way. What is the central idea of each book? How do these stories reveal the impact African American women can have on the world around them? What does each story demonstrate about persistence and passion? What does each story reveal about the value of art and storytelling? Students can share their findings in an essay or visual presentation of their choice.
- **Have students come up with a list of questions to ask author Bethany Hegedus.** Have students brainstorm a list of interview questions for Bethany. What do students want to know about the process behind writing a children's book? How did she conduct her research on Maya Angelou? Why did she want to write a book about Maya Angelou? How did she get inspiration for her other picture books? Consider contacting Bethany and inviting her to your school for an author visit (<http://www.bethanyhegedus.com/>).

Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1-3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4-6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7-9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10) (Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

- **Design a lesson or unit on Black women activists in the United States and internationally.** Learning goals should highlight key aspects of their biographies such as their origins, time period, organizational affiliations, core beliefs, critiques, political party, and media coverage, as well as connections to organizations and other activists. What challenges did they face due to racism, sexism, classism, or other factors? Consult the National Museum of African American History and Culture (https://nmaahc.si.edu/sites/default/files/images/black_women_civil_rights_movement_5.pdf) as well as UNESCO's Women in African History (<https://en.unesco.org/womeninafrica/>).
- **Have students map the places Maya lived throughout the book.** Have them create and write their own postcards from one of those places using the Postcard Creator from Read-WriteThink.org (<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/postcard-creator-30061.html>). How were these places impactful in her life? What was happening in those places during the specific time period when Maya lived? Students can write in bullets the most important moments from Maya's life and the historical events that occurred on the postcard.
- **Ask students to research Arkansas in the early 1900s.** What was going on socially and

politically at that time in history? What challenges did African Americans who lived in Arkansas face? What did towns like Stamps look like? Discuss how this information helps students understand Maya Angelou's childhood and experiences.

- **Refer to the timeline and choose a period from Maya Angelou's life.** Conduct a more detailed research study about what was happening during that particular instance. Who were other important historical figures during that time period (i.e. James Baldwin, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., etc.)? How did that time affect Maya and her life? What could she possibly have been going through emotionally? Professionally? Students can display their findings in a visual presentation format of their choosing.
- **Encourage students to research the Jim Crow era (1877–1960s) and its effects on people of the United States.** What caused Jim Crow? How did Jim Crow affect African American communities? In a graphic organizer, have students list the cause and effects of Jim Crow on Americans overall and African Americans specifically. Consult the Library of Congress "Teaching with Primary Sources: Jim Crow and Segregation" (http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/civil-rights/pdf/teacher_guide.pdf), "The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow" (<https://www.thirteen.org/wnet/jimcrow/education.html>), and "Realities of Life in the Jim Crow Era" (<https://ny.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/fyr12.socst.us.1950pres.lpreallif/realities-of-life-in-the-jim-crow-era/>).
- **Have students research the history and mission of the Harlem Writers' Guild (<http://www.theharlemwritersguild.org/index.html>).** Students can answer the following questions in their work: Who was involved? Why was it started? What impact did it have? What famous works were created in the Harlem Writers' Guild? How does it have a presence today? Students can share their findings in a visual presentation format of their choosing.

Arts/Performing Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1-3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4-6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7-9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10) (Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10) (Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Put students in small groups where each group is assigned to read and perform one of Maya Angelou's poems to the rest of the class.** Have students discuss how reading the poem out loud felt versus reading the poems to themselves. Poems can be found on Maya Angelou's Poetry Foundation page (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/maya-angelou>). Afterwards, students can view Maya Angelou reading her own poems (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qviM_GnJbOM). What was it like watching her read her own poem? How did she read the poem with emotion? What can students learn about reading poetry from watching Maya Angelou?
- **Ask students to write their own poem about a cause they care about or a difficult moment they had to overcome.** Encourage students to have their poems reflect their personal experiences and/or their feelings and opinions. Have students perform their work. Refer to ReadWriteThink.org (<http://www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/tips-howtos/help-child-write-poem-30317.html?main-tab=2>)
- **Have students watch a video of Maya Angelou's biography (<https://www.mayaange->**

leeandlow.com/biography/). Ask students to take notes while watching. How does each film depict Maya Angelou? How is she characterized? How is the information presented? What functions do the commentaries (if any) play? How accurate is the information? What is the overall message or theme? What in this film is similar to and different from *Rise! From Caged Bird to Poet of the People, Maya Angelou*?

- **Have them students discuss their reactions to the photographs at the end of the *Rise! From Caged Bird to Poet of the People, Maya Angelou*.** Why did they think those particular photographs were chosen? What stood out? How do they think it relates to what they read in the book? How do photographs and additional media, such as videos, help and complement reading a book about a particular person? Students can explain their reasoning and beliefs with a partner, small group, or the whole class.
- **Encourage students to read “On the Pulse of Morning,” the poem by Maya Angelou (<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/on-the-pulse-of-morning-2/>) that she read at the first inauguration of President Bill Clinton on January 20, 1993.** Discuss the meaning of the poem and relate it to Maya’s life story. How does this poem connect to what students read in *Rise! From Caged Bird to Poet of the People, Maya Angelou*?
- **Have students come up with questions to interview the illustrator Tonya Engel.** What is the process behind creating the illustrations with a children’s book? What medium did she choose to create the illustrations? Why? How did she select the images that appear throughout the book? How does her work showcase magical realism? Consider contacting Tonya Engel for a school visit (<http://www.tonyaengel.com/>).
- **Show students the following video (https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded_document/698/BH-Rise_Long.mp4) that features illustrator, Tonya Engel, showcasing and explaining her artistic process and development of the illustrations.** Encourage students to engage in discussion after watching the video with the following questions: Does Maya Angelou’s past mirror Tonya Engel’s past? How does Tonya Engel “rise” from the prejudice she faces as a Black woman? How does Tonya incorporate her own personal experiences in her art? What did you learn from Tonya Engel in her description of how she created her art that you wouldn’t get from reading the book?

School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

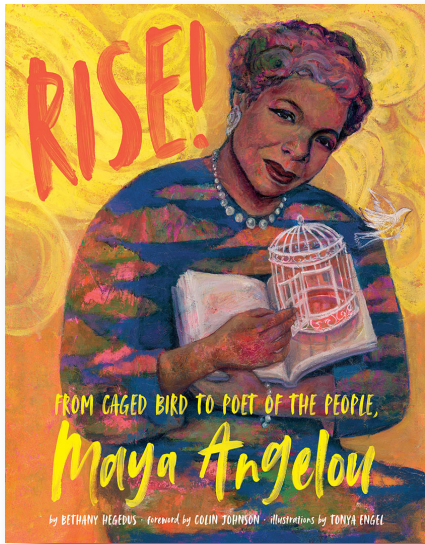
(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Ask students to create portraits of people who are their personal role models through drawing, collage, or photograph.** In writing, students should describe what actions and qualities they admire about this person. Students can write in prose or submit a poem or song.
- **Have students interview a parent, guardian, or adult mentor about their experiences with fighting for something they believe in or going through a hardship (perhaps someone alive during the 1940s, 1950s or 1960s).** How did this person react to and handle the situation when they were faced with obstacles? What do they remember

about the political climate during their youth? What advice do they have for someone trying to take up a cause and stand up for justice? What advice do they have for someone who has been abused or silenced?

- **If accessible, have students and families research other titles featuring African American women artists and/or activists.** What did they find? What African American women artists did they know about before, and who did they discover in their research? How did their legacy and impact affect others?



Ordering Information

General Order Information:
leeandlow.com/contact/ordering

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By Fax: 212-683-1894

By Mail:

Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue,
 New York, NY 10016

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bethany Hegedus is an award-winning author of picture books and middle-grade novels, including *Grandfather Gandhi* and *Alabama Spitfire*. She is well known for writing thoroughly researched, high profile picture-book biographies, and for collaborating with the family members of her subjects, such as Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi. A former educator, Hegedus teaches widely and enjoys mentoring young writers. She is the owner and creative director of the Writing Barn, a writing workshop and retreat center. She lives with her family in Austin, Texas.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Tonya Engel is a self-taught painter and children's book illustrator, including the pictures for the picture book *Our Lady of Guadalupe* and the jacket art for the novel *Hurricane Child*. Southern folk artists inspire her work. Early in her career she explored abstract painting, but soon began to concentrate on figurative form mixed with emotion and expressionistic narrative. This art style was the perfect complement to Maya Angelou's lyrical storytelling. Engel lives in Houston, Texas.

REVIEWS

VERDICT "An intense and enlightening historical fiction title that's highly recommended for all libraries." –*School Library Journal*, **starred review**

"Through Estrella's eloquent letters to her late grandmother and insightful poetry written in her journal, the sorrow and hardship of the ordeal is brought to light in a unique voice." –*Booklist*

"Enhanced by excerpts from Estrella's journal, teens will get lost in the pages of this story and truly feel for the injustice the community faced during this often forgotten chapter of American history. An incredibly relevant story, now more than ever." –*Kirkus Reviews*

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