

## “Still I Rise” by Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history  
With your bitter, twisted lies,  
You may tread me in the very dirt  
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?  
Why are you beset with gloom?  
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells  
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,  
With the certainty of tides,  
Just like hopes springing high,  
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?  
Bowed head and lowered eyes?  
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.  
Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?  
Don't you take it awful hard  
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines  
Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,  
You may cut me with your eyes,

You may kill me with your hatefulness,  
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?  
Does it come as a surprise  
That I dance like I've got diamonds  
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame  
I rise  
Up from a past that's rooted in pain  
I rise  
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,  
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
I rise  
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  
I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors  
gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the  
slave.  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise.

- Who do you think the speaker/narrator of the poem is? Is it a person? A cultural group? Identify words or phrases that help you identify the speaker/narrator.
- How does the speaker/narrator seem to feel about herself (or itself)? Draw a face that represents that emotion (e.g., a smiley face, sad face or angry face) next to a word phrase that exhibits it. Have you ever felt that way about yourself? If so, share with your partner what makes you feel that way.
- To whom do you think the poem is directed? Highlight words and phrases that support your answers and share them with your partner.
- What message is the writer trying to give to the person or group to which she is writing? Have you ever had to give a similar message to someone? If so, when?
- What do you believe the poem's overall theme is? Examples include hopelessness, strength, resiliency, spirit and anger. Write the theme you have identified at the top of the poem. Then draw an arrow to a word or phrase from the poem that supports that theme.
- Do you see this poem in a historical context? If so, explain that context to your partner.
- Finally, consider and share with your partner how your own knowledge, experiences and cultural identity influence the way you have chosen to interpret the poem. Have you interpreted it differently than your partner?