

Name: _____ Class: _____

Still I Rise

By Maya Angelou
1978

Maya Angelou (1928-2014) was an American poet, memoirist, and civil rights activist. She received dozens of awards and more than 50 honorary degrees. She was respected as a spokesperson for Black people and women, and her work centers on themes such as racism, identity, family and travel. Her poems, prose and essays are widely used in schools and universities worldwide. As you read, make note of the details that support the reasons why the speaker uses the phrases "I rise" or "I'll rise" throughout the poem.

- [1] You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod¹ me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.
- [5] Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset² with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.
- [10] Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.
- [15] Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?
- [20] 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 backyard.
- 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.
- [25] Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds



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1. past tense of "tread"
2. to be covered with

At the meeting of my thighs?

[30] 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.

[35] Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise

[40] Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

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