

The main message of still i rise poem

Literature



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In “ Still I Rise” by Maya Angelou, a speaker explains how no amount of poor treatment will keep her from achieving and living her life. Throughout the poem the African American female voice refers to someone in second person in a confident and almost mocking tone, asking if the person is offended or upset by the speaker’s sassiness, haughtiness, and sexiness. The person she can be referring to is a white man, as when the poem was written, oppression and hatred was a common struggle for most if not all African Americans. The speaker begins in the first stanza by acknowledging how she and other African American women will be documented into history from a biased and unfair view through “ bitter, twisted lies”. She uses a simile to compare how she will rise up against the negativity to how dirt rises from dust. After asking if her sassiness upsets someone and if that someone is “ beset with gloom”, the speaker goes on to explain how her sassiness looks to the outside world – like she has “ oil wells/ Pumping in [her] living room”. She emphasizes that her opposers wish to bring her down through poverty but even in the harshest conditions, she manages to appear free of financial issues. She, once again, uses a simile in the third stanza to compare her rise to the rise of the moon, sun and tides, making clear that her and other African American women’s rise is inevitable and will ultimately happen in the future. The speaker continues in the fourth stanza to emphasize how black women are expected to appear: “ bowed head and lowered eyes.../shoulders falling down.../weakened by...soulful cries”. Her questioning reveals her confidence and her sureness that she will never appear like this. She also questions if her haughtiness offends the man in the fifth stanza. She immediately follows the question with a humorous image of “ gold mines/Diggin’ in [her] own backyard,” also emitting a confident tone.

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The sixth stanza analyzes the different methods that are used to belittle the speaker and other African American women. She is shot down with words, cut with looks she receives, and killed by hate. In other words, her and other African Americans are shown hatred through the dirty looks they receive, the awful things they are told and called, and the hatred expressed towards them. Nonetheless, the hatred the speaker receives will not and cannot discourage her because she “ still, like air, [will] rise”. The speaker asks one last and final question directly to someone else: “ 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?” Maya Angelou referring to her strip club past, embodies herself through the speaker, and questions whether her dancing like she has something to show off between her legs makes the person she is speaking to uncomfortable and irritated. The eighth and final stanza of the poem she will rise out of the “ huts of history’s shame” and leave the reputation she was given from the past in the past. She will rise up “ from a past that’s rooted in pain” and leave behind nights of “ terror and fear”, in other words, accepting that she had a painful past and create a better future for herself and her race. The speaker repeats “ I rise” seven times in the final stanza to create a sense of hope and clarify that she is optimistic and sure of a bright and empowered future.

Although I am not an African American woman living through oppression and hatred, I can relate to “ Still I Rise” by Maya Angelou. Angelou wrote the poem to express how she is underestimated and often belittled. Being a usually calm and quiet individual in high school, I am often not very much noticed or people don’t expect much of me. Angelou is giving the

world a warning of her rise and her capability in this poem and even though many people know what I am capable of, I still have more to me than what meets the eye. " Still I Rise" has a confident and empowered tone and the speaker has an attitude that almost says " you don't what's coming for you". Readers will either love the confidence in Angelou's poem or be opposed to it, I, however, am a huge supporter. " Still I Rise" is a perfect representation of my capability to diminish peoples doubt in me, like Angelou most likely did.