

Maya angelou and the poetry of uplift in "still i rise"

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Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise" can be understood as the narrative of a woman who was discarded and hampered by the world and its cruel definition of beauty and success. You can discern the story of a young girl who once felt ashamed to appear in the light, and a tale of the same young lady transforming into a woman who has pride in the person she is, inside and out. Angelou seems to portray a similar theme as this powerful woman's. She wrote a poem that insists on the ability of all human kind being able to 'rise' from all circumstance. Through her use of metaphoric phrases, her choice of vivid vocabulary, and her beautiful similes, Maya Angelou crafts a poem filled with a message of strength and endurance.

An American poet of remarkable optimism, Maya Angelou can be described as a writer who understands the true usage of contradicting and powerful metaphors. In "Still I Rise," there are abundant metaphorical phrases that will keep you extremely attentive when reading them. One circumstance of such a metaphor is through her description of dirt and dust. She begins by saying "You may tread me in the very dirt" (line 3) however she finishes the sentence saying "But still like dust, I'll rise". In these two lines, she is able to address the meaning of treading someone in the dirt or in simpler terms, belittling someone and treating them as if they are minute. She is also able to show us that something as inconsistent as 'dust' can rise even if it is seen as incapable. Maya also decides to use violence as a metaphor, to show her audience that there is cruelty which is deeper than physical pain. An example of this could be when she mentions that "You may shoot me with your words" (21). This powerful line is able to show us that in every circumstance where we feel like the victim whether through speech,

emotional abuse, or physical abuse, it is still an act of inflicting hurt and it should be taken with an act of perseverance. Maya reveals to us that not all atrocities are clear cut and emphasized for us to understand, but no matter how big or small these things seem and no matter who we are we still have the ability to rise.

Certain words evoke multiple emotions for people who read them. Maya Angelou uses a wide range of vocabulary that creates a great deal of imagery and controversy in the way we view the poem. She shows us her approach to how self confidence should be expressed, using the word “sexiness” to ask the question “ Does my sexiness upset you?” (25). This question is written in a way that is meant to show that we should not be ashamed of who we are and how we look which is an apparent explanation of the main theme of the poem. Another example of a word which excites our reader brains is the word slave. This is a word which is controversial in a number of countries and can even be related to primarily in the United States. She uses the word by saying “ I am the dream and the hope of the slave” (40). This statement is added onto the poem for us to be able to understand that she has no choice but to rise because of the people who fought for her chance to be able to pursue her dreams. One last word that was used ten times in the poem was rise. Since this particular word is even in the title we as the readers can assume that it is important and relevant to the writer that we understand that we can rise. Such a diverse lexicon helps us to think about the meaning behind the written identity of her poem.

Comparisons are an important component of Maya Angelou's poetic repertoire, and are especially evident in the number of similes that Angelou used as she wrote "Still I Rise." One instance of this is when she compares walking to having oil wells. She says "'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells pumping in my living room" (7-8). Although she knows that she does not have much, she has her confidence and pride and carries herself with that because she knows that she can rise. Another example of a simile is she compares the moon and suns to herself and everyone else who is meant to rise. While keeping a clear image in our minds, she says "Just like moons and like suns, with the certainty of tides, Just like hopes springing high, Still I'll rise" (9-12). Nature, particularly the different types she mentions in this stanza show an example of common things that were created have the automatic ability to rise, this should give us the realization that rising is actually a simple task.

Though falling down and getting back up is a hard task to handle, Angelou shows us that with the right amount of self assurance we can do anything and we can rise from any situation. She gives us a proper lesson on what it means to control how we live our lives, either constantly complaining of our struggles or acknowledging them and choosing to rise above them. Maya Angelou wrote a poem filled with a message of strength and endurance through her use of metaphoric phrases, her choice of vivid vocabulary, and her beautiful similes.