

Maya angelou graduation essay sample

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Graduation is an important transition time in every person's life. It is about moving on to something better and more important and to use your knowledge to achieve life goals. This is what the children attending the grammar school believed as well, including Maya Angelou. Given from her point of view, the story Graduation has ethos because as an African American girl, she shared the same thoughts and feelings as everyone standing on the stage or in the auditorium when Mr. Edward Donleavy passively demeaned everything the students had worked so hard to achieve. This story is told by a woman who had surpassed all of the difficulties in life to get to this day, and through her learned, and personal, figurative, and detailed writing, has been able to pass on both the ill feelings and the warm feelings of that experience from Mr. Donleavy's speech, to that of Henry Reed.

What Angelou does best is evoke feelings and empathy from her readers. By relating to them and broadcasting her emotions for everyone to see, she emphasizes her sense of being wronged. When she is describing the excitement and anxiety in the people around her, she is relating to what everyone feels when they are about to graduate. "The children in Stamps trembled visibly with anticipation...the whole young population had come down with graduation epidemic." (22). This is the opening of the story. Immediately what does it make you think about? Graduation. Your graduation, whether in the past or the future. This helps her connect with her readers from the very beginning before them knowing the full setting of the story or who she is.

Figurative language also allows her readers to picture the events and is prominent throughout Angelou's work: " She smocked the yoke into tiny crisscrossing puckers.... embroidered raised daisies...added a crocheted cuff..." (24). This was an entire paragraph dedicated to the detail her mother added to her dress. This concrete information she included only added to the believability of her story and the significance of the moment. When describing the scents coming from the home economics building with such preciseness, she clarifies the fact that everything is clear and the little things made all the difference on that memorable day. Everything in the story was told with such intricate detail. ! Even the minuscule features of her writing surprisingly gave off small hints of something more.

When Angelou states " I was headed for the freedom of open fields." (24) it is somewhat a reminder of slavery. Although in reality it is talking about freedom from school, there is a long history of slavery in America and the inequality of African Americans to whites; when the word " freedom" is used when referring to African Americans, many tend to associate it with freedom from slavery. This may evoke pity from the reader, or simply add intrigue from how she connects it with school. Inequality between African Americans and whites was emphasized strongly by Angelou. When Angelou is walking up the hill to her school, she describes the gloomy atmosphere surrounding it—foreshadowing what is to come. When inside the auditorium she also notes that something feels off. Once the two white men walk on stage, the entire atmosphere returns to this gloomy awareness.

The use of “ Amen” throughout the speech is a sad reminder of their inequality: it was an automatic response as well as showing how they were lesser than him since no one contended anything he said. ! Angelou describes the feeling she got when listening to Mr. Donleavy’s speech (“ The man’s dead words fell like bricks around the auditorium and too many settled in my belly.”) (29). The fact that everyone just accepted that he was devaluing their achievements and their possibilities made her resign to it as well. While reading this section it makes the reader sympathize with her and brings them closer together.

Another moment in which—although she might not be connecting with the reader—she evokes emotion is when she is explicitly recounting Henry Reed’s speech. “ I looked up and saw Henry Reed, the conservative, the proper, the A student, turn his back to the audience and turn to us...and sing...the Negro national anthem.” (31). Many readers are not African American and thus do not know their national anthem, nonetheless, the way in which Angelou narrates this section is extremely figurative. It is easier to picture what is happening and it brings tears to my eyes reading it.

Figurative language is prominent throughout Angelou’s work: “ She smocked the yoke into tiny crisscrossing puckers.... embroidered raised daisies... added a crocheted cuff...” (24). This was an entire paragraph dedicated to the detail her mother added to her dress. This concrete information she included only added to the believability of her story and the significance of the moment. When describing the scents coming from the home economics building with such preciseness, she clarifies the fact that everything is clear

and the little things made all the difference on that memorable day. Everything in the story was told with such intricate detail.

Even so, the minuscule features surprisingly gave off small hints of something more. When Angelou states “ I was headed for the freedom of open fields.” (24) it is somewhat a reminder of slavery. Although in reality it is talking about freedom from school, there is a long history of slavery in America and the inequality of African Americans to whites; when the word “ freedom” is used when referring to African Americans, many tend to associate it with freedom from slavery. This may evoke pity from the reader, or simply add intrigue from how she connects it with school.

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The fact that everyone just accepted that he was devaluing their achievements and their possibilities made her resign to it as well. While reading this section it makes the reader sympathize with her and brings

them closer together. ! Angelou's entire story was about sharing her experience with the outside world and open them up to the fact that African Americans are not below us and are not lesser.

It makes people realize that what they work so hard to achieve—what anyone works so hard to achieve—can be spit on once and affect their goals and aspirations to no end. It makes people think twice before commenting about someone else and possibly ruining their mood at the least. Although Angelou may have been put down once however, the fact that she became a famous author and we as her readers admire her work, shows what she showed in her story; people can do whatever they desire to do by reaching high. Her incredible voice and passionate tone has the power to influence her readers, which is the main point isn't it?