

# Analysis of the poem "still i rise" by maya angelou

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



Analysis of the poem, " Still I Rise" Maya Angelou's poem, " Still I Rise" may contain different meanings depending on the reader who interprets it. It is a poem that talks about keeping one's head up no matter how hard the situation they come from and not being affected by the problems on the side. Maya Angelou was part of a generation wherein the black race was still seen as " inferior". During that time, the " truth" is usually kept hidden favoring the more superior groups of people. Hence, the first lines of her poem: " You may write me down in history With your bitter, twisted lies, You may trod me in the very dirt

But still, like dust, I rise. " Maya Angelou was raped as a child. Thus, the line, " You may trod me in the very dirt" may be connected with the way she was treated when she was a child. On a larger sense, she may also be talking about the way her race was treated during the time of slavery. In the next stanza of her poem, Maya Angelou uses comparisons to depict a certain situation that she wants to show. "'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells Pumping in my living room. " In this certain line, Maya Angelou uses symbolism to express the way she rises above the situation. Oil wells are a symbol of prosperity.

The richest countries in the world are oil selling countries. Thus, when Maya Angelou said that she walks like she has oil wells inside her living room, the reader will picture her walking like a rich girl, with her head held high. In the next stanza, she says: " Just like moons and like suns, With the certainty of tides, Just like hopes springing high, Still I'll rise. " The word " certainty" is very important in this stanza. Using this word, she is expressing that no

matter how hard the situation she faces, she will rise above it with certainty.

In the third stanza, the author asks: " Did you want to see me broken?

Bowed head and lowered eyes? Shoulders falling down like teardrops.

Weakened by my soulful cries. Maya Angelou's description in this stanza is the picture of defeat. This may literally be the picture of the slave who was abused or tortured, a picture of a broken person. By broken, she was not referring to broken limbs; she was referring more to a broken spirit, a broken heart. This picture may have also reflected her experience when she was abused as a child. According to her biography, she became mute for five years. That only shows how broken her spirit was through that experience.

And this she effectively described in her poem. When we further analyze these lines, this brokenness and defeat is also an image that applies to every person who undergoes troubles in life and therefore, this poem is also applicable to everyone who is going through something. In the lines that follow, it can be noticed that Maya Angelou loved to compare her feelings with material things. For example, just like when she compared her " head held high" attitude to having an oil well in her living room, she compared her joy to a gold mine: " Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines

Diggin' in my own back yard. " In another two lines she writes: " Does it come as a surprise That I dance like I've got diamonds At the meeting of my thighs? " In the lines mentioned above, Maya Angelou is expressing her toughness of character, that despite the goings-on in her life, she still laugh likes the rich man does and she still dances like the rich man dances, that is, without carrying the shame of the deprived and abused person. In another

stanza, she writes: " You may shoot me with your words, You may cut me with your eyes,

You may kill me with your hatefulness" In the above-mentioned lines, Maya Angelou is saying that not only guns or knives can destroy a person. She is not talking about physical hurt but more of a deeper, emotional hurt. She is saying that one's words can destroy a person, one's mere look can cut through a person's soul like a knife, and hatred can kill - she is not talking about physical death here but she is talking more about the death of her spirit because of the emotional pain that was brought about by certain rejections throughout her lifetime.

In the last stanza of her poem, Maya Angelou writes: Out of the huts of history's shame I rise Up from a past that's rooted in pain I rise Here, I think she is talking about her race and their bout with slavery. She describes it as shameful and painful. And then, in the next lines, she tried to give hope to her race - that they will rise above this shame and pain. " I am a black ocean, leaping and wide, Welling and swelling I bear in the tide" In the lines above, she compared herself to an ocean, constantly going with the highs and lows of the tide, " welling and swelling".

The next few lines talks about the hope that she gives to her race and her yearning to leave behind thememoriesof " terror and fear" which in slavery, means constant abuse and torture. In herpersonal experience, this would mean leaving behind the painful memory of being an abused child. All these she would leave behind and face a new " daybreak that's wonderfully clear". Leaving behind nights of terror and fear I rise Into a daybreak that's

wondrously clear I rise In the last line, she said: I am the dream and the hope of the slave

In this, Maya Angelou was trying to set an example to her race on rising above very hard situations. This can be shown through the works that she did in her later life. She became a voice of her race through her poetry and other literary works. Through her life, she gave hope to her race and to other people as well. She also gave hope to every person who went through the pain of child abuse and to every person who went through a rough patch in their lives and wanted to make their lives better.