

# Maya angelou: interpretation of poetry

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Maya Angelou Dr. Maya Angelou, born April 24, 1928, was a phenomenal poet, memoirist, novelist, educator, dramatist, producer, actress, historian, filmmaker, and civil rights activist known as one of the greatest voices of renaissance. She experienced harsh racial discrimination throughout her lifetime, and yet in the midst of her trials she never loses self-respect or confidence. Through her powerful delivery of words she dually embodies her captivating personality and demeanor. Altogether, her works are representations of who she is and what she believes in.

Sandra Cookson is the author of an article featured in World Literature Today, published by the University of Oklahoma, who does a wonderful job of illuminating Angelou's impactful messages that lie within her poem "Still I Rise". In addition, Kelly Holland Cecil, a student who attended University of North Carolina in 1998, conducted a thorough analysis on many of Angelou's Poems. Cecil provides a door of understanding as she analytically goes into depth on explaining Dr. Angelou's poem, "Phenomenal Woman".

Through careful study and analysis of Angelou's poetry followed by research obtained from research an understanding of who she was and the message she was trying to get across may be developed. To begin with, Angelou believes that being "phenomenal" does not come from the beauty that is accepted from others but from one's genuine uniqueness. The persona in "Phenomenal Woman," portrays a strong, proud woman of modesty and humility which is undoubtedly Angelou. She displays this in the first line of the poem, when she says "Pretty women wonder where my secret lies. The auditor purposely separates herself from the "in-crowd", which in this case is "pretty women." Thus, suggesting that she does not even consider herself

as attractive. Then, in line 2 she reassures the auditor of her disposition when she writes " I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size. " After initially reading these first two lines, it is possible for them to be mistaken for insecurities, but as one reads further, it is clear that Angelou is not ashamed of her individuality but indeed exuberantly modest.

It's in the reach of my arms The p of my hips, The stride of my step, The curl of my lips. I'm a woman Phenomenally. Phenomenal woman, That's me. After reading the lines above, there is no doubt that she does not view herself as a woman with model beauty, but, in her perspective, a phenomenal woman. Looking at lines 1-4 above, rather than the traditional looks that are generally accepted from men of female models, she illuminates the less noticeable features of her body that make her unique in a special way.

Although an exact number was unmentioned, she specifically refers to her height in line 3 above. Angelou was an imposing woman standing at about six feet tall(Cecil 1998). This is yet another display of Angelou's character proving that she is proud of the physical features she has that make her inimitable. Furthermore, the Angelou uses repetition which according to Cecil " helps give the poem a flow and makes it seem more familiar and lyrical. " The person repeats the following lines at the end of each stanza: I'm a woman Phenomenally Phenomenal woman

That's me. Due to Angelou's history of musicality she incorporates this style of repetition just as a hook or chorus to a song. She does in such a manner that almost forces the auditor to say it with her and eventually acknowledge that she is not a " pretty woman", but " a phenomenal woman/ phenomenally". According to Cecil, This may have been influenced by <https://assignbuster.com/maya-angelou-interpretation-of-poetry/>

her career as a dancer and as a Broadway actress. Furthermore, Cookson quotes that, " The musical currents of blues and jazz, the rhythm of rap songs, and the language of the Bible mingle in her poems. Through the creativity of similes and imagery in Angelou's poem " Still I Rise" she is able to paint a picture of herself that reveals her as a strong woman of color by displaying her level of determination and perseverance to overcome racial discrimination. In the first stanza of this particular poem, she has an attitude that exemplifies her strong-willed character as she refers to the many things that she has encountered throughout her lifetime. In line 4 of the poem she declares that despite her circumstance " still" like the " dust" of the ground she shall rise.

Thus, proving statements made by Cookson when she writes "... The language of the bible mingle in her poems". Biblically speaking, God made mankind through the dust of the ground, so in essence Angelou is using imagery to show that just as God made man rise from dust, no matter what force is against her she can still rise up and be triumphant. By taking the lyrics of Angelou's poem into consideration, one may notice that she expresses herself in a way that corresponds to the harsh discrimination she endured.

In the words of Cookson, Still I rise is " a poem about the survival of black women despite every kind of humiliation... America has subjected them since the days of slavery"(800). With this statement in mind, there should be no question of the auditor in her poem, as it seems to be the predominating white race in America. In the following lines Angelou reveals her strength to tolerate discrimination: 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.

Angelou's takes this as an opportunity to convey her feelings towards the discrimination She has endured. In the above stanza, she illuminates that she has been " hated on", " looked down upon", and " spoken to harshly" because of her color. But, she doesn't allow herself to be broken by the circumstances she faces. In any event, she " rises". By venting on Angelou's poetry analytically, one can see that her character symbolizes a woman who is strong, tolerant, modest, and perseverant in the face ofadversity. In her poem " Still I Rise" she goes on to say " I am the dream and the hope of the slave".

This is Angelou bold stating that where others have failed, she has prospered because of her perseverance and commitment to herself to be who she is---" A Phenomenal Woman, Phenomenally". Works Cited Cecil, Kelly Holland. Maya Angelou -1928. 1998. 20 4 2012 . Cookson, Sandra. World Literature Today. Vol. Vol. 69. Autumn: World Literature Today, 1995. Penguin Creative. Dr. Maya Angelou, The Official Website . 2012 . .