

Literature 2.3.3

Literature



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Poetry and Mood The mood of Maya Angelou poem “ On the Pulse of Morning” in general has a mood of optimism and satisfaction, though it also has its low points. It is a celebration of the changes that our society has made in the respect of diversity, but also has an acknowledgment of how much more progress does need to be made. Angelou does not shy away from expressing sadness and disappointment at historical events that brought our society to a point where we needed to actively work on respecting diversity.

One of the moods in the poem is actually a sense of closure as well as something slightly aggressive. When Angelou states

“ Come, you may stand upon my
Back and face your distant destiny,
But seek no haven in my shadow.

I will give you no more hiding place down here,”

she is creating a rather dark mood about historical events. She is saying that those times are over, and while she is not holding past actions against anyone, in the future she will not allow them to re-occur. The days when people could use visible racial differences to assert superiority over one another have ended, and people will fight to ensure this state of affairs remains.

“ On the Pulse of Morning” also includes a sense of longing. Angelou wants to see a day when all people can be united, and when discrimination can truly be a thing of the past. She gives a listing of different groups that live in the United States:

“ So say the Asian, the Hispanic, the Jew
The African, the Native American, the Sioux,

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The Catholic, the Muslim, the French, the Greek
The Irish, the Rabbi, the Priest, the Sheik,
The Gay, the Straight, the Preacher,
The privileged, the homeless, the Teacher.”

as well as naming many of the Native American tribes who have been all but lost in history:

“ You, who gave me my first name, you,
Pawnee, Apache, Seneca, you
Cherokee Nation, who rested with me”.

Giving these groups all together in this way indicates that Angelou wants them in our minds in the same thought and in our speech in the same breath. She gives us a sense of loss and yearning with the Native Americans, since we can never be united with those lost people, and we can never be united with those of the first group from the past.

However, Angelou's poem is also about hope, and about looking forward instead of back.

“ Yet, today I call you to my riverside,
If you will study war no more. Come.”

Letting go of past conflicts is vital to moving forward, and Angelou says with hope that she is willing to let bygones be bygones. Perhaps the future will be better, she says, and we must take that chance. She also references this idea in the later verse

" Each new hour holds new chances
for new beginnings."

Angelou also expresses a feeling of pride at being an American and at how far we have come as a society.

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“ You may have the grace to look up and out
And into your sisters eyes, and into
Your brothers face, your country
And say simply
Very simply
With hope --
Good morning.”

While this stanza is also an expression of hope, it suggests that some of us have already come far enough to consider every neighbor our brother or sister. Americans may still need to work harder at acceptance, but we have already succeeded greatly in a short period of time. Angelous poem points out that this is an accomplishment of which to be proud.