

# Characterization in i know why the caged bird sings assignment

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Characterization is a physical description of a character, the way the character acts and the personality traits of the character. Bailey Johnson Jr. is the older brother of Marguerite Ann Johnson, the protagonist of the novel, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou. In order for Maya to become independent, she needs to separate from Bailey. Their original relationship was holding her back. Bailey is described in the book as a bright, clever and light-spirited person. Maya needs to separate from Bailey because she relies on him to fight her battles.

He is also a “ God-like” figure to her, which is an unhealthy obsession. Bailey also keeps Maya from believing in herself because Maya puts too much faith in him. Bailey influences Maya both positively and negatively throughout the novel, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Bailey influences Maya negatively because she depends on him to defend herself in her battles. Maya says in the book that, “ Bailey was the greatest person in my life. ” Bailey is really the only person for Maya in her life and she looks up to him. He is basically the big brother of Maya’s dreams.

Bailey gives Maya that confidence and couragement such as getting back at Maya’s family members and friends who tease her about her imperfections. In the text, Maya describes one of his actions when she explains, “ When our elders said unkind things about my features, Bailey would wink at me from across the room, and I knew that it was a matter of time before he would take revenge. ” This is one of the key examples of Maya relying on Bailey too much and giving him that faith instead of herself. Since Maya is relying on her older brother to defend her, she could never become a stronger person individually.

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Maya is not capable of becoming more independent because she is ignorant of her own reliance on Bailey. Bailey is described in the book by Maya as a savior in her eyes, which is an unhealthy obsession for Maya. She believes that he is a “ God-like” figure in her eyes. This is unhealthy for Maya because she puts too much faith into Bailey and not in herself. Maya describes Bailey as a savior when she explains that, “ It made me want to live a Christian life just to show God I was grateful”, meaning that she wants to show God that she was thankful for a brother like Bailey.

Not only does Bailey influence Maya to be herself and not to worry about the thoughts of others, but he also influences her to be a religious person and walk the path of righteousness. This is one of the reasons why Maya wants to become a person like Bailey because he gets into trouble and misbehaves but yet he prays aloud in church. In the text, Angelou describes that, “ Bailey could count on very few punishments for his consistently outrageous misbehavior.... He could even pray aloud in church and was apt at stealing pickles. This quote also explains how Maya seeks to become more like Bailey. She wishes to be more like Bailey because he is a pure soul to her and she is desperate for that purity in her life. As Bailey and Maya both begin to grow up and mature in their own ways, Maya begins to become independent. One of the key challenges that Maya has faced that has made her independent was with Daddy Bailey. Daddy Bailey became very drunk one night while they were in Mexico and Maya had no choice but to drive, even though this was her first time driving, both of them back home.

This was the first time that Maya was actually in control without the help of Bailey. This is important towards Maya because she begins to slowly separate from Bailey. This is important towards Maya because she begins to realize that she doesn't need Bailey as help to her. She begins to realize that she doesn't need her big brother as a crutch anymore. In order for Maya to become independent, she needs to separate from Bailey. Their original relationship was holding her back.

By the end of the book, Maya still looks up to Bailey for advice on her pregnancy and Bailey still has that influence on Maya. As Bailey continues to grow up, he becomes wiser about his life and the choices he makes in them. He continues to be the big brother she has always loved. The evolution of Bailey is important because it shows the contrast of independence and maturity between himself and Maya. The change in characterization of Bailey throughout the book influences Maya because when Maya and Bailey grow apart, Maya becomes more independent.