

"i know why the caged bird sings" by maya angelou essay sample



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Jennifer Lee writes about the use of different spelling and writing mistakes that were a new phenomenon in 2002. She writes about the teacher, Jacqueline Harding; an eighth-grade teacher, who always shows her new students each year what different common mistakes are that are made. For example, " their, there, and they're" or " your and you're" would be common mistakes to see on student writing. In addition to those common mistakes, a new type of mistakes has begun cropping up with Harding's students. They were apparently being made because students were instant messaging and texting so much that they became too desensitized to proper grammar.

Examples of these grammatical mistakes are: u, r, ur, b4, wuz, cuz, and 2. When Harding asked her students which of them made mistakes like these, in order to cut time down, most of them raised their hands. She told them that if she saw it in their work, she would take points off. Unfortunately, the teenagers seemed to ignore warnings, and continued to use them, possibly unconsciously. One teen, Eve Brecker, said that she became so used to abbreviating things that she just started to do it unconsciously on school reports, etc. Eve once handed in a midterm exam that was filled with texting shorthand. Her excuse was that she had an hour to write an essay, and she just wanted to finish before time was up.

Additionally, even terms that can't be expressed verbally were making their ways into papers, such as " smiley faces" (AKA emoticons). Ms. Harding says that to them, it's not wrong, it's acceptable because it's in their culture. Harding doesn't understand the reason for abbreviating " was" to " wuz," because it's not really even an abbreviation; it takes the same amount of letters.

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Deborah Bova, another teacher, thought that her eyes were failing her when she read the sentence, " B4 we perform, ppl have 2 practice." When she summoned the student to the desk to talk about it, she realized that the student thought that she was out of touch. Students were astonished when things like this were pointed out to them, because they were so used to reading it that they didn't even realize it was wrong any more. Spell checkers can't always notice mistakes like this, because they don't mark single letters down as wrong.

While some teachers find this new style of writing very rude and careless, Erika Varres, a professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, tries to turn it into a positive teaching moment. She tries to help them improve.

Maya Angelou wrote an amazing and entertaining autobiography titled *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*, about her hard life growing up as a black girl from the South. Among the hardships are things known as " cages" as stated from a metaphor from Paul Dunbar's poem " Sympathy." " Cages" are things that keep people from succeeding in life and being everything they want to be. Some of Maya Angelou's cages include being black in the 1940's and her overbearing grandmother. In my life, a " cage" is my young age, that restricts me from carrying on with goals I hope to achieve.

A major " cage" from Maya Angelou's youth was that she was black in a prejudice southern town. Maya has recounted in her book the times when she was discriminated against. When she was working for a white woman named Mrs. Viola Cullinan, Mrs. Cullinan started calling her Mary, " That's

[Margaret] too long. She's Mary from now on."(pp. 91) One of the most important aspects of a person is their name. It is a great insult for someone to change your name, without your consent. If Maya was white Mrs. Cullinan would not have changed her name and she did it only because of her racist friends and attitudes. Even some of the white adults who supposedly supported her had hidden their racist messages in seemingly nice speeches. Maya conveys the words of Mr. Edward Donleavy, one of the people in the masquerade, " The white kids were going to have a chance to become Galileos and Madame Curies and Edisons and Gauguins, and our boys (the girls weren't even in on it) would try to be Jesse Owens and Joe Louises."(pp. 151) Maya was forced to listen to Mr. Donleavy's stereotypes of how white children could be thinkers and black children can only be athletes.

What was supposed to be an encouraging speech, which Mr. Donleavy probably thought was sincere, turned out to be just another racist and stereotypical speech. Maybe it was not so much Mr. Donleavy's fault, because he was trying to be nice, but more of his upbringing. Racism was the most prominent of Maya's " cages" and it is probably due to the society and ignorant ideas.

The second major cage of Maya Angelou was that she has a very strict, religious, and overbearing grandmother. It is important that a child's guardian be caring and strict but that guardian should not be too strict. After coming back from Mrs. Flowers' house bringing Bailey some cookies, Maya is disciplined by momma, " I repeated, ' I said, Bailey by the way, Mrs. Flowers sent you-' [Momma responds] ' Thats what I thought you said. Go on and <https://assignbuster.com/i-know-why-the-caged-bird-sings-by-maya-angelou-essay-sample/>

take off your dress. I'm going to get a switch."(pp. 85) Maya's grandmother was punishing Maya for just using a common day phrase that seems to be a little harsh. Maya's grandmother was trying to raise her well but what she did could actually do the opposite of what was intended. Just when she was making progress getting out of her depression and taking a step forward with Mrs. Flowers, the punishment may have actually made Maya take a step back.

Another thing that Momma does, to try to do help Maya but was actually doing the opposite was when, " If they [feet] weren't clean enough for her, she took the switch and woke up the offender with a few aptly place burning reminders."(pp. 21) A switching for dirty feet seems to be a little extreme. Again she was trying to do good but in turn may be doing the opposite by being too severe in punishing for a small offense. It is important to be clean, but a switching because of not being clean is just a little harsh. The punishment must fit the offense and this punishing could do more harm than good though it may not be momma's fault but that of her time and heritage. Maya's grandmother being too strict, even though she meant good, was a factor that keeps Maya from achieving.

Maya Angelou was not the only person who has cages, I also have them. My " cage" is a fairly common one; my young age. Age is a barrier that stops me from doing things. A job is something I strongly desire to start saving money, and to have a little on the side. I can't apply hardly anywhere because the average hiring age is 16. I believe if I had a job it would better help me understand what it means to be independent, and to take care of myself a

little more. Something else that's upsetting about my age is the fact that people belittle my opinions or ideas simply because I'm younger.

Many people do not listen to ideas of a young person, thinking that he or she does not understand, even I sometimes have done this with younger kids.

Many people equate youth with immaturity, which is sometimes true but is not always true. This is somewhat similar, but not as severe, as the experience that Maya had with Mr. Donleavy, being caught in a stereotype.

Something I am thankful for is my school. I am free to express myself and the sky is truly the limit. Most teachers at my school are very understanding of my desires. They take away the " cage" of ignorance that most adults overlook because of age.