

***I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou (Published by _____)**

Approved for use in Honors Communication Arts II

Summary

The first of five autobiographical works, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* focuses on the recollections and adult understanding of Maya Angelou. Growing up female and black in America in the 1930s and 1940s, she is sent at a young age to live with her grandmother in Arkansas, where she learns a great deal from this exceptional woman and the tightly knit black community there. These very lessons carry her through the hardships she endures later in life, including a tragic occurrence while visiting her mother in St. Louis and her formative years spent in California.

Connection to the Curriculum

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings is an autobiography, requiring students to develop additional reading skills. Told through the eyes of a young, African-American female, this coming of age memoir gives personal insights into contemporary societal issues and events, including prejudice, tolerance, the Civil Rights Movement, migration, prohibition, and the culture of the South. Issues/themes presented in Angelou's narrative allow students to connect to their personal and cultural experiences and viewpoints. Angelou's use of dialect provides a model for students to examine before writing oral history papers.

Standards

Course Objectives (Benchmarks)

Reading: 1.2- The students read fluently. 1.3- The students expand vocabulary. 1.4- The students comprehend a variety of texts.

Literature: 2.1-The students use literary concepts to interpret and respond to text. The students understand the significance of literature and its contributions to various cultures.

Writing: 3.1- The students use writing as a tool for learning throughout the curriculum.

Possible Skills Taught (Indicators)

Reading:

1.3.2- The student engages in connotative vocabulary practice.

1.4.10- The student generates and responds logically to literal, inferential, evaluative, and critical thinking questions before, during, and after reading the text.

Literature:

2.1.1- The student identifies and describes different types of characters.

2.1.2- The student analyzes the historical, social, and cultural contextual aspects of the setting and its influence on characters and events in the story.

2.1.3- The student analyzes and evaluates plot elements.

2.1.5- The student identifies, analyzes, and evaluates the use of literary devices in a text.

2.2.6- The student recognizes ways that literature from different cultures presents similar themes differently across various texts/genres.

Writing:

3.2.2- The student generates ideas through the writing process.

A Note on the Text: (The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

This autobiography contains descriptions of violence (including sexual child abuse, murder, and other abuse) and other sexual language. Mature situations include those involving alcohol, questioning of religion, and questioning of sexuality. Strong language includes profanity using both the "f" and "n" words and other racial slurs. All of this content is in the context of Maya honestly and realistically speaking of what she's experienced in life neither sparing nor softening the tragedies for the reader.

AP Connections

Written by an acclaimed, award-winning author, this work often appears on college-bound reading lists and has been referenced on Advanced Placement tests.

Additional Unit Design Connections

Coming soon:

To be completed during future curriculum development activities