

Classic Poetry Series

Maya Angelou
- poems -

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Maya Angelou(4 April 1928 - 28 May 2014)

(born Marguerite Ann Johnson on April 4, 1928) was an American author and poet who has been called "America's most visible black female autobiographer" by scholar Joanne M. Braxton. She is best known for her series of six autobiographical volumes, which focus on her childhood and early adult experiences. The first and most highly acclaimed, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), tells of her first seventeen years. It brought her international recognition, and was nominated for a National Book Award. She has been awarded over 30 honorary degrees and was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for her 1971 volume of poetry, *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water 'Fore I Die*.

Angelou was a member of the Harlem Writers Guild in the late 1950s, was active in the Civil Rights movement, and served as Northern Coordinator of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Since 1991, she has taught at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina where she holds the first lifetime Reynolds Professorship of American Studies. Since the 1990s she has made around eighty appearances a year on the lecture circuit. In 1993, Angelou recited her poem "On the Pulse of Morning" at President Bill Clinton's inauguration, the first poet to make an inaugural recitation since Robert Frost at John F. Kennedy's inauguration in 1961. In 1995, she was recognized for having the longest-running record (two years) on The New York Times Paperback Nonfiction Bestseller List.

With the publication of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Angelou was heralded as a new kind of memoirist, one of the first African American women who was able to publicly discuss her personal life. She is highly respected as a spokesperson for Black people and women. Angelou's work is often characterized as autobiographical fiction. She has, however, made a deliberate attempt to challenge the common structure of the autobiography by critiquing, changing, and expanding the genre. Her books, centered on themes such as identity, family, and racism, are often used as set texts in schools and universities internationally. Some of her more controversial work has been challenged or banned in US schools and libraries.

A Brave And Startling Truth

We, this people, on a small and lonely planet
Traveling through casual space
Past aloof stars, across the way of indifferent suns
To a destination where all signs tell us
It is possible and imperative that we learn
A brave and startling truth

And when we come to it
To the day of peacemaking
When we release our fingers
From fists of hostility
And allow the pure air to cool our palms

When we come to it
When the curtain falls on the minstrel show of hate
And faces sooted with scorn are scrubbed clean
When battlefields and coliseum
No longer rake our unique and particular sons and daughters
Up with the bruised and bloody grass
To lie in identical plots in foreign soil

When the rapacious storming of the churches
The screaming racket in the temples have ceased
When the pennants are waving gaily
When the banners of the world tremble
Stoutly in the good, clean breeze

When we come to it
When we let the rifles fall from our shoulders
And children dress their dolls in flags of truce
When land mines of death have been removed
And the aged can walk into evenings of peace
When religious ritual is not perfumed
By the incense of burning flesh
And childhood dreams are not kicked awake
By nightmares of abuse

When we come to it
Then we will confess that not the Pyramids

With their stones set in mysterious perfection
Nor the Gardens of Babylon
Hanging as eternal beauty
In our collective memory
Not the Grand Canyon
Kindled into delicious color
By Western sunsets

Nor the Danube, flowing its blue soul into Europe
Not the sacred peak of Mount Fuji
Stretching to the Rising Sun
Neither Father Amazon nor Mother Mississippi who, without favor,
Nurture all creatures in the depths and on the shores
These are not the only wonders of the world

When we come to it
We, this people, on this minuscule and kithless globe
Who reach daily for the bomb, the blade and the dagger
Yet who petition in the dark for tokens of peace
We, this people on this mote of matter
In whose mouths abide cankerous words
Which challenge our very existence
Yet out of those same mouths
Come songs of such exquisite sweetness
That the heart falters in its labor
And the body is quieted into awe

We, this people, on this small and drifting planet
Whose hands can strike with such abandon
That in a twinkling, life is sapped from the living
Yet those same hands can touch with such healing, irresistible tenderness
That the haughty neck is happy to bow
And the proud back is glad to bend
Out of such chaos, of such contradiction
We learn that we are neither devils nor divines

When we come to it
We, this people, on this wayward, floating body
Created on this earth, of this earth
Have the power to fashion for this earth
A climate where every man and every woman
Can live freely without sanctimonious piety

Without crippling fear

When we come to it

We must confess that we are the possible

We are the miraculous, the true wonder of this world

That is when, and only when

We come to it.

Maya Angelou

A Conceit

Give me your hand

Make room for me
to lead and follow
you
beyond this rage of poetry.

Let others have
the privacy of
touching words
and love of loss
of love.

For me
Give me your hand.

Maya Angelou

A Plagued Journey

There is no warning rattle at the door
nor heavy feet to stomp the foyer boards.
Safe in the dark prison, I know that
light slides over
the fingered work of a toothless
woman in Pakistan.
Happy prints of
an invisible time are illumined.
My mouth agape
rejects the solid air and
lungs hold. The invader takes
direction and
seeps through the plaster walls.
It is at my chamber, entering
the keyhole, pushing
through the padding of the door.
I cannot scream. A bone
of fear clogs my throat.
It is upon me. It is
sunrise, with Hope
its arrogant rider.
My mind, formerly quiescent
in its snug encasement, is strained
to look upon their rapturous visages,
to let them enter even into me.
I am forced
outside myself to
mount the light and ride joined with Hope.

Through all the bright hours
I cling to expectation, until
darkness comes to reclaim me
as its own. Hope fades, day is gone
into its irredeemable place
and I am thrown back into the familiar
bonds of disconsolation.
Gloom crawls around
lapping lasciviously
between my toes, at my ankles,

and it sucks the strands of my
hair. It forgives my heady
fling with Hope. I am
joined again into its
greedy arms.

Maya Angelou

Ain't That Bad?

Dancin' the funky chicken
Eatin' ribs and tips
Diggin' all the latest sounds
And drinkin' gin in sips.

Puttin' down that do-rag
Tighten' up my 'fro
Wrappin' up in Blackness
Don't I shine and glow?

Hearin' Stevie Wonder
Cookin' beans and rice
Goin' to the opera
Checkin' out Leontyne Price.

Get down, Jesse Jackson
Dance on, Alvin Ailey
Talk, Miss Barbara Jordan
Groove, Miss Pearlle Bailey.

Now ain't they bad?
An ain't they Black?
An ain't they Black?
An' ain't they Bad?
An ain't they bad?
An' ain't they Black?
An' ain't they fine?

Black like the hour of the night
When your love turns and wriggles close to your side
Black as the earth which has given birth
To nations, and when all else is gone will abide.

Bad as the storm that leaps raging from the heavens
Bringing the welcome rain
Bad as the sun burning orange hot at midday
Lifting the waters again.

Arthur Ashe on the tennis court

Mohammed Ali in the ring
Andre Watts and Andrew Young
Black men doing their thing.

Dressing in purples and pinks and greens
Exotic as rum and Cokes
Living our lives with flash and style
Ain't we colorful folks?

Now ain't we bad?
An' ain't we Black?
An' ain't we Black?
An' ain't we bad?
An' ain't we bad?
An' ain't we Black?
An' ain't we fine?

Maya Angelou

Alone

Lying, thinking
Last night
How to find my soul a home
Where water is not thirsty
And bread loaf is not stone
I came up with one thing
And I don't believe I'm wrong
That nobody,
But nobody
Can make it out here alone.

Alone, all alone
Nobody, but nobody
Can make it out here alone.

There are some millionaires
With money they can't use
Their wives run round like banshees
Their children sing the blues
They've got expensive doctors
To cure their hearts of stone.
But nobody
No, nobody
Can make it out here alone.

Alone, all alone
Nobody, but nobody
Can make it out here alone.

Now if you listen closely
I'll tell you what I know
Storm clouds are gathering
The wind is gonna blow
The race of man is suffering
And I can hear the moan,
'Cause nobody,
But nobody
Can make it out here alone.

Alone, all alone
Nobody, but nobody
Can make it out here alone.

Maya Angelou

Awaking In New York

Curtains forcing their will
against the wind,
children sleep,
exchanging dreams with
seraphim. The city
drags itself awake on
subway straps; and
I, an alarm, awake as a
rumor of war,
lie stretching into dawn,
unasked and unheeded.

Maya Angelou

Caged Bird

The free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wings
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with fearful trill
of the things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn-bright lawn
and he names the sky his own.

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still

and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

Maya Angelou

California Prodigal

FOR DAVID P—B

The eye follows, the land
Slips upward, creases down, forms
The gentle buttocks of a young
Giant. In the nestle,
Old adobe bricks, washed of
Whiteness, paled to umber,
Await another century.

Star Jasmine and old vines
Lay claim upon the ghosted land,
Then quiet pools whisper
Private childhood secrets.

Flush on inner cottage walls
Antiquitous faces,
Used to the gelid breath
Of old manors, glare disdainfully
Over breached time.

Around and through these
Cold phantasmatalities,
He walks, insisting
To the languid air,
Activity, music,
A generosity of graces.

His lupin fields spurn old
Deceit and agile poppies dance
In golden riot. Each day is
Fulminant, exploding brightly
Under the gaze of his exquisite
Sires, frozen in the famed paint
Of dead masters. Audacious
Sunlight casts defiance
At their feet.

Equality

You declare you see me dimly
through a glass which will not shine,
though I stand before you boldly,
trim in rank and marking time.
You do own to hear me faintly
as a whisper out of range,
while my drums beat out the message
and the rhythms never change.

Equality, and I will be free.
Equality, and I will be free.

You announce my ways are wanton,
that I fly from man to man,
but if I'm just a shadow to you,
could you ever understand ?

We have lived a painful history,
we know the shameful past,
but I keep on marching forward,
and you keep on coming last.

Equality, and I will be free.
Equality, and I will be free.

Take the blinders from your vision,
take the padding from your ears,
and confess you've heard me crying,
and admit you've seen my tears.

Hear the tempo so compelling,
hear the blood throb in my veins.
Yes, my drums are beating nightly,
and the rhythms never change.

Equality, and I will be free.
Equality, and I will be free.

Glory Falls

Glory falls around us
as we sob
a dirge of
desolation on the Cross
and hatred is the ballast of
the rock
which his upon our necks
and underfoot.
We have woven
robes of silk
and clothed our nakedness
with tapestry.
From crawling on this
murky planet's floor
we soar beyond the
birds and
through the clouds
and edge our waays from hate
and blind despair and
bring horror
to our brothers, and to our sisters cheer.
We grow despite the
horror that we feed
upon our own
tomorrow.
We grow.

Maya Angelou

Harlem Hopscotch

One foot down, then hop! It's hot.
 Good things for the ones that's got.
Another jump, now to the left.
 Everybody for hisself.

In the air, now both feet down.
 Since you black, don't stick around.
Food is gone, the rent is due,
 Curse and cry and then jump two.

All the people out of work,
 Hold for three, then twist and jerk.
Cross the line, they count you out.
 That's what hopping's all about.

Both feet flat, the game is done.
They think I lost. I think I won.

Maya Angelou

Human Family

I note the obvious differences
in the human family.
Some of us are serious,
some thrive on comedy.

Some declare their lives are lived
as true profundity,
and others claim they really live
the real reality.

The variety of our skin tones
can confuse, bemuse, delight,
brown and pink and beige and purple,
tan and blue and white.

I've sailed upon the seven seas
and stopped in every land,
I've seen the wonders of the world
not yet one common man.

I know ten thousand women
called Jane and Mary Jane,
but I've not seen any two
who really were the same.

Mirror twins are different
although their features jibe,
and lovers think quite different thoughts
while lying side by side.

We love and lose in China,
we weep on England's moors,
and laugh and moan in Guinea,
and thrive on Spanish shores.

We seek success in Finland,
are born and die in Maine.
In minor ways we differ,
in major we're the same.

I note the obvious differences
between each sort and type,
but we are more alike, my friends,
than we are unlike.

We are more alike, my friends,
than we are unlike.

We are more alike, my friends,
than we are unlike.

Maya Angelou

I know why the caged bird sings

A free bird leaps on the back
Of the wind and floats downstream
Till the current ends and dips his wing
In the orange sun's rays
And dares to claim the sky.

But a BIRD that stalks down his narrow cage
Can seldom see through his bars of rage
His wings are clipped and his feet are tied
So he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings with a fearful trill
Of things unknown but longed for still
And his tune is heard on the distant hill for
The caged bird sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze
And the trade winds soft through
The sighing trees
And the fat worms waiting on a dawn-bright
Lawn and he names the sky his own.

But a caged BIRD stands on the grave of dreams
His shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
His wings are clipped and his feet are tied
So he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings with
A fearful trill of things unknown
But longed for still and his
Tune is heard on the distant hill
For the caged bird sings of freedom.

Maya Angelou

In All Ways A Woman

In my young years I took pride in the fact that luck was called a lady. In fact, there were so few public acknowledgments of the female presence that I felt personally honored whenever nature and large ships were referred to as feminine. But as I matured, I began to resent being considered a sister to a changeling as fickle as luck, as aloof as an ocean, and as frivolous as nature. The phrase 'A woman always has the right to change her mind' played so aptly into the negative image of the female that I made myself a victim to an unwavering decision. Even if I made an inane and stupid choice, I stuck by it rather than 'be like a woman and change my mind.'

Being a woman is hard work. Not without joy and even ecstasy, but still relentless, unending work. Becoming an old female may require only being born with certain genitalia, inheriting long-living genes and the fortune not to be run over by an out-of-control truck, but to become and remain a woman command the existence and employment of genius.

The woman who survives intact and happy must be at once tender and tough. She must have convinced herself, or be in the unending process of convincing herself, that she, her values, and her choices are important. In a time and world where males hold sway and control, the pressure upon women to yield their rights-of-way is tremendous. And it is under those very circumstances that the woman's toughness must be in evidence.

She must resist considering herself a lesser version of her male counterpart. She is not a sculptress, poetess, authoress, Jewess, Negress, or even (now rare) in university parlance a rectoress. If she is the thing, then for her own sense of self and for the education of the ill-informed she must insist with rectitude in being the thing and in being called the thing.

A rose by any other name may smell as sweet, but a woman called by a devaluing name will only be weakened by the misnomer. She will need to prize her tenderness and be able to display it at appropriate times in order to prevent toughness from gaining total authority and to avoid becoming a mirror image of those men who value power above life, and control over love.

It is imperative that a woman keep her sense of humor intact and at the ready. She must see, even if only in secret, that she is the funniest, looniest woman in her world, which she should also see as being the most absurd world of all times. It has been said that laughter is therapeutic and amiability lengthens the life

span. Women should be tough, tender, laugh as much as possible, and live long lives. The struggle for equality continues unabated, and the woman warrior who is armed with wit and courage will be among the first to celebrate victory.

Maya Angelou

Insomniac

There are some nights when
sleep plays coy,
aloof and disdainful.
And all the wiles
that I employ to win
its service to my side
are useless as wounded pride,
and much more painful.

Maya Angelou

Kin

FOR BAILEY

We were entwined in red rings
Of blood and loneliness before
The first snows fell
Before muddy rivers seeded clouds
Above a virgin forest, and
Men ran naked, blue and black
Skinned into the warm embraces
Of Sheba, Eve and Lilith.
I was your sister.

You left me to force strangers
Into brother molds, exacting
Taxations they never
Owed or could ever pay.

You fought to die, thinking
In destruction lies the seed
Of birth. You may be right.

I will remember silent walks in
Southern woods and long talks
In low voices
Shielding meaning from the big ears
Of overcurious adults.

You may be right.
Your slow return from
Regions of terror and bloody
Screams, races my heart.
I hear again the laughter
Of children and see fireflies
Bursting tiny explosions in
An Arkansas twilight.

Maya Angelou

Life Doesn't Frighten Me

Shadows on the wall
Noises down the hall
Life doesn't frighten me at all

Bad dogs barking loud
Big ghosts in a cloud
Life doesn't frighten me at all

Mean old Mother Goose
Lions on the loose
They don't frighten me at all

Dragons breathing flame
On my counterpane
That doesn't frighten me at all.

I go boo
Make them shoo
I make fun
Way they run
I won't cry
So they fly
I just smile
They go wild

Life doesn't frighten me at all.

Tough guys fight
All alone at night
Life doesn't frighten me at all.

Panthers in the park
Strangers in the dark
No, they don't frighten me at all.

That new classroom where
Boys all pull my hair
(Kissy little girls
With their hair in curls)

They don't frighten me at all.

Don't show me frogs and snakes
And listen for my scream,
If I'm afraid at all
It's only in my dreams.

I've got a magic charm
That I keep up my sleeve
I can walk the ocean floor
And never have to breathe.

Life doesn't frighten me at all
Not at all
Not at all.

Life doesn't frighten me at all.

Maya Angelou

Men

When I was young, I used to
Watch behind the curtains
As men walked up and down the street. Wino men, old men.
Young men sharp as mustard.
See them. Men are always
Going somewhere.
They knew I was there. Fifteen
Years old and starving for them.
Under my window, they would pauses,
Their shoulders high like the
Breasts of a young girl,
Jacket tails slapping over
Those behinds,
Men.

One day they hold you in the
Palms of their hands, gentle, as if you
Were the last raw egg in the world. Then
They tighten up. Just a little. The
First squeeze is nice. A quick hug.
Soft into your defenselessness. A little
More. The hurt begins. Wrench out a
Smile that slides around the fear. When the
Air disappears,
Your mind pops, exploding fiercely, briefly,
Like the head of a kitchen match. Shattered.
It is your juice
That runs down their legs. Staining their shoes.
When the earth rights itself again,
And taste tries to return to the tongue,
Your body has slammed shut. Forever.
No keys exist.

Then the window draws full upon
Your mind. There, just beyond
The sway of curtains, men walk.
Knowing something.
Going someplace.
But this time, I will simply

Stand and watch.

Maybe.

Maya Angelou

Million Man March Poem

The night has been long,
The wound has been deep,
The pit has been dark,
And the walls have been steep.

Under a dead blue sky on a distant beach,
I was dragged by my braids just beyond your reach.
Your hands were tied, your mouth was bound,
You couldn't even call out my name.
You were helpless and so was I,
But unfortunately throughout history
You've worn a badge of shame.

I say, the night has been long,
The wound has been deep,
The pit has been dark
And the walls have been steep.

But today, voices of old spirit sound
Speak to us in words profound,
Across the years, across the centuries,
Across the oceans, and across the seas.
They say, draw near to one another,
Save your race.
You have been paid for in a distant place,
The old ones remind us that slavery's chains
Have paid for our freedom again and again.

The night has been long,
The pit has been deep,
The night has been dark,
And the walls have been steep.

The hells we have lived through and live through still,
Have sharpened our senses and toughened our will.
The night has been long.
This morning I look through your anguish
Right down to your soul.
I know that with each other we can make ourselves whole.

I look through the posture and past your disguise,
And see your love for family in your big brown eyes.

I say, clap hands and let's come together in this meeting ground,
I say, clap hands and let's deal with each other with love,
I say, clap hands and let us get from the low road of indifference,
Clap hands, let us come together and reveal our hearts,
Let us come together and revise our spirits,
Let us come together and cleanse our souls,
Clap hands, let's leave the preening
And stop impostering our own history.
Clap hands, call the spirits back from the ledge,
Clap hands, let us invite joy into our conversation,
Courtesy into our bedrooms,
Gentleness into our kitchen,
Care into our nursery.

The ancestors remind us, despite the history of pain
We are a going-on people who will rise again.

And still we rise.

Maya Angelou

Momma Welfare Roll

Her arms semaphore fat triangles,
Pudgy hands bunched on layered hips
Where bones idle under years of fatback
And lima beans.

Her jowls shiver in accusation
Of crimes clichéd by
Repetition. Her children, strangers
To childhood's toys, play
Best the games of darkened doorways,
Rooftop tag, and know the slick feel of
Other people's property.

Too fat to whore,
Too mad to work,
Searches her dreams for the
Lucky sign and walks bare-handed
Into a den of bureaucrats for
Her portion.
'They don't give me welfare.
I take it.'

Maya Angelou

Old Folks Laugh

They have spent their
content of simpering,
holding their lips this
and that way, winding
the lines between
their brows. Old folks
allow their bellies to jiggle like slow
tambourines.
The hollers
rise up and spill
over any way they want.
When old folks laugh, they free the world.
They turn slowly, slyly knowing
the best and the worst
of remembering.
Saliva glistens in
the corners of their mouths,
their heads wobble
on brittle necks, but
their laps
are filled with memories.
When old folks laugh, they consider the promise
of dear painless death, and generously
forgive life for happening
to them.

Maya Angelou

On Aging

When you see me sitting quietly,
Like a sack left on the shelf,
Don't think I need your chattering.
I'm listening to myself.
Hold! Stop! Don't pity me!
Hold! Stop your sympathy!
Understanding if you got it,
Otherwise I'll do without it!
When my bones are stiff and aching,
And my feet won't climb the stair,
I will only ask one favor:
Don't bring me no rocking chair.
When you see me walking, stumbling,
Don't study and get it wrong.
'Cause tired don't mean lazy
And every goodbye ain't gone.
I'm the same person I was back then,
A little less hair, a little less chin,
A lot less lungs and much less wind.
But ain't I lucky I can still breathe in.

Maya Angelou

On The Pulse Of Morning

A Rock, A River, A Tree
Hosts to species long since departed,
Mark the mastodon.
The dinosaur, who left dry tokens
Of their sojourn here
On our planet floor,
Any broad alarm of their of their hastening doom
Is lost in the gloom of dust and ages.
But today, the Rock cries out to us, clearly, forcefully,
Come, you may stand upon my
Back and face your distant destiny,
But seek no haven in my shadow.
I will give you no hiding place down here.
You, created only a little lower than
The angels, have crouched too long in
The bruising darkness,
Have lain too long
Face down in ignorance.
Your mouths spelling words
Armed for slaughter.
The rock cries out today, you may stand on me,
But do not hide your face.
Across the wall of the world,
A river sings a beautiful song,
Come rest here by my side.
Each of you a bordered country,
Delicate and strangely made proud,
Yet thrusting perpetually under siege.
Your armed struggles for profit
Have left collars of waste upon
My shore, currents of debris upon my breast.
Yet, today I call you to my riverside,
If you will study war no more.
Come, clad in peace and I will sing the songs
The Creator gave to me when I
And the tree and stone were one.
Before cynicism was a bloody sear across your brow
And when you yet knew you still knew nothing.
The river sings and sings on.

There is a true yearning to respond to
The singing river and the wise rock.
So say the Asian, the Hispanic, the Jew,
The African and Native American, the Sioux,
The Catholic, the Muslim, the French, the Greek,
The Irish, the Rabbi, the Priest, the Sheikh,
The Gay, the Straight, the Preacher,
The privileged, the homeless, the teacher.
They hear. They all hear
The speaking of the tree.
Today, the first and last of every tree
Speaks to humankind. Come to me, here beside the river.
Plant yourself beside me, here beside the river.
Each of you, descendant of some passed on
Traveller, has been paid for.
You, who gave me my first name,
You Pawnee, Apache and Seneca,
You Cherokee Nation, who rested with me,
Then forced on bloody feet,
Left me to the employment of other seekers-
Desperate for gain, starving for gold.
You, the Turk, the Swede, the German, the Scot...
You the Ashanti, the Yoruba, the Kru,
Bought, sold, stolen, arriving on a nightmare
Praying for a dream.
Here, root yourselves beside me.
I am the tree planted by the river,
Which will not be moved.
I, the rock, I the river, I the tree
I am yours- your passages have been paid.
Lift up your faces, you have a piercing need
For this bright morning dawning for you.
History, despite its wrenching pain,
Cannot be unlived, and if faced with courage,
Need not be lived again.
Lift up your eyes upon
The day breaking for you.
Give birth again
To the dream.
Women, children, men,
Take it into the palms of your hands.
Mold it into the shape of your most

Private need. Sculpt it into
The image of your most public self.
Lift up your hearts.
Each new hour holds new chances
For new beginnings.
Do not be wedded forever
To fear, yoked eternally
To brutishness.
The horizon leans forward,
Offering you space to place new steps of change.
Here, on the pulse of this fine day
You may have the courage
To look up and out upon me,
The rock, the river, the tree, your country.
No less to Midas than the mendicant.
No less to you now than the mastodon then.
Here on the pulse of this new day
You may have the grace to look up and out
And into your sister's eyes,
Into your brother's face, your country
And say simply
Very simply
With hope
Good morning.

Maya Angelou

Our Grandmothers

She lay, skin down in the moist dirt,
the canebrake rustling
with the whispers of leaves, and
loud longing of hounds and
the ransack of hunters crackling the near
branches.

She muttered, lifting her head a nod toward
freedom,
I shall not, I shall not be moved.

She gathered her babies,
their tears slick as oil on black faces,
their young eyes canvassing mornings of madness.
Momma, is Master going to sell you
from us tomorrow?

Yes.

Unless you keep walking more
and talking less.

Yes.

Unless the keeper of our lives
releases me from all commandments.

Yes.

And your lives,
never mine to live,
will be executed upon the killing floor of
innocents.

Unless you match my heart and words,
saying with me,

I shall not be moved.

In Virginia tobacco fields,
leaning into the curve

of Steinway
pianos, along Arkansas roads,
in the red hills of Georgia,
into the palms of her chained hands, she
cried against calamity,
You have tried to destroy me
and though I perish daily,

I shall not be moved.

Her universe, often
summarized into one black body
falling finally from the tree to her feet,
made her cry each time into a new voice.
All my past hastens to defeat,
and strangers claim the glory of my love,
Iniquity has bound me to his bed.

yet, I must not be moved.

She heard the names,
swirling ribbons in the wind of history:
nigger, nigger bitch, heifer,
mammy, property, creature, ape, baboon,
whore, hot tail, thing, it.
She said, But my description cannot
fit your tongue, for
I have a certain way of being in this world,

and I shall not, I shall not be moved.

No angel stretched protecting wings
above the heads of her children,
fluttering and urging the winds of reason
into the confusions of their lives.
The sprouted like young weeds,

but she could not shield their growth
from the grinding blades of ignorance, nor
shape them into symbolic topiaries.
She sent them away,
underground, overland, in coaches and
shoeless.

When you learn, teach.
When you get, give.
As for me,

I shall not be moved.

She stood in midocean, seeking dry land.
She searched God's face.
Assured,
she placed her fire of service
on the altar, and though
clothed in the finery of faith,
when she appeared at the temple door,
no sign welcomed
Black Grandmother, Enter here.

Into the crashing sound,
into wickedness, she cried,
No one, no, nor no one million
ones dare deny me God, I go forth
along, and stand as ten thousand.

The Divine upon my right
impels me to pull forever
at the latch on Freedom's gate.

The Holy Spirit upon my left leads my
feet without ceasing into the camp of the
righteous and into the tents of the free.

These momma faces, lemon-yellow, plum-purple,
honey-brown, have grimaced and twisted
down a pyramid for years.
She is Sheba the Sojourner,
Harriet and Zora,
Mary Bethune and Angela,
Annie to Zenobia.

She stands
before the abortion clinic,
confounded by the lack of choices.
In the Welfare line,
reduced to the pity of handouts.
Ordained in the pulpit, shielded
by the mysteries.
In the operating room,
husbanding life.
In the choir loft,
holding God in her throat.
On lonely street corners,
hawking her body.
In the classroom, loving the
children to understanding.

Centered on the world's stage,
she sings to her loves and beloveds,
to her foes and detractors:
However I am perceived and deceived,
however my ignorance and conceits,
lay aside your fears that I will be undone,

for I shall not be moved.

Maya Angelou

Passing Time

Your skin like dawn
Mine like musk

One paints the beginning
of a certain end.

The other, the end of a
sure beginning.

Maya Angelou

Phenomenal Woman

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.
I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size
But when I start to tell them,
They think I'm telling lies.
I say,
It's in the reach of my arms
The span of my hips,
The stride of my step,
The curl of my lips.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

I walk into a room
Just as cool as you please,
And to a man,
The fellows stand or
Fall down on their knees.
Then they swarm around me,
A hive of honey bees.
I say,
It's the fire in my eyes,
And the flash of my teeth,
The swing in my waist,
And the joy in my feet.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Men themselves have wondered
What they see in me.
They try so much
But they can't touch
My inner mystery.
When I try to show them
They say they still can't see.
I say,

It's in the arch of my back,
The sun of my smile,
The ride of my breasts,
The grace of my style.
I'm a woman

Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Now you understand
Just why my head's not bowed.
I don't shout or jump about
Or have to talk real loud.
When you see me passing
It ought to make you proud.
I say,
It's in the click of my heels,
The bend of my hair,
the palm of my hand,
The need of my care,
'Cause I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Maya Angelou

Pickin Em Up and Layin Em Down

There's a long-legged girl
in San Francisco
by the Golden Gate.
She said she'd give me all I wanted
but I just couldn't wait.
I started to
Pickin em up
 and layin em down,
Pickin em up
 and layin em down,
Pickin em up
 and layin em down,
gettin to the next town
Baby.

There's a pretty brown
in Birmingham.
Boys, she little and cute
but when she like to tied me down
I had to grab my suit and started to
Pickin em up
 and layin em down,
Pickin em up
 and layin em down,
Pickin em up
 and layin em down,
getting to the next town
Baby.

I met that lovely Detroit lady
and thought my time had come
But just before I said "I do"
I said "I got to run" and started to
Pickin em up
 and layin em down,
Pickin em up
 and layin em down,
Pickin em up
 and layin em down,

getting to the next town
Baby.

There ain't no words for what I feel
about a pretty face
But if I stay I just might miss
a prettier one some place
I started to
Pickin em up
 and layin em down,
Pickin em up
 and layin em down,
Pickin em up
 and layin em down,
getting to the next town
Baby.

Maya Angelou

Preacher, Don't Send Me

Preacher, don't send me
when I die
to some big ghetto
in the sky
where rats eat cats
of the leopard type
and Sunday brunch
is grits and tripe.

I've known those rats
I've seen them kill
and grits I've had
would make a hill,
or maybe a mountain,
so what I need
from you on Sunday
is a different creed.

Preacher, please don't
promise me
streets of gold
and milk for free.
I stopped all milk
at four years old
and once I'm dead
I won't need gold.

I'd call a place
pure paradise
where families are loyal
and strangers are nice,
where the music is jazz
and the season is fall.
Promise me that
or nothing at all.

Maya Angelou

Recovery

A Last love,
proper in conclusion,
should snip the wings
forbidding further flight.
But I, now,
reft of that confusion,
am lifted up
and speeding toward the light.

Maya Angelou

Refusal

Beloved,
In what other lives or lands
Have I known your lips
Your Hands
Your Laughter brave
Irreverent.
Those sweet excesses that
I do adore.
What surety is there
That we will meet again,
On other worlds some
Future time undated.
I defy my body's haste.
Without the promise
Of one more sweet encounter
I will not deign to die.

Maya Angelou

Remembrance

Your hands easy
weight, teasing the bees
hived in my hair, your smile at the
slope of my cheek. On the
occasion, you press
above me, glowing, spouting
readiness, mystery rapes
my reason

When you have withdrawn
your self and the magic, when
only the smell of your
love lingers between
my breasts, then, only
then, can I greedily consume
your presence.

Maya Angelou

Savior

Petulant priests, greedy
centurions, and one million
incensed gestures stand
between your love and me.

Your agape sacrifice
is reduced to colored glass,
vapid penance, and the
tedium of ritual.

Your footprints yet
mark the crest of
billowing seas but
your joy
fades upon the tablets
of ordained prophets.

Visit us again, Savior.
Your children, burdened with
disbelief, blinded by a patina
of wisdom,
carom down this vale of
fear. We cry for you
although we have lost
your name.

Maya Angelou

Son to Mother

I start no
wars, raining poison
on cathedrals,
melting Stars of David
into golden faucets
to be lighted by lamps
shaded by human skin.

I set no
store on the strange lands,
send no
missionaries beyond my
borders,
to plunder secrets
and barter souls.

They
say you took my manhood,
Momma.
Come sit on my lap
and tell me,
what do you want me to say
to them, just
before I annihilate
their ignorance ?

Maya Angelou

Song for the Old Ones

My Fathers sit on benches
their flesh counts every plank
the slats leave dents of darkness
deep in their withered flanks.

They nod like broken candles
all waxed and burnt profound
they say 'It's understanding
that makes the world go round.'

There in those pleated faces
I see the auction block
the chains and slavery's coffles
the whip and lash and stock.

My Fathers speak in voices
that shred my fact and sound
they say 'It's our submission
that makes the world go round.'

They used the finest cunning
their naked wits and wiles
the lowly Uncle Tomming
and Aunt Jemima's smiles.

They've laughed to shield their crying
then shuffled through their dreams
and stepped 'n' fetched a country
to write the blues with screams.

I understand their meaning
it could and did derive
from living on the edge of death
They kept my race alive.

Maya Angelou

Still I Rise

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may tread me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.
Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own back yard.

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.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise

I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

Maya Angelou

Televised

Televised news turns
a half-used day into
a waste of desolation.
If nothing wondrous preceded
the catastrophic announcements,
certainly nothing will follow, save
the sad-eyed faces of
bony children,
distended bellies making
mock at their starvation.
Why are they always
Black ?
Whom do they await ?
The lamb-chop flesh
reeks and cannot be
eaten. Even the
green peas roll on my plate
unmolested. Their innocence
matched by the helpless
hope in the children's faces.
Why do Black children
hope ? Who will bring
them peas and lamb chops
and one more morning ?

Maya Angelou

The Black Family Pledge

BECAUSE we have forgotten our ancestors,
our children no longer give us honor.

BECAUSE we have lost the path our ancestors cleared
kneeling in perilous undergrowth,
our children cannot find their way.

BECAUSE we have banished the God of our ancestors,
our children cannot pray.

BECAUSE the old wails of our ancestors have faded beyond our hearing,
our children cannot hear us crying.

BECAUSE we have abandoned our wisdom of mothering and fathering,
our befuddled children give birth to children
they neither want nor understand.

BECAUSE we have forgotten how to love, the adversary is within our
gates, and holds us up to the mirror of the world shouting,
'Regard the loveless'

Therefore we pledge to bind ourselves to one another, to embrace our
lowliest, to keep company with our loneliest, to educate our illiterate,
to feed our starving, to clothe our ragged, to do all good things,
knowing that we are more than keepers of our brothers and sisters.

We ARE our brothers and sisters.

IN HONOR of those who toiled and implored God with golden tongues,
and in gratitude to the same God who brought us out of hopeless desolation, we
make this pledge.

Maya Angelou

The Detached

We die,
Welcoming Bluebeards to our darkening closets,
Stranglers to our outstretched necks,
 Stranglers, who neither care nor
 care to know that
 DEATH IS INTERNAL.

We pray,
Savoring sweet the teethed lies,
Belying the grounds before alien gods,
 Gods, who neither know nor
 wish to know that
 HELL IS INTERNAL.

We love,
Rubbing the nakednesses with gloved hands,
Inverting our mouths in tongued kisses,
 Kisses that neither touch nor
 care to touch if
 LOVE IS INTERNAL.

Maya Angelou

The Health-Food Diner

The Health-Food Diner
No sprouted wheat and soya shoots
And Brussels in a cake,
Carrot straw and spinach raw,
(Today, I need a steak).

Not thick brown rice and rice pilaw
Or mushrooms creamed on toast,
Turnips mashed and parsnips hashed,
(I'm dreaming of a roast).

Health-food folks around the world
Are thinned by anxious zeal,
They look for help in seafood kelp
(I count on breaded veal).

No smoking signs, raw mustard greens,
Zucchini by the ton,
Uncooked kale and bodies frail
Are sure to make me run

to

Loins of pork and chicken thighs
And standing rib, so prime,
Pork chops brown and fresh ground round
(I crave them all the time).

Irish stews and boiled corned beef
and hot dogs by the scores,
or any place that saves a space
For smoking carnivores.

Maya Angelou

The Lesson

I keep on dying again.
Veins collapse, opening like the
Small fists of sleeping
Children.
Memory of old tombs,
Rotting flesh and worms do
Not convince me against
The challenge. The years
And cold defeat live deep in
Lines along my face.
They dull my eyes, yet
I keep on dying,
Because I love to live.

Maya Angelou

The Mothering Blackness

She came home running
back to the mothering blackness
deep in the smothering blackness
white tears icicle gold plains of her face
She came home running

She came down creeping
here to the black arms waiting
now to the warm heart waiting
rime of alien dreams befrosts her rich brown face
She came down creeping

She came home blameless
black yet as Hagar's daughter
tall as was Sheba's daughter
threats of northern winds die on the desert's face
She came home blameless

Maya Angelou

The Rock Cries Out to Us Today

A Rock, A River, A Tree
Hosts to species long since departed,
Mark the mastodon.
The dinosaur, who left dry tokens
Of their sojourn here
On our planet floor,
Any broad alarm of their of their hastening doom
Is lost in the gloom of dust and ages.
But today, the Rock cries out to us, clearly, forcefully,
Come, you may stand upon my
Back and face your distant destiny,
But seek no haven in my shadow.
I will give you no hiding place down here.
You, created only a little lower than
The angels, have crouched too long in
The bruising darkness,
Have lain too long
Face down in ignorance.
Your mouths spelling words
Armed for slaughter.
The rock cries out today, you may stand on me,
But do not hide your face.
Across the wall of the world,
A river sings a beautiful song,
Come rest here by my side.
Each of you a bordered country,
Delicate and strangely made proud,
Yet thrusting perpetually under siege.
Your armed struggles for profit
Have left collars of waste upon
My shore, currents of debris upon my breast.
Yet, today I call you to my riverside,
If you will study war no more.
Come, clad in peace and I will sing the songs
The Creator gave to me when I
And the tree and stone were one.
Before cynicism was a bloody sear across your brow
And when you yet knew you still knew nothing.
The river sings and sings on.

There is a true yearning to respond to
The singing river and the wise rock.
So say the Asian, the Hispanic, the Jew,
The African and Native American, the Sioux,
The Catholic, the Muslim, the French, the Greek,
The Irish, the Rabbi, the Priest, the Sheikh,
The Gay, the Straight, the Preacher,
The privileged, the homeless, the teacher.
They hear. They all hear
The speaking of the tree.
Today, the first and last of every tree
Speaks to humankind. Come to me, here beside the river.
Plant yourself beside me, here beside the river.
Each of you, descendant of some passed on
Traveller, has been paid for.
You, who gave me my first name,
You Pawnee, Apache and Seneca,
You Cherokee Nation, who rested with me,
Then forced on bloody feet,
Left me to the employment of other seekers-
Desperate for gain, starving for gold.
You, the Turk, the Swede, the German, the Scot...
You the Ashanti, the Yoruba, the Kru,
Bought, sold, stolen, arriving on a nightmare
Praying for a dream.
Here, root yourselves beside me.
I am the tree planted by the river,
Which will not be moved.
I, the rock, I the river, I the tree
I am yours- your passages have been paid.
Lift up your faces, you have a piercing need
For this bright morning dawning for you.
History, despite its wrenching pain,
Cannot be unlived, and if faced with courage,
Need not be lived again.
Lift up your eyes upon
The day breaking for you.
Give birth again
To the dream.
Women, children, men,
Take it into the palms of your hands.
Mold it into the shape of your most

Private need. Sculpt it into
The image of your most public self.
Lift up your hearts.
Each new hour holds new chances
For new beginnings.
Do not be wedded forever
To fear, yoked eternally
To brutishness.
The horizon leans forward,
Offering you space to place new steps of change.
Here, on the pulse of this fine day
You may have the courage
To look up and out upon me,
The rock, the river, the tree, your country.
No less to Midas than the mendicant.
No less to you now than the mastodon then.
Here on the pulse of this new day
You may have the grace to look up and out
And into your sister's eyes,
Into your brother's face, your country
And say simply
Very simply
With hope
Good morning.

Maya Angelou

The Traveller

Byways and bygone
And lone nights long
Sun rays and sea waves
And star and stone

Manless and friendless
No cave my home
This is my torture
My long nights, lone

Maya Angelou

The Week of Diana

The dark lantern of world sadness has cast its shadow upon the land.

We stumble into our misery on leaden feet.

Our minds seek to comprehend the unknowable and our hearts seek to

Measure a tomorrow without the Sunshine Princess.

Her hands which had held bright tiaras and jewelled crowns,

Also stroked the faces of pain along

Angola's dusty roads.

She was born to the privilege of plenty

Yet, she communed with the needy without a show of pompous piety.

Glowing in Bosnia, radiant at glittering balls,

We came to love her and claim her for her grace and accessibility.

Luminous always.

We smiled to see her enter and grinned at her happiness.

Now the world we made is forever changed...

Made smaller, meaner, less colorful.

Yet, because she did live,

Because she ventured life and confronted change,

She has left us a legacy.

We also may dare...

To care for some other than ourselves and those who look like us.

And maybe we can take a lesson from her

And try to live our lives

With passion, compassion, humor and grace.

Goodbye Sunshine Princess.

Maya Angelou

These Yet To Be United States

Tremors of your network
cause kings to disappear.
Your open mouth in anger
makes nations bow in fear.

Your bombs can change the seasons,
obliterate the spring.
What more do you long for ?
Why are you suffering ?

You control the human lives
in Rome and Timbuktu.
Lonely nomads wandering
owe Telstar to you.

Seas shift at your bidding,
your mushrooms fill the sky.
Why are you unhappy ?
Why do your children cry ?

They kneel alone in terror
with dread in every glance.
Their nights ['rights' ? - Schrift nicht lesbar] are threatened daily
by a grim inheritance.

You dwell in whitened castles
with deep and poisoned moats
and cannot hear the curses
which fill your children's throats.

Maya Angelou

They Went Home

They went home and told their wives,
that never once in all their lives,
had they known a girl like me,
But... They went home.

They said my house was licking clean,
no word I spoke was ever mean,
I had an air of mystery,
But... They went home.

My praises were on all men's lips,
they liked my smile, my wit, my hips,
they'd spend one night, or two or three.
But...

Maya Angelou

Touched By An Angel

We, unaccustomed to courage
exiles from delight
live coiled in shells of loneliness
until love leaves its high holy temple
and comes into our sight
to liberate us into life.

Love arrives
and in its train come ecstasies
old memories of pleasure
ancient histories of pain.
Yet if we are bold,
love strikes away the chains of fear
from our souls.

We are weaned from our timidity
In the flush of love's light
we dare be brave
And suddenly we see
that love costs all we are
and will ever be.
Yet it is only love
which sets us free.

Maya Angelou

We Had Him

Beloveds, now we know that we know nothing
Now that our bright and shining star can slip away from our fingertips like a puff
of summer wind

Without notice, our dear love can escape our doting embrace
Sing our songs among the stars and and walk our dances across the face of the
moon

In the instant we learn that Michael is gone we know nothing
No clocks can tell our time and no oceans can rush our tides
With the abrupt absence of our treasure

Though we our many, each of us is achingly alone
Piercingly alone
Only when we confess our confusion can we remember that he was a gift to us
and we did have him

He came to us from the Creator, trailing creativity in abundance
Despite the anguish of life he was sheathed in mother love and family love and
survived and did more than that

He thrived with passion and compassion, humor and style
We had him
Whether we knew who he was or did not know, he was ours and we were his
We had him

Beautiful, delighting our eyes
He raked his hat slant over his brow and took a pose on his toes for all of us and
we laughed and stomped our feet for him

We were enchanted with his passion because he held nothing
He gave us all he had been given

Today in Tokyo, beneath the Eiffel Tower, in Ghana's Blackstar Square, in
Johannesburg, in Pittsburgh, in Birmingham, Alabama and Birmingham England,
we are missing Michael Jackson

But we do know that we had him
And we are the world.

Maya Angelou

Weekend Glory

Some clichy folks
don't know the facts,
posin' and preenin'
and puttin' on acts,
stretchin' their backs.

They move into condos
up over the ranks,
pawn their souls
to the local banks.
Buying big cars
they can't afford,
ridin' around town
actin' bored.

If they want to learn how to live life right
they ought to study me on Saturday night.

My job at the plant
ain't the biggest bet,
but I pay my bills
and stay out of debt.
I get my hair done
for my own self's sake,
so I don't have to pick
and I don't have to rake.

Take the church money out
and head cross town
to my friend girl's house
where we plan our round.
We meet our men and go to a joint
where the music is blue
and to the point.

Folks write about me.
They just can't see
how I work all week
at the factory.

Then get spruced up
and laugh and dance
And turn away from worry
with sassy glance.

They accuse me of livin'
from day to day,
but who are they kiddin'?
So are they.

My life ain't heaven
but it sure ain't hell.
I'm not on top
but I call it swell
if I'm able to work
and get paid right
and have the luck to be Black
on a Saturday night.

Maya Angelou

When Great Trees Fall

When great trees fall,
rocks on distant hills shudder,
lions hunker down
in tall grasses,
and even elephants
lumber after safety.

When great trees fall
in forests,
small things recoil into silence,
their senses
eroded beyond fear.

When great souls die,
the air around us becomes
light, rare, sterile.
We breathe, briefly.
Our eyes, briefly,
see with
a hurtful clarity.
Our memory, suddenly sharpened,
examines,
gnaws on kind words
unsaid,
promised walks
never taken.

Great souls die and
our reality, bound to
them, takes leave of us.
Our souls,
dependent upon their
nurture,
now shrink, wizened.
Our minds, formed
and informed by their
radiance,
fall away.
We are not so much maddened

as reduced to the unutterable ignorance
of dark, cold
caves.

And when great souls die,
after a period peace blooms,
slowly and always
irregularly. Spaces fill
with a kind of
soothing electric vibration.
Our senses, restored, never
to be the same, whisper to us.
They existed. They existed.
We can be. Be and be
better. For they existed.

Maya Angelou

When I Think About Myself

When I think about myself,
I almost laugh myself to death,
My life has been one great big joke,
A dance that's walked
A song that's spoke,
I laugh so hard I almost choke
When I think about myself.

Sixty years in these folks' world
The child I works for calls me girl
I say 'Yes ma'am' for working's sake.
Too proud to bend
Too poor to break,
I laugh until my stomach ache,
When I think about myself.

My folks can make me split my side,
I laughed so hard I nearly died,
The tales they tell, sound just like lying,
They grow the fruit,
But eat the rind,
I laugh until I start to crying,
When I think about my folks.

Maya Angelou

When You Come

When you come to me, unbidden,
Beckoning me
To long-ago rooms,
Where memories lie.

Offering me, as to a child, an attic,
Gatherings of days too few.
Baubles of stolen kisses.
Trinkets of borrowed loves.
Trunks of secret words,

I CRY.

Maya Angelou

Woman Work

I've got the children to tend
The clothes to mend
The floor to mop
The food to shop
Then the chicken to fry
The baby to dry
I got company to feed
The garden to weed
I've got shirts to press
The tots to dress
The can to be cut
I gotta clean up this hut
Then see about the sick
And the cotton to pick.

Shine on me, sunshine
Rain on me, rain
Fall softly, dewdrops
And cool my brow again.

Storm, blow me from here
With your fiercest wind
Let me float across the sky
'Til I can rest again.

Fall gently, snowflakes
Cover me with white
Cold icy kisses and
Let me rest tonight.

Sun, rain, curving sky
Mountain, oceans, leaf and stone
Star shine, moon glow
You're all that I can call my own.

Maya Angelou