

Who is Maya Angelou?

In this activity, you'll learn about Maya Angelou, the writer who created the powerful poem "Life Doesn't Frighten Me." You'll also learn great new words and their synonyms! (Synonyms are two different words that share the same meaning.)

Directions: For each word in the word bank below, find its synonym in bold in the article, and write it in the blank on the right.

Maya Angelou was born Marguerite Annie Johnson on April 4, 1928, in St. Louis, Missouri. After her **destitute** parents got divorced when she was 3 years old, she was sent to live with her grandmother in the **rural** town of Stamps, Arkansas. There, Maya had her first **encounter** with racial **prejudice**—an experience that would **recur** throughout her life.

But Maya wasn't **deterred**. And she wasn't **afraid**. When she was 16, she became the first African-American **trolley** conductor in San Francisco. In her 20s, she recorded an album, *Calypso Lady*. She also **formally** changed her name to Maya Angelou.

By the time she was 35, Maya had lived all over the world. She wrote for a **prominent** magazine in Cairo, Egypt. In Ghana, she taught singing and acting. And she learned to speak five other languages: French, Spanish, Italian, Arabic, and the West African language Fanti.

When she returned to America in 1964, she decided to try something different, once again. She worked closely with Dr. Martin Luther King in speaking out against racial **injustice**. And she became one of the most **respected** voices in the civil rights movement.

In addition to her dozens of books and screenplays, Maya wrote *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, a **moving memoir** about her childhood. And, of course, there's her poetry. In 1993, Bill Clinton was looking for an inspiring person to speak at his presidential **inauguration**. He chose Maya. In front of thousands of people and a **worldwide** TV audience, she read her poem "On the Pulse of the Morning." With that, she **cemented** her place as one of the most powerful voices of our nation.

Word Bank	
distinguished	_____
autobiography	_____
bucolic	_____
induction	_____
admired	_____
secured	_____
discouraged	_____
cable car	_____
poor	_____
touching	_____
officially	_____
unfairness	_____
run-in	_____
repeat	_____
frightened	_____
discrimination	_____
global	_____