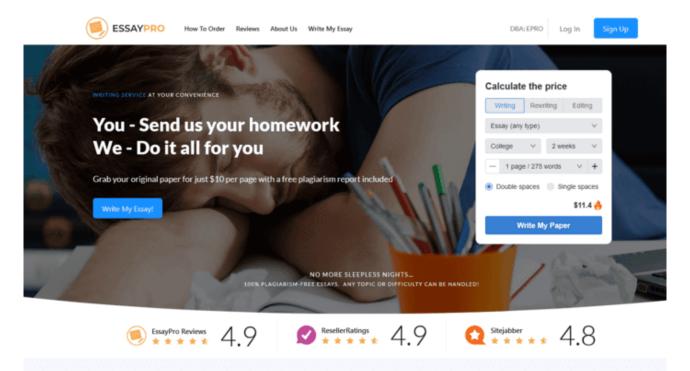
Maya Angelou



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Maya Angelou

By consistently weaving the theme of motherhood into her literature,

Maya Angelou creates both personal narratives and poems that the reader

can relate to. Her exploration of this universal theme lends itself to a

very large and diverse audience. Throughout Angelou's works, she allows

her followers to witness her metamorphosis through different aspects of

motherhood.

Well-worked themes are always present in Angelou's works- selfacceptance, race, men, work, separation, sexuality, and motherhood. However, Angelou uses the latter to provide "literary unity" (Lupton 7-8).

Maya Angelou was born Marguerite Annie Johnson on April 4, 1928, to

Vivian Baxter and Bailey Johnson. After three years her parents divorced,
and both Maya and her older brother Bailey, were sent to Stamps, Arkansas.

Once in Stamps, the children were cared for by their paternal grandmother,
Mrs. Annie Henderson (Neubauer 21).

In her first book, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Angelou tells the story of her childhood. She also makes the reader keenly aware of her close connection with her grandmother. Stephen Butterfield says of Caged Bird (in his Black Autobiography in America, 1974): "Continuity is achieved by the contact of mother and child, the sense of life begetting life that happens automatically in spite of all confusion- perhaps also because of it."

Annie Henderson is a God-fearing, independent woman whose firm hand leads Maya throughout many rough spots in her childhood. It is through Mrs. Henderson's values of self-determination and personal dignity that Maya's id...

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