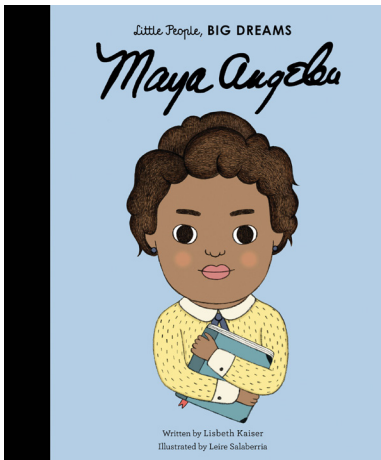


Little People, BIG DREAMS™

TEACHERS' GUIDE



Maya Angelou

Little People, BIG DREAMS™

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LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

As a Black girl growing up in the southern United States during the 1930s and '40s, Maya Angelou had a hard childhood, and she was often treated cruelly. However, she used these challenges to help her identify what was most important in life: equality and hope for the future. Maya went on to hold several jobs, travel the globe, and eventually write books that inspire millions of people around the world to this day. Maya's story helps children realize that no matter what difficulties they have in life, they can choose to live it the way they want and inspire others to do the same.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS IN THIS UNIT

1. Why is Maya Angelou famous?
2. What was life like for Maya as she grew up in the South?
3. What did Maya do after she was attacked by her mother's boyfriend?
4. What helped Maya get over her fears?
5. What different jobs did Maya have in her life?
6. What book made Maya famous around the world?

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. The book explains that Maya "loved words so much, she read every book in the library." Ask the students why they think books mattered to Maya so much. In what ways do they think the stories and poems Maya read helped her? Can they imagine reading every book in their school's library?

What do they think would be wonderful about that?

2. Despite being told “she couldn’t get a good job because of the color of her skin,” Maya went on to have several jobs. Ask the class why they think Maya held so many different jobs. What do they think it was like for Maya to be told she couldn’t do something because of her skin color and actively ignore those people? How do students think she mustered the courage to keep trying new things despite the naysayers?

3. Even though Maya held many jobs, she waited until she was older to become a writer. Why do students think she waited so long to share her experiences? What do they think it was like for Maya to think back on the events of her life, both good and bad, and share them with people? Would students be brave enough to share their lives with the entire world if they had to share the good and bad things that had happened to them?

4. According to the book, Maya’s favorite thing was hope. Ask the class why the idea of hope was so important to Maya. In what ways did she try to promote hope during her life? In what ways do the students think they can promote hope in their own lives?

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

1. The book explains that Maya spoke on the day President Clinton was inaugurated. Search for the YouTube video of Maya reading her poem *On the Pulse of the Morning* and allow the class to view it. Afterward, discuss the meanings of the poem. What were the students’ impressions from seeing her and listening to her speak?

2. According to Mrs. Flowers, a friend of Maya’s grandmother, “words come alive when you read them out loud.” Select a book that is inspiring and ask students to take turns reading passages aloud. Have them try to imagine that, by reading, they are bringing the words to life. Afterwards, ask them about their reading experiences: did they find it enjoyable, memorable, scary?

3. Many of the books that Maya wrote were memoirs which usually focus on the important events in a person’s life. Ask the students to consider what important life events they would include in their memoirs. Have them write down a few of these events, explaining why they are meaningful. You can also give them the option to draw or paint their important events. At the end, ask for volunteers to share their lists or artwork with the class.

4. Maya survived a terrible event as a child – one that caused her to stop speaking for five years. As a class, consider the personality traits she needed to overcome her fears and do what she wanted with her life. Make a list of these traits to post in the classroom.

Guide created by Shannon Gallagher

<http://quartokno.ws/LPBD>

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Frances Lincoln
Children’s Books

