I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud Versus I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings

People have always been intrigued of what the future will look like, when the answers are quite simple. To be able to understand the future you must know the past. What has taken us to where we are today and what has changed along the way. 200 years takes us from before the Wright Brothers to the Space Shuttle. Much like civil rights activist Maya Angelou and an early leader of romanticism, William Wordsworth, these poets verify literature has the same meaning time and time again. The world has changed a lot in the last 200 years, but we humans are driven by the same basic needs as we were 200 years ago, food, sleep, sex, the feeling of being appreciated and loved. Will this change in the next 200 years? No. The inventions for the last 200 years have been a human strive for freedom and communication, to be able to get in control of the time and world.

1807 was a century that saw the invention of railroads, cars, bicycles and much more. At the beginning of the 1800s, most people all over the world spent most of their time farming: planting, weeding, and harvesting, and taking care of animals. By the end of the 1800s, all of this was starting to change. Many more people lived in cities and worked in factories or in offices. William Wordsworth has implemented an array of literary techniques to envision the solitariness of the individual as heard in the title, “I wandered lonely as a cloud”. Wordsworth is comparing himself to a cloud in the sky, wandering without a destination, as can be seen in Line 1 of the poem 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' a powerless and aimless cloud, the poet could only watch and appreciate, but he could not join the daffodils in dancing and fluttering in the breeze. The reader might conclude that the poet recognizes himself as an outcast in his society; that he feels he can only watch silently from afar. The continuing use of the image may further suggest to us that the poet may not be satisfied with what he observes of social affairs and is away from the social trend as he is looking at things from a distance. There is always a distance, psychologically and physically, between the daffodils and the poet.

Maya Angelou's “I know why the cage bird sings” is a powerful metaphor for Angelou's own experience as a black woman and conveys the same struggles as Wordsworth’s “I wandered lonely as a cloud”. 1983 was a time where racial discrimination was still very much present, although more and more black American’s could now catch a glimpse of the American Dream. The most important theme in Angelou’s poem is freedom, written as an autobiography of Angelou herself, though the speaker of the poem is not always the poet themselves as in “I wandered lonely as a cloud”. Thanks to the challenges that have faced black American’s throughout history, beginning with the horrifying history of the American slave trade and the problems associated with the Black Lives matter movement, Angelou is a voice for caged birds everywhere, or black individuals who has had to live with the racism that has trapped them their whole lives. In Angelou’s poem, she has painted “free birds” as the dominating white’s and “cage birds” as the opposing blacks. She writes a story of “free birds” reigning the great blue who then swoop down into an array of sunlight. However, the caged bird is trapped by the “bars of rage” and has no other way to express itself but to sing “with a fearful trill”. As the free bird soars through the sky with “fat worms” waiting for him, shows how white lives are further privileged, the caged bird, wings clipped and feet tied, keeps singing of freedom.

How should I do then to make the future great? Well, as you know the winner in life is not the one with the most money when he dies, the winner is the person who sleeps best at night. Technology keeps advancing but what about the humanity in it? Angelou and Wordsworth have both addressed the plain racial discrimination in society through the use of personification and themes of freedom across the span of 200 years, let’s not make it 200 more.