
Maya Angelou The Influential Author

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."- Maya Angelou. "You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it."- Maya Angelou. A great author and an even more amazing individual. She was an open minded woman who knew what to do at the right moment and how to understand what was going on with her surroundings. Maya Angelou was an American treasure and a prized author. The awards she won aged from 1991 to 2012 numbering at 11 total awards. Those include the Langston Hughes Medal in 1991, then receiving the Woman in Crystal Film Award in 1992. The last award she has received is the BET Honors Award for Literacy Arts in 2012. She has many awards that are well deserved and inspired many people to become something as strong and mindful as she was. People of all ages know her poem, "Why the Caged Bird Sing," but she has many more prominent works. All of her written works and awards inspired so many young African American inspiring authors and etched her name into history. Maya Angelou is one of the most influential voices of the time period she gave her mindset out to the public and inspired so many young African Americans to go beyond and above what they think they can do.

Marguerite Johnson, known as Maya Angelou was born on April 4, 1928, in St. Louis, Missouri. Her parents, Vivian Baxton Johnson and Bailey Johnson's marriage ended when she was young, and she and her brother Bailey (who called Maya), were sent to live with their grandma in Stamps, Arkansas. Angelou was raped at the young age of eight when she visited St. Louis by her mother's boyfriend. A few of Maya's uncles beat her mother's boyfriend to death after she testified against him in court. Angelou refused to speak for about five years believing she caused his death. After moving to San Francisco with her mother and brother in 1940, Angelou began taking dance lessons, eventually auditioning for professional theater. While still in high school she became the first-ever African American female streetcar conductor in San Francisco, California. She had a son at sixteen and that put her life on hold. She moved to San Diego and had to work in a strip club, but fortunately, she was found by a theatre group. Angelou started her career in theater and appeared in Porgy and Bess. When she was finished with Broadway she moved overseas and became the associate editor of The Arab Observer in Cairo. Later, Angelou contributed articles to The Ghanaian Times and was featured on the Ghanaian Broadcasting Corporation programming in Accra. In the '60s, she became an assistant administrator of the School of Music and Drama at the University of Ghana. Angelou was the feature editor of the African Review in Accra from 1964 to 1966. When she came back, she served as northern coordinator for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. She later taught at several American colleges and universities. Angelou taught at the University of California at Los Angeles, the University of Kansas, Wichita State University, and California State University at Sacramento. In the early 1980's, she has been Reynolds Professor and writer-in-residence at Wake Forest University.

Not everyone has the same upbringing or ambitions in life. Some people have it worse from the start, but it all depends on your perspective and goals that it makes people great. Her rough past plays a significant role in her success. Her most famous work, "Why the Caged Bird Sings", was an autobiography based on her early years. She had a rough past as a young girl,

and during that time she developed a love for languages. Angelou began to read Black authors like Langston Hughes, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Paul Lawrence Dunbar, as well as canonical works by William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, and Edgar Allan Poe. An African American woman named Mrs. Flowers eventually got her to speak again about what had happened with her situation when she was a little girl. Mrs. Flowers, as Angelou recalled in her children's book "Mrs. Flowers: A Moment of Friendship " (1986), emphasized the importance to her of the spoken word, explained the nature of and importance of education, and instilled and a development of her love and interest of poetry writing and reading. As she aged, she gained more popularity for her literary works which she earned many awards and achievements from the way she had made herself. Also, as an advocate of women's rights, she inspired many African Americans with her words and actions such as Oprah Winfrey and Barack Obama. "You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them"- Maya Angelou, " Letter to My Daughter." This is a prime example of how she could and did inspire African Americans. She had a traumatic event happen to her at a very young age, but instead of letting that moment in time define her life she used it to better herself. She used what happened to her as a young girl for a release of her fine pieces or literature art which showed how strong of a woman she is. She expressed herself through her unapologetic writing style and grabbed life by the reins and did not let go for one second. She said what she had planned for herself and what she wanted and she went for it and achieved it.

Maya Angelou earned her fair share of awards and recognition which was all well deserved. Her writing caught the attention of many people due to her style. Her book " Why the Caged Bird Sings" became an immediate bestseller and remained on The New York Times paperback bestseller list for two years. The book gave Angelou worldwide fame and critical praise. It was nominated for National Book Award in 1970 and was translated into 17 languages, sold more than one million copies and still appears on college reading lists. In 2011, Time Magazine listed it as one of 100 most influential books written in English since 1923. Angelou's other works gained her popularity, achievements, and honors also. Angelou recites her poem "On the Pulse of Morning" at the inauguration of Bill Clinton in 1993, making her the first female author to have this honor and the second person overall. Maya Angelou also created works for theatre and movies. She wrote the screenplay and soundtrack of the 1972 Swedish-American drama film "Georgia, Georgia ". It was the first major release with a screenplay from a black woman and she also directed the 1998 movie "Down in the Delta", achieving a major goal of hers as directing a film. She also received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, which is the highest U.S honor for a citizen that was awarded by President Barack Obama. "You can only become truly accomplished at something you love. Don't make money your goal. Instead, pursue the things you love doing and then do them so well that people can't take their eyes off of you."- Maya Angelou. She expressed this quote throughout her career. She shows how money and fame are not always the best action in life. She loved to give her opinion and explain her mindset and her past with different strengths and weaknesses. She did it a different way, she added some figurative language in the mix and a few more pages to hers. She never stopped writing and improving herself even after she earned all that she did and more. She had a true passion for writing and it shows deeply. Angelou inspired many with her words and tales of her past and her hopes for the future.

Angelou was also a civil rights activist. She heard Dr. King spoke in a church on February 10, 1963 and was influenced by the cause, stating that he himself, Martin Luther King Jr wanted it so that all races could be at peace with each other and it would end racism. She then decided to help the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to raise money. The revenue gained from

raising as much money as they did was very successful, and she was appointed the Northern Coordinator in their newly made York office for the SCLC. Angelou left her position and married a South African freedom fighter named Vusumzi Make in 1961. In her resignation letter, she acknowledged Dr. King as her leader and wished the cause good luck. She became a member of the African- American expatriate community while living in Ghana, and became close friends with Malcolm X who was a civil rights activist. When Angelou returned to the U.S, she played a part in the development of the Organization of Afro-American Unity. Malcolm X was assassinated before the organization could start working on February 21, 1965. Three years later, she helped Dr. King organize the Poor People's March. Dr. King would later be assassinated on her birthday which is April 4th. The death of great leaders like them inspired Angelou to write, produce, and narrate a 10-part documentary titled "Blacks, Blues, Black!"

Maya Angelou left a deep and heavy heartbreak on the world. She was a very successful author and will be remembered for years and years to come and will be learned about in history classes and english classes throughout the United States. She had a terrible childhood, but she never let that rule her life. She grew her love for reading and writing at a young age and she let it flourish into something beautiful and amazing for years from passion and hope. She influenced many people of all races and gave hope to all young and inspiring authors. She became a role model for people of all ages with all her accomplishments that she earned. Sadly, the very talented, smart, open minded, lady died in her late 80s. She was 86 years old on the day she died. Her death day is May 28, 2014. She was found by her nurse and she was very unhealthy. Even though she died, she still continues to inspire and motivate young to old people to do more of what they love no matter what they have gone through or how hard it was for them. She showed her strength in everything she had for herself. "Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud" -Maya Angelou 2014. She was always a happy spirit.