

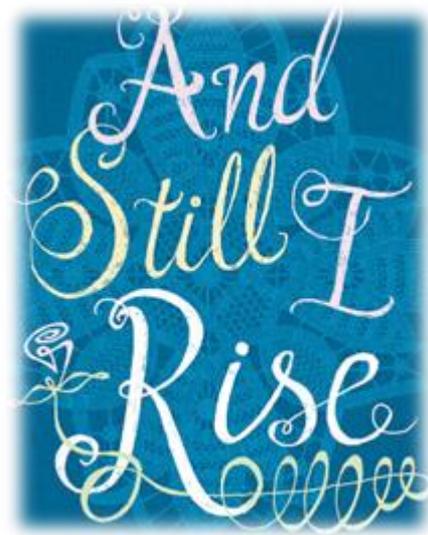
Black History Month

Year 5 and Year 6

Black History Month Activity Pack



Still I Rise by Maya Angelou



Links to the National Curriculum

| National Curriculum | Writing Objectives |
|---------------------|--|
| Year 5 | Write for a range of purposes and audiences based on personal experiences and high quality texts |
| | Develop characterisation by drawing on their reading |
| | Use a dictionary and thesaurus effectively |
| | Read their own writing aloud using appropriate intonation, controlling the tone, volume and movement to make the meaning clear |
| | Indicate degrees of possibility using modal verbs |
| | Use a range of cohesive devices |
| Year 6 | Write effectively for a range of purposes and audiences, selecting language that shows good awareness of the reader |
| | Use a dictionary and thesaurus effectively |
| | Use a range of figurative language (within TAF criteria bullet points 1 and 4) |
| | Use a range of devices to build cohesion within and between paragraphs |
| | Use verb tenses consistently and accurately. |
| | Read their own writing aloud using appropriate intonation, controlling the tone, volume and movement to make the meaning clear |

| National Curriculum | Reading Objectives |
|---------------------|---|
| Year 5 & Year 6 | Continuing to read and discuss an increasingly wide range of fiction, poetry, plays, non-fiction and reference books or textbooks |
| | Identify how the same theme is represented across texts |
| | Learn a wider range of poetry by heart |
| | Prepare poems and plays to read aloud and to perform, showing understanding through intonation, tone and volume so that the meaning is clear to an audience |
| | Discuss words and phrases that capture the reader's interest and imagination |
| | Check that the text makes sense to them, discussing their understanding and explaining the meaning of words in context |
| | Ask questions to improve their understanding |

| | |
|--|--|
| | Draw inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence |
| | Discuss and evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, considering the impact on the reader |
| | Identify how language, structure, and presentation contribute to meaning |

Context

Teaching Points:

Maya Angelou

- Maya Angelou was an American poet, memoirist, and civil rights activist
- She published seven autobiographies, three books of essays, several books of poetry, and is credited with a list of plays, movies, and television shows spanning over 50 years
- She received dozens of awards and more than 50 honorary degrees
- Angelou is best known for her series of seven autobiographies, which focus on her childhood and early adult experiences. The first, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), tells of her life up to the age of 17 and brought her international recognition and acclaim.
- 'Still I Rise'; was published in Angelou's poetry collection, 'And Still I Rise' in 1978. It is the collection's title poem.

Still I rise

- *Still I Rise* was published in Maya Angelou in 1978.
- In this poem Maya Angelou makes a series of statements about herself. She praises her strength, body and ability to rise up and away from her personal and historical past. Nothing can hold her back as she is going to 'rise' about and beyond anything that seeks to control.
- *Still I Rise* is a nine stanza poem that's separated into uneven sets of lines. The first seven stanzas contain four lines, known as quatrains, stanza eight has six lines and the ninth has nine. The first seven stanzas follow a rhyme scheme of ABCB, the eight, ABABCCBBB.
- She wrote a play in 1976 by the same title.
- The poem appeared in an advertising campaign for the UNCF in 1994.
- In the poem, Angelou makes it clear it does not matter how hard the discriminating minds try, the voices of her community can never be muted.

Activities:

Topic

- Give context as to the history of Black History Month and slavery.
- Discuss the impact the poem had on the poet herself.

Poet

- Share information about Maya Angelou
- Discuss and predict reasons for why she decided to write about rising against prejudice and discuss how her own personal experiences have influenced the content of the poem.

Comparisons:

- Read 'Faceless' by Benjamin Zephaniah. Together, discuss the message that is being communicated through his poem. In what way is the message portrayed in *Faceless* similar to that of *Still I Rise*. Are there any differences in these messages? Why is this?

Links to online resources:

- [Maya Angelou's official website](#)
- [BBC Black History Month Teacher Resources](#)
- [National Geographic Kids - Black History Month](#)
- [Benjamin Zephaniah Official Website](#)

Vocabulary and Language

Teaching Points:

- (1) Share new vocabulary with children (e.g. *bitter, beset, soulful, haughtiness, shame, rooted, welling, bear, richly, ancestors*)
- (1) Address that many of these words have multiple meanings and allow children to explore this before they see the words in the poem. Once explored, read the poem and decide which definitions fit the context.
- (2) Discuss the use of non-finite verbs: is she speaking in the past tense or implying this is still an issue now? E.g.- *pumping, falling, springing, living, diggin', leaping, welling, swelling, bringing*.
- (3) Reflect on the use of rhetorical questions and how these provide the reader with the opportunity to reflect on their own actions. How do these rhetorical questions affect you as the reader?
- Focus on the modal verb use of 'may' opposed to 'will' (I'll) and explain how she is giving them permission to bring her down but it won't have an impact on her.

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You **may** trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, **I'll** rise.

- Why has the poem been written in 1st and 2nd person? The first person has been included to show her personal experience while the second person can be a reference to those who subjugate others. Does the use of 'you' make you feel guilty?

Activities:

Create a Story Board (1)

- Children need a secure understanding of the vocabulary in order to understand the poem. Children use/ create illustrations along with key vocabulary that that need to use and understand.

Swap Tense (2)

- Rewrite the second stanza in the simple past tense.
- How has the effect of the poem changed?
- The poem now reads as if it happened and stayed in the past with the issue no longer being relevant today. Whereas, with the use of non-finite verbs, the reader feels the sense of guilt that they are adding to the problem and that this is an issue which the world it yet to overcome.

Rhetorical Questions (3)

- Identify all of the rhetorical questions used in the poem.
- Use hot-seating as a strategy for children to devise their own rhetorical questions. Explain that these aren't questions about what you want to find out. This is your opportunity to have a voice and stand up for yourself, questioning the actions of others. E.g *Did you want to see me broken?*

Comparisons

- *Still I Rise* is mainly written in the present tense whereas *Faceless* uses both the present and the past. Explore why this may be. If you change both poems to be in the same tense, do they create the same effect?
- Both poems use both first and second person pronouns but which poem speaks to you more? Consider whether rhetorical questions make *Still I Rise* feel more personal and measure the impact of placing these within *Faceless*.

Figurative language and Poetic Devices

Teaching Points:

- **Alliteration:** Alliteration is a literary device in which a series of words begin with the same consonant sound. Alliteration is another form of repetition but one that is solely focused on the repetition of consonant

sounds at the beginning of multiple words. For example, 'huts of history' and 'gifts that my ancestors gave'.

- **Assonance:** Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds in the same line such as the sound of /i/ in "With your bitter, twisted lies".
- **Consonance:** Consonance is the repetition of consonant sounds in the same line. For example, the sound of /l/ in "Welling and swelling I bear in the tide" and the sound of /t/ in "Out of the huts of history's shame".
- **Enjambment:** Enjambment is another important literary device that's also quite common in contemporary poetry. It appears when a poet chooses to cut off a sentence or phrase with a line break before its natural stopping point. For example, the transition between lines one and two and three and four in the first stanza.
- **Imagery:** Imagery is used to make readers perceive things involving their five senses. For example, "You may write me down in history"; "You may shoot me with your words" and "I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide."
- **Simile:** It is used to compare an object or person with something else to make the meanings clear to the readers. There are a lot of similes used in this poem such as, "But still, like dust, I'll rise"; "Just like moons and like suns" and "Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines".
- **Metaphors:** Metaphors are a direct comparison of one thing to something else. E.g *I am a black ocean. Shoot me with your words.*
- **End Rhyme:** End rhyme is used to make a stanza melodious. In this poem, the rhyme often repeats in ABCB form within each stanza.
- **Repetition:** The repetition of certain phrases helps to emphasise the point of the poem, such as constant repetition of 'I rise'. This also adds a musical quality to the poem.
- **Refrain:** The lines that are repeated at some distance in the poems are called refrain. The phrase, "Still I'll rise" is repeated in first, third and fifth stanzas with the same words. Hence it has become a refrain.

Activities:

Identify and Replace Rhyme (1)

- Highlight the end rhymes
- What form does the poem take? (ABCB)
- Remove the last two lines in each stanza
- As a group, come up with words to rhyme with the last word on the second line
- From this list, write two new lines to finish each stanza

Spot the Device (2)

- Give children a checklist of figurative devices (Resources section) and ask them to highlight examples in the poem

- Award points for every correct example found

Create Similes (3)

- Highlight the similes throughout the poem
- Ask children to create their own similes which depict determination and self-belief

Replace the Repetition (4)

- Discuss the reason 'I rise' and 'Still I Rise' are repeated
- What do these phrases tell us about the poet?
- Consider alternative phrases to replace these with
- Reread the poem with these changes
- Discuss which poem is more effective and why

Comparisons (5)

- Read *Faceless* and *Still I Rise* aloud. Children split their page in half and write the title of a poem in each half. As you read, the children are to draw icons in each box with any images that come to mind. E.g 'bitter twisted lies' may make you draw twists. Which poem made more images spring to your mind? Why is this? What did the poet include that the other poet didn't?

Links to online resources:

- [What is figurative language? Oak National Academy](#) (from 6:00 mins)
- [Figurative devices videos- BBC Bitesize](#)

Structure

Structure and Form

'Still I Rise' is a nine stanza poem that's separated into uneven sets of lines. The first seven stanzas contain four lines, known as quatrains, stanza eight has six lines and the ninth has nine. The first seven stanzas follow a rhyme scheme of ABCB, the eighth: ABABCC, and the ninth: ABABCCBBB.

Repetition

The main structural device that Angelou uses to support her theme is the **repetition of the phrase "I rise."** She repeats this phrase ten times throughout the poem. Not only does she use the phrase as a refrain, which means it is what sticks in our minds after reading the poem, she does so strategically. The repetition of "I Rise" and "I'll Rise" ten times during the poem, is very significant because it emphasises how much confidence and strength she has even though she suffers so severely from society being

racist towards her. By repeating it throughout the poem it portrays her determination to overcome all the problems she faces during her life. Also, by repeating "I rise" it emphasises the speaker's message which is to always fight for your rights and live strong.

Activities

Rhyming Patterns (1)

- Children can explore the rhyming pattern within the poem.
- Highlight the rhyming couplets
- Why does the pattern change in stanzas eight and nine?

Changing Repetition (2)

- Discuss the message conveyed through the repetition of 'Still I Rise'
- Explain how it shows that she is resilient and overcoming adversity.
- Explore how changing the word 'rise' would change the overall message conveyed
- Can the children think of alternatives for this repetition? How does it affect the poem's tone?
- For example, discuss how 'But I'll fall' changes the themes and feelings of the readers
- Can the children think of their own examples?

Rhythm Explorers (3)

- Give the children a copy of the poem and ask them to count and note down the number of syllables within each line
- Explain that there are a similar number of syllables in most lines to create a rhythm
- Look at the final line in stanza three. Discuss the number of syllables and why this is an anomaly in comparison to previous lines in the poem.
- Explore how her emotions shift. In the first three stanzas, it is evident that she is feeling confident and can overcome adversity, yet after the end of stanza three (three syllables), her emotions change to question the readers and show some sadness before picking up again.
- Discuss how the number of syllables change at the end of the poem. Does this reflect her emotions? What does it suggest? Does it show persistence? Does it show anger? Does it show an increasing power or confidence?

Comparisons

- Look at the poem 'Faceless' by Benjamin Zephaniah

- Explain that they will be discussing the structure of the poem and comparing it to the structure of 'Still I Rise'
- Can the children identify the rhyming structure of the poem? (A, B, A, B, C, C)
- How is this similar or different to 'Still I Rise'?
- How does this change the way the poem is read aloud?
- Which structure do you like best/ find the most effective and why?

Themes

Teaching Points:

Self-Respect and Confidence

Throughout the text, the speaker, who is commonly considered to be Angelou herself, addresses her own oppressor. The "you" she refers to represents the varieties of injustices that people of colour, women, and all marginalized communities have dealt with as long as history has been recorded.

She throws a prior self-derogatory way of thinking to the side and addresses herself lovingly and proudly. The poet seeks to empower herself, as well as all those who have doubted their abilities, strength, beauty, intelligence, or worth. This is seen through lines like "You may trod me in the very dirt / But still, like dust, I'll rise".

Oppression

Oppression is another key theme within the poem. The poet speaks of the legacy of oppression, making references to the suffering of black people throughout history. She condemns the oppressors—ostensibly, white people—with great fierceness. She will make her "slave" ancestors proud by rising above their suffering and defying the oppressors.

Race/Racism

The oppression faced by the speaker is linked to the history of racism. The fact that the speaker calls herself a "black ocean" is significant because this is an overt reference to race, showing that the binary between "you" and "I" in the poem is linked to a racial distinction. She condemns racism and speaks about a universal idea—overcoming prejudice of any kind.

Activities:

Changing Faces (1)

- Explore the poet's feelings throughout the poem
- Many themes are evident throughout the poem. These themes influence the narrator's feelings.
- Discuss with the children how she shows a range of feelings and the reasons why she would be feeling that way.
- Explain to the children that they are part of many groups (family, cultural, religious and gender). Can they share an example of how they have faced adversity as part of one of these groups and how have they risen up against it?

Word Cloud (2)

- Consider which is the most powerful theme in this poem. Children to articulate why they chose this theme. Further examples could include hopelessness, strength, resilience and spirit.
- Write the theme in the centre of a sheet of paper and select words of phrases around the poem that link to the overall theme.
- Which colours would be used to represent this theme? Which colours represent the words and phrases selected.
- Can the colours which are included on the word cloud link to the theme and the emotions?

Comparisons

Comparing Themes: Venn Diagram (1)

- Look at the poem Faceless by Benjamin Zephaniah
- Complete a venn diagram comparing 'Faceless' to 'Still I Rise' focusing on the themes of the poem.
- You may choose to focus on one specific theme (eg. self-respect and confidence/ race/racism) or you may look at multiple themes and colour code these within the same venn diagram.
- See the 'resources' section below for an example

Resources

Still I Rise

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.
Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.
Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?
Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.
You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.
Does my elegance upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
Pouring richly from the skies?
Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear

I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

[Maya Angelou](#) - 1928-2014

Faceless

You have to look beyond the face
to see the person true,
Deep down within my inner space
I am the same as you;
I've counted since that fire burnt
the many lessons I have learnt.
You have to talk to me and not
the skin that holds me in,
I took the wisdom that I got
to make sure I would win;
I'm counting weaker folk than me
who look but truly cannot see.
I've seen compassion from the blind
who think with open eyes,
It's those that judge me quick you'll find
are those that are unwise;
why judge the face that I have on
just value my opinion
Friends will come and friends will go,
now I need friends who feel.
My friends have changed so much and so,
I make sure they are real;
I took the ride and paid the price,
I can't afford to do that twice.
I came to here from ignorance
I cannot call it bliss,
and now I know the importance
of loving me like this;
To leave behind that backward state
of judging looks is very great.
I'm beautiful,

I'm beautiful
this minor fact I know,
I tell you It's incredible
near death has made me grow;
Look at me, smile, you are now seeing
a great thing called a human being.

by Benjamin Zephaniah

Vocabulary and Language: Create a Story Board (1)

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|--|--|--|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;">beset</p> | | | |
|  | | | |
| <p>(verb) To come at from all sides; completely engulfed. "Why are you beset with gloom? 'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells pumping in my living room."</p> | | | |

Themes: Changing Faces (1)

| Emotion | Line(s) from the poem | Facial expression to show the emotion |
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Comparing Themes: Venn Diagram (1)

