

Maya Angelou

You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them.

Maya Angelou was an American poet, author, writer, memoirist, and civil rights activist. She published seven autobiographies, three books of essays, several books of poetry, and was credited with a list of plays, films, and television shows spanning over 50 years. Learn more about this American icon in this monthly patch!

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Discover

1. Maya Angelou is considered one of the greatest American writers. Learn more about who she was and what her life was like. Make sure to have an adult help you look for information about Maya.
2. Explore a little bit of Maya's poetry. Read one of her poems and think about what it means and how it makes you feel. How did she do that? Perhaps try reading "I Love the Way Words Look", "Life Doesn't Frighten Me" or "Woman Work"
3. Maya wrote many different kinds of things, including children's books. Look in your local library and read one of her books.
4. Though she is best known as a writer, Maya has had many jobs including an editor, cook, streetcar conductor, and a dancer. It was

dancing that she first went by Maya Angelou. Learn a little bit of contemporary dance. Pick a few moves and practice them and see if you can find some calypso music to dance to. Maya often performed under the name Miss Calypso.

Connect

5. Maya is best known for her autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. This is just one of seven autobiographies she wrote. Try writing your own story. Think about your own life and write down your story to create your own autobiography.
6. Maya wrote her poem “On the Pulse of Morning” for President Clinton’s 1993 inauguration. She was the second poet to read at a presidential inauguration and the first woman. Write your own poem to honor an event that is happening. Think about what is the significance of the event and what you want to say about it.
7. “I would like to be known as an intelligent woman, a courageous woman, a loving woman, a woman who teaches by being.” Maya Angelou is a woman with a great and varied legacy. Think about what you would want your legacy to be create something to let others know what that would be whether through words, art or another creative expression.

Take Action

8. Maya Angelou is quoted as saying, “Any book that helps a child to form a habit of reading, to make reading one of his deep and continuing needs, is good for him.” Not everyone has access to books at home. Collect old books that are still in good condition and donate them to an organization that works with kids or to your local Little Free Library.

9. For most of her childhood, from ages 8 to 13, Maya did not speak. She was eventually encouraged to speak again by a teacher having her read poetry out loud. Organize a poetry reading for your troop and friends. Have everyone bring a poem to read out loud, either one of their favorites or one they wrote themselves.

10. Maya's work spoke to the racism and sexism she saw and faced in the world. Look at the world around you and write a poem exploring something you would like to change or draw attention to.

11. Maya once said, "Be a rainbow in someone else's cloud." Small actions can make a big difference to someone and brighten their day. Every day for a week make the discussion to do something kind for someone or help them out in some way without being asked. At the end of the week think of how people reacted to you helping them and how it made you feel.