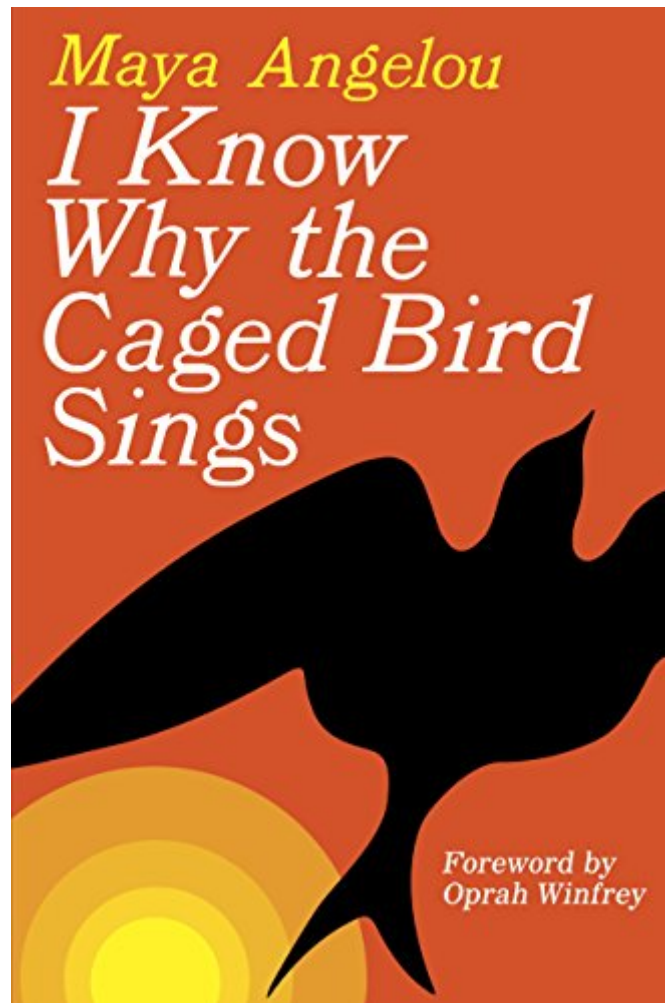




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I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings



Synopsis

Here is a book as joyous and painful, as mysterious and memorable, as childhood itself. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* captures the longing of lonely children, the brute insult of bigotry, and the wonder of words that can make the world right. Maya Angelou's debut memoir is a modern American classic beloved worldwide. Sent by their mother to live with their devout, self-sufficient grandmother in a small Southern town, Maya and her brother, Bailey, endure the ache of abandonment and the prejudice of the local "powhitetrash." At eight years old and back at her mother's side in St. Louis, Maya is attacked by a man many times her age and has to live with the consequences for a lifetime. Years later, in San Francisco, Maya learns that love for herself, the kindness of others, her own strong spirit, and the ideas of great authors ("I met and fell in love with William Shakespeare") will allow her to be free instead of imprisoned. Poetic and powerful, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* will touch hearts and change minds for as long as people read. "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings liberates the reader into life simply because Maya Angelou confronts her own life with such a moving wonder, such a luminous dignity." —James Baldwin

From the Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

Here's my review on one of the three books that I've read by Maya Angelou: *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*: Smiling Through Sadness. Maya Angelou's first memoir, *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*, captures the sweetest, purest, and the most honest inner voice of a black child who grew up to be a heroine. Dr. Angelou does not censor anything; She wants us to know it all. It is so true, straightforward, and uncensored that many white parents have attempted to ban this book from schools. This memorable and mysterious autobiography - originally published in 1969 - was followed by another masterpiece entitled: *Gather Together In My Name*. Both books are available in audio format recorded by Random House Audio. It is amazing that we can hear Dr. Angelou reading her own books to us just like a grandmother putting us to sleep with her adventurous bed-time stories. Dr. Maya Angelou, who has been honored and awarded numerous times, is a pure soul writing about the evil world of the racist America keeping a matching voice on each chapter of her life. When she is writing about her experiences as a five-year-old, you hear a five-year-old talking to you. Being one of the most recognized public figures and a civil rights movement heroine, Maya Angelou, gives us a poetic journey of how a poor disadvantaged black girl was rejected by everyone including her own mother, raped by her mother's boyfriend, and had to witness his crippled uncle hiding under a pile of onions and potatoes to be protected from racist white beasts on a regular basis. The good news is that the story of *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* does not end here. This bird sings her heart out until the cage breaks and she becomes our national treasure. This powerful modern American classic has changed many readers' (and listeners') hearts and minds in a way that every great work of literature should. This book became the best-seller immediately after it was published. What added to my personal itch to read this book when I was first introduced to it was the fact that Dr. Angelou has described William Shakespeare as one of her strongest influence on her life and works. Shakespeare is my all-time favorite "pennist." Buy it, read it, keep it, reread it, highlight it, talk about it, advertise it, buy more of it and give it out as a gift, learn from it, and apply what you've learned from it in your daily life. *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* is coming from a heart and soul of someone who had to witness the unnecessary, harsh, and brutal insults that no ordinary human being can bear. Maya Angelou writes the story of a human who was

pushed to her limits by the ugliness of this world and while being in a saddest cage, sang the happiest song. Once precious Maya Angelou told her younger generation that seem to be unable to cope with the racism in the past and present: “You should be angry. You must not be bitter. Bitterness is like cancer. It eats upon the host. It doesn’t do anything to the object of its displeasure. So use that anger. You write it. You paint it. You dance it. You march it. You vote it. You do everything about it. You talk it. Never stop talking it.”

I loved Maya Angelou’s way of speaking and wisdom, as well as her ability to help others, because she had been through hard trials. I seemed to have learned something every time I heard her speak. Her words had a profound ability to effect and this book does, too.

Childhood memories, living in Arkansas with grandmother, later in St. Louis with mother. Sexual abuse when she was eight years old. Brother Bailey, there love and support, hopes for the future. Back to San Francisco with mother, questioning herself about her sexuality. She was the first African-American to be hired to work on the the transportation department at the age of seventeen.

Deeply moving account of growing up a black girl. This book opened my old heart to understanding the life of what it was like being a person of color in the 40s, and 50s when I was a poor white girl growing up in the mostly black city of Detroit, Mi.

This story of the author’s childhood is beautifully told with honesty, dignity and hope. While some scenes are intense and painful, all shine through the eyes of this bright child who views the world, even at its harshest, with wonder. The chapter describing her graduation from eighth grade encompasses all of these emotions: the joy of a child who has achieved a valued goal and is being recognized as a ‘star’ by her community, only to be told by a crass political speaker that she and her kind have no hope to excel beyond their position as dictated by their race; followed by a realization that the pride and defiance of their very survival has made them strong enough to give lie to his claims. While *The Caged Bird* has the attraction of most good childhood autobiographies, showing through young eyes how someone can overcome the worst kind of adversity and thrive, it has another dimension as well. The author reports with dignified distance on the events of her childhood, but not without critical judgement. In the course of telling her story, she also give insight into her culture and the reasons behind it. Beyond the wonderful style, it’s a worthwhile and enlightening read.

I had ALWAYS heard about this book, but somehow, I had never read it. I finally bought it, and read it in one night. What a great story! Maya Angelou was such a gifted writer and what an understatement that is!

I was impressed with how candid Maya Angelou was about her childhood and growing up. She unashamedly describes events in her life that many would not want to reveal. By doing so she demystifies and normalizes those events for the reader. Her writing flows and is easy to read, yet her descriptions are thorough and vivid. This is a book that all should read. I loved it!

I am surprised why it took me so long before I read this book. I was at a Maya Angelou's presentation for the first time in 2010 and totally enjoyed it. I have had this book on my reading list for many years. Once I started it, I never stopped. It took only a day to read. The book discusses her life as a young black woman living in rural Arkansas, her time with her mother in St. Louis where she will get raped by her mother's boyfriend, her return to Stamps, Arkansas and her eventual move to California where she spent some time with her mother. The book chronicles the life of a young woman who defied all odds and progressed in life. She could have easily become a statistic. Even when she became pregnant at 16, she soldiered on and graduated high school. Unfortunately this account ends with the birth of her son at the age of 16. However, she has other autobiographies that supplement this and are also a must read. I strongly recommend this book to all those who want to learn something about race in American south in the 40s and 50s.

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