



# INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR

<b>Class: VIII</b>	<b>Department: ENGLISH</b>	<b>Date of submission: January 2023</b>
<b>Study Notes</b>	<b>Topic: Caged Bird</b>	<b>Note: To be written in the notebook</b>

## Summary

'Caged Bird' by Maya Angelou is an incredibly important poem in which the poet describes the experience of two different birds, one free and one caged.

The free bird flies around the wind currents, feeling like the sky belongs to him. On the other hand, the caged bird can barely move in its prison. It's angry and frustrated. Its wings are clipped, and its feet are tied together. All it can do is sing fearfully of what it wants and does not know. It sings for its freedom, and everyone, even far distant, can hear its song.



All the while, the free bird is focused on the breeze, the sounds the trees make, and the words in the ground he's planning on eating. Once more, the speaker reiterates the fact that the bird feels as though it owns the sky. The poem concludes with the caged bird singing once more as the poet repeats the third stanza in its entirety.

## Stanza wise meaning of the Poem

A free bird leaps  
on the back of the wind  
and floats downstream  
till the current ends  
and dips his wing  
in the orange sun rays  
and dares to claim the sky.

The first four lines of "Caged Bird" focus on the life of a "free bird"—that is, one that doesn't live in a cage. The free bird can "leap / on the back of the wind" and simply float "downstream" without a destination in mind, continuing "till the current ends." These actions demonstrate its easy-going, carefree lifestyle. This free bird is not only able to go wherever it pleases, but its sense of freedom also makes it feel powerful: it "dares to claim the sky."

But a bird that stalks  
down his narrow cage  
can seldom see through  
his bars of rage  
his wings are clipped and  
his feet are tied  
so he opens his throat to sing.

The second stanza changes the atmosphere completely. Its main focus is on the caged bird and its pain as being confined. The cage's narrow form shows how limiting its confines are as opposed to the openness of the free bird's sky. The bars of rage refers to how due to its anger and pain, the caged bird can barely see past its sorrow. The clipped wings and bound feet are supposed to show how its freedom was taken away from it. The line where the bird opens his mouth to sing is a turning point in the stanza as it is the only thing that the bird can do willingly. The change to the dark mood of the cage bird's narrative is made all the more jarring by the considerably lighter mood of the first stanza.

The caged bird sings  
with a fearful trill  
of things unknown  
but longed for still  
and his tune is heard  
on the distant hill  
for the caged bird  
sings of freedom.

The third stanza goes deeper into the caged bird's song. The bird sings with fear and apprehension for it doesn't wish to live the rest of its life in such a confined manner. The next two lines of things unknown and longed for still is a paradox, for someone cannot long for something they do not know. Here, Angelou is referring to the way someone who was captive all his life would yearn for freedom.

It states that it is an innate emotion to have control over one's self even if the person in question has never had the chance to feel that way. The caged bird's song reaching far enough to the distant hill is a metaphor for how calls of justice are always heard, but not always reciprocated.

The free bird thinks of another breeze  
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees  
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn  
and he names the sky his own

In the fourth stanza, the free bird thinks of things that the caged bird has never experienced and has had the privilege to enjoy them. The fat worms mentioned could be a kind of privilege along with the dawn bright lawn because they seem there just to serve the free bird's desires. By naming the sky his own, the free bird states that there is no other being that is obliged to share it with. This aligns with the preconceived notion that some groups of people are born with rights over others.

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams  
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream  
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied  
so he opens his throat to sing.

In the fifth stanza, the tone shifts yet again from the free bird's bright imagery to the chilling narrative of the caged bird. The grave of dreams refers to all the hopes the caged bird might have had at an earlier age than now seems irrelevant or impossible at its current stage.

The caged bird's shadow is a personification of his powerlessness. The nightmare problem refers to a small part of the caged bird that fears it will never be released. The caged bird continues to sing despite its wavering resilience, showing that it believes that life will get better and will continue to

persist.

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Maya Angelou

The final stanza is a repeat of the third, which delves into the bird's song. The bird cries out about freedom, but it's never stated if its cries are ever heard by its free-flying twin.

### **Critical appreciation of the poem -**

#### **Themes**

'Caged Bird' is filled with powerful themes. These include racial oppression, freedom/captivity, and happiness/sorrow. These themes are all wrapped together in 'Caged Bird' through Angelou's depiction of the two birds, one free and one caged.

The caged bird is an extended metaphor for the Black community in America and worldwide. Angelou is alluding to the lived experience of millions of men, women, and children since the beginning of time and the variety of oppressive tactics, whether physical, mental, or economic, employed by those in power.

Black men, women, and children see "through...bars" while the free bird soars in the sky. The bird sings from a place of sadness rather than joy to convey a broader history of sorrow.

#### **Figurative Analysis:**

**Alliteration:** (repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of nearby words) is used in places like —  
".... can seldom see through (repetition of 's' sound)  
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn  
his shadow shouts on a nightmare screams."  
"sun" and "sky" at the end of stanza one and  
"cage / can" in lines three and four of stanza two.

**Repetition:** is seen throughout the poem but most prominently in the structure of the stanzas and the continual reference to the "free bird" and "caged bird." One of the best examples is seen in the sixth stanza, in which the poet repeats the entire third stanza.

**Symbolism:** Use of an image to represent something else. In this case, the caged bird symbolizes the confined and oppressed African American community in the United States.

**Caged Bird Metaphor:** The poet uses two bird metaphors. The free bird symbolizes white Americans or all free people who enjoy equal rights. The caged bird is a metaphor for/symbolizes oppressed Black Americans who are kept captive through racist policies.

**Personification:** The poet personifies (applies human characteristics) the two birds when she says —

