



'Still I Rise': Maya Angelou

*Adapted from Carolyn Hopkins/Bethel High School's
"Still I Rise Educator's Reference Desk" Lesson Plan*

Oregon Content Standards

EL.CM.SL.09 Analyze the occasion and the interests of the audience, and choose effective verbal and non-verbal techniques, such as volume, expression, rate, gestures, eye contact for presentations.

EL.CM.RE.02 Listen to, read, and understand a wide variety of informational and narrative text, including classic and contemporary literature, poetry, magazines, newspapers, reference materials, and online information.

EL.CM.LI.13 Evaluate the impact of word choice and figurative language on tone, mood, and theme.

AR.CM.CP.03 Create, present and/or perform a work of art by controlling essential elements and organizational principles and describe how well the work expresses an intended idea, mood or feeling.

Introduction: This plan was created to expose students to Maya Angelou's powerful poem, "Still I Rise," as well as to enhance their understanding of the power of poetry. It informs students about poetry's unique format and rhythms, as well as devices such as metaphor, simile, and personification. It demonstrates how these poetic conventions can add a tremendous punch to a poet's message.

Period: One to three 50-minute sessions

Learning Objectives:

- Students will annotate the poem, "Still I Rise," for the poet's tone and theme.
- Students will be able to identify similes, metaphors, allusions and personification in the poem, "Still I Rise."
- Students will listen to and respond to the oral presentation of poetry.

Materials and Resources:

- Maya Angelou's poem, "Still I Rise," from the Poetry Out Loud poetry anthology, available online at www.poetryoutloud.org
- Poetry Annotation Chart (page 14)
- Oral Interpretation of Literature guide (page 9)
- Dictionary, encyclopedia or online resources such as Project Poetry www.twinfeld.net/teachers/fowler/classroom/resources/poetry_project/



LESSON PLAN 1: 'STILL I RISE'

Day One

1. Distribute “Still I Rise” to each student along with the annotation chart. Explain that poetry is often best enjoyed and understood when read aloud. To give students a strong understanding of the poem’s tone, it is best that the teacher read the poem first and then a few students read the poem aloud to see if they can find alternative interpretations in their own recitation.
2. Put the following literary terms on the board: personification, metaphor, simile, tone, allusion. Have students define these terms by looking them up online or in dictionaries or encyclopedias. Explain that they will be using their annotation charts to look for these poetic devices throughout the poem. Discuss how these devices help the reader better understand and enjoy the speaker’s message. They will begin to search for similes, metaphors, personification, allusions (made to slavery) and tone, and place them in the annotation boxes. After completing their charts, students summarize in a short written response of three to four sentences, what the poem’s message or theme appears to be. Have students explain how that determination was made by using analysis to connect the poetic devices listed in the charts.
3. Discuss how these elements of poetry and literature can and should influence students’ recitation choices for Poetry Out Loud. How might understanding similes and metaphors change the oral delivery of poetry for an audience?

Day Two

1. Ask students to review the Poetry Out Loud anthology, either online or in hard copy format, looking up poems that exemplify simile, metaphor, allusion and personification. Allow 15 - 20 minutes, depending on your students’ access to the internet or copies of the anthology. (To help meet additional research standards, ask students to find the Poetry Out Loud website, identify the Search/Browse Poems section and review the poems on their own.)
2. Once students have chosen a poem, have them work individually reviewing the poem for examples of allusion, personification, simile and metaphor (you may wish to put the definitions of these terms back on the board, or have students compare their own poems with the examples from “Still I Rise”).
3. Remind students of their suggestions and comments they made about how these forms of poetic expression can and should have an influence on the way the poem is read aloud. Ask a few students to read their chosen poems to the class and seek the input and comments of the rest of the class on their performance. For each, ask the class what they thought the poem meant, what the themes were, and to identify examples of allusion, metaphor, simile and personification from the recitation.
4. Assign students the task of preparing their selected poems for recitation at the next class session, paying particular attention to how they can deliver them in a way that takes the poetic devices into consideration. Use the Oral Interpretation of Literature handout to help guide their preparation.



Day Three

1. Allow students five minutes of preparation and rehearsal time before beginning their recitations.
2. Ask all students to pay particular attention to the use of poetic devices in the poems and to consider the various recitation and delivery choices made by their classmates in their performances.
3. Ask students to recite their poems. After all students have spoken, open discussion of the poems. Keep the focus on what delivery choices were made to help augment and clarify the poetic devices in the poems.

GUIDE THE DISCUSSION:

- Is it harder or easier to understand the poems when they are spoken out loud? Is it harder or easier to understand the poems when you read them on the page? Why?
- What were some of the most effective examples of recitation style you saw during the class? What did those students have in common? Speed of delivery? Volume? Confidence? Clarity? Emotional tone? Other changes in delivery?
- How does reciting poetry out loud change the way we understand or feel poetry? Does it help or hinder our enjoyment of poetry? Why?



LESSON PLAN 1: 'STILL I RISE'

Student Name _____

Title of Poem _____

ANNOTATION CHART

SIMILES	METAPHORS	PERSONIFICATION	ALLUSIONS

SUMMARIZE THE POEM'S THEME:
