

## Caged Bird

By Maya Angelou

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.

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 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 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.

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.

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.

### Notes:

List as many words/phrases from this poem that convey "freedom"

List as many words/phrases from this poem that convey "oppression"

What could "bars of rage" symbolize?

What does the "caged bird" (an *oppressed person*) dream of? Why?

How is this possible?

What value is there in "singing" for freedom from oppression? Who needs to hear such songs?

What might the "fat worms" symbolize?

What do these two stanzas imply about the American Dream?

Some people argue that *caged birds* "don't know what they're missing." Must oppressed people **KNOW** that they are oppressed? Is it justifiable to deny freedom on the basis of ignorance?