



# Still I rise



This poem by **Maya Angelou**, American poet and civil rights activist, is a reflection of resilience, encouraging us to not only fight to survive but also thrive in the wake of trauma and injustice.

## Still I rise

You may write me down in history  
With your bitter, twisted lies,  
You may trod me in the very dirt  
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?  
Why are you beset with gloom?  
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells  
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,  
With the certainty of tides,  
Just like hopes springing high,  
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?  
Bowed head and lowered eyes?  
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,  
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?  
Don't you take it awful hard  
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines  
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,  
You may cut me with your eyes,  
You may kill me with your hatefulness,  
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?  
Does it come as a surprise  
That I dance like I've got diamonds  
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame  
I rise  
Up from a past that's rooted in pain  
I rise  
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,  
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.  
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
I rise  
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  
I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise.



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## Activity steps

1. Ask participants what, if any, poems they like or have explored in the past.
2. Play the video of Maya Angelou reciting Still I rise, or read the poem aloud.
3. Give each participant a Still I rise handout and walk through the contents.
4. Arrange participants into small groups or pairs. Ask them to talk about and write answers to the 'reflect and discuss' questions.
5. Debrief with the group.
6. Invite participants to choose a writing activity.

## Reflect and discuss

- How did you feel when reading or listening to this poem? Which part stood out most for you? Why?
- How important is it to 'rise up' against injustice? Which issue(s) is most important to you? Why?
- How would you describe the personality or characteristics of the person featured in the poem? Are these positive or negative qualities? Explain.
- **Still I rise** is about resilience, the ability to both survive hardship and thrive in its wake.
  - a. Is resilience important? Why or why not?
  - b. Who is the most resilient person you know? What made you choose that person?
  - c. What are some ways to develop resilience?

## Write it out!

Write a poem or short story that features an example of resilience from your own life.