



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.



Task 1: Identify

With two different coloured highlighters, highlight any words, phrases or descriptions in the poem that relate to:

1. The caged bird or captivity
2. The free bird or freedom

Task 2: Comprehend

Summarise what happens in each stanza. Each stanza's summary should be one sentence long.

Task 3: Explain

What are the differences between how the caged bird sees and experiences the world and how the free bird sees the world? Present your results in a table in your books: one column for the free bird and one for the caged bird.

Task 4: Caged vs Free

Provide extended answers the following three questions:

- a) What is a "FREE BIRD"? Explain what this could be a metaphor for.
- b) What is a "CAGED BIRD"? Explain what this could be a metaphor for.
- c) What connections can you find between these two ideas and our big question: *How can we rise above obstacles to achieve our dreams?* Answer in a paragraph.

Extension 1: The Craft of Poetry

Recreate the following table in your book and complete it. You will need to quote examples of each technique in Maya Angelou's poem, and explain what effect you think this language would have on an audience hearing this poem:

Poetic Device	Definition	Example from poem	Effect of example
Rhyme			
Repetition			
Alliteration			
Personification			
Metaphor			

Extension 2: Privilege and Dispossession

The free bird "names the sky his own". Why would he do this, and what is the importance of 'naming' something? The caged bird "sings of freedom". Why would he do this, and why would the free bird not do the same? How do their different positions result in different ways of viewing and interpreting their world?

Answer these questions in a response that is at least two paragraphs long. Draw parallels between the imagery of the 'caged' and 'free' birds and real-world examples in order to illustrate your ideas.