In *Holt Literature and Language Arts*, you read “Brother,” from Maya Angelou’s autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. In the selections you are about to read, you will learn more about the experiences that made Maya Angelou the extraordinary individual she is today.

In the biographical essay “Maya Angelou,” Joyce Hansen gives us a sense of the events that shaped Angelou’s life.

Angelou’s poem “Life Doesn’t Frighten Me” presents a more subjective viewpoint. “Life Doesn’t Frighten Me” exists as a personal statement in which Angelou herself tells us how she’s managed to overcome the fears that otherwise might have beaten her down.

Marguerite Johnson, who became known as Maya Angelou, was born on April 4, 1928, in St. Louis, Missouri. She and her brother, Bailey, were raised by their grandmother, the owner of a country store in Stamps, Arkansas.

During her lifetime, Angelou struggled to overcome many difficult circumstances, a process she believes made her strong. The events of her life became known to millions through the 1970 publication of her autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, which was nominated for a National Book Award and later used as the basis for a TV movie.

**BEFORE YOU READ**

How did you become you? What are the circumstances that helped shape you? Who are the individuals who changed your life? This biographical essay provides a sketch of the experiences that formed Maya Angelou.
“I was mute for five years,” Maya Angelou has said. “I wasn’t cute and I didn’t speak. . . . But my grandma told me all the time, ‘Sister, Mama don’t care what these people say about you being a moron, being a idiot. Mama don’t care. Mama know, Sister, when you and the good Lord get ready, you’re gonna be a preacher.’”

In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, the first of her five autobiographies, Maya Angelou begins to chronicle her life. She was a little girl with a poet’s heart. But when she was seven, her song was silenced by a terrible experience and she stopped speaking. With the help of her grandmother who raised her in Stamps, Arkansas, the close-knit black community there, and a perceptive teacher who recognized her literary gifts and introduced her to literature, Maya found her voice again. She graduated from her segregated school at the top of her eighth-grade class.

She left Arkansas at thirteen to go to California to live with her mother. By sixteen, she had a child of her own to raise. “The greatest gift I’ve ever had was the birth of my son. . . . When he was small, I knew more than he did, I expected to be his teacher. So because of him I educated myself. When he was four . . . I taught him to read. But then he’d ask questions, and I didn’t have the answers, so I started my lifelong love affair with libraries. . . .”

She also refused to be controlled by a society that defined her as inferior because she was black and female.
“I decided many years ago to invent myself. I had obviously been invented by someone else—by a whole society—and I didn’t like their invention.” Maya Angelou redefined herself. When she was in her twenties, she studied dance and was in a musical that toured Europe and Africa. Angelou also used her talents to try to help make the world a better place. In 1960, she and another performer wrote, produced, and appeared in the revue *Cabaret for Freedom* to raise money for the civil rights movement. She also spent time in Ghana, West Africa, working as a journalist in the 1960s. She has written, produced, directed, and acted in theater, movie, and television productions. She was nominated for an Emmy Award for her performance in the television miniseries *Roots* and was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in poetry. Maya Angelou also has twelve honorary doctorates.

Millions of Americans saw and heard her recite her poem “On the Pulse of Morning” for President Clinton’s inauguration in 1993.

The message she brings through the example of her life and her art is clear. “All of my work is meant to say, you may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated.”

Maya Angelou continues to rise, and we soar with her.
**Life Doesn’t Frighten Me**

**Maya Angelou**

Shadows on the wall  
Noises down the hall  
Life doesn’t frighten me at all  
Bad dogs barking loud  
Big ghosts in a cloud  
Life doesn’t frighten me at all.

Mean old Mother Goose  
Lions on the loose  
They don’t frighten me at all  
Dragons breathing flame  
On my counterpane  
That doesn’t frighten me at all.

I go boo  
Make them shoo  
I make fun  
Way they run  
I won’t cry  
So they fly  
I just smile  
They go wild  
Life doesn’t frighten me at all.

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*Life Doesn’t Frighten Me* from *And Still I Rise* by Maya Angelou. Copyright © 1978 by Maya Angelou. Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.
Tough guys in a fight
All alone at night
Life doesn’t frighten me at all.

Panthers in the park
Strangers in the dark
No, they don’t frighten me at all.

That new classroom where
Boys pull all my hair
(Kissy little girls
With their hair in curls)
They don’t frighten me at all.

Don’t show me frogs and snakes
And listen for my scream.
If I’m afraid at all
It’s only in my dreams.

I’ve got a magic charm
That I keep up my sleeve,
I can walk the ocean floor
And never have to breathe.

Life doesn’t frighten me at all
Not at all
Not at all
Life doesn’t frighten me at all.
OWN THE SELECTIONS

PRACTICING THE STANDARDS

Biography/Poem   Write a few sentences telling how the biographical essay and the poem work together to provide you with a sense of who Maya Angelou is.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

KEEPING TRACK

Personal Word List   Record the words you learned from the essay in your Personal Word List.

Personal Reading Log   As you record this selection in your Personal Reading Log, write a few sentences explaining which of the pieces you liked better. Award yourself 1 point on the Reading Meter for reading these selections.

Checklist for Standards Mastery   Check your progress in recognizing first-person and third-person narration. Use the Checklist for Standards Mastery in the back of this book to track your progress in mastering the standards.
Go Beyond Literary Texts

Author “Interview”  Think about what you know of Maya Angelou and what you’d like to find out. Then write a list of interview questions that you would prepare if you had the opportunity to meet her.

A good interview contains a mix of question types. Avoid asking questions that can be answered by a simple “yes” or “no” or by simple research.

**Interview Questions**

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 
Build Independence Through Interactive Selections

(Interactive Reading, pages 195-221)

Maya Angelou
Joyce Hansen • page 196

Life Doesn’t Frighten Me
Maya Angelou • page 198

INTRODUCE
- Tell students that they are going to read a brief biographical essay on Maya Angelou, along with Angelou’s poem “Life Doesn’t Frighten Me.”
- Invite a volunteer to read the Author Study and Before You Read aloud. Have students share what they know about segregation in the United States in the 1950s.

MODEL
- Have students locate and read the first note on Interactive Reading page 196. Point out that by circling pronouns that appear in the piece, students will be able to identify the narrator’s point of view.

TEACH
- Have the class work independently to read “Maya Angelou” and “Life Doesn’t Frighten Me.” Remind students to “Say Something” as they move along.
- As students complete these selections, have them add their comments to their Personal Reading Logs.

ASSESS AND EXTEND
- You may photocopy and have students complete the “Say Something” Chart in Section Three of the Teacher’s Edition to evaluate students’ understanding of the selections.
- Use the Vocabulary Check on page 66 and Comprehension Check on page 67 of the Teacher’s Edition to evaluate students’ mastery of the standards.
- Assign the Author “Interview” project on Interactive Reading page 201 as an extension activity.

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION
Maya Angelou; Life Doesn’t Frighten Me

Learners Having Difficulty
Have students preview the two selections. You may wish to have them listen to the poem “Life Doesn’t Frighten Me” read aloud on the Audio CD. The poem is easily accessible to these learners.

Benchmark Students
Engage students’ interest in “Maya Angelou” by having them read the direct quotations from Maya Angelou while you read Hansen’s narration describing the writer’s life.

Advanced Students
For the poem “Life Doesn’t Frighten Me,” invite each student to copy a part of the poem and illustrate it with the things that “don’t frighten” Angelou. Afterward, display the artwork. Note that the poem has been published as a picture book.

TEACHER TO TEACHER
To help students understand the relationship between the two selections, group students into pairs. Have each student choose a passage to read aloud and to “Say Something” about. One student should choose a passage from the Hansen essay; the other student should choose a passage from the poem. Then, see if students can connect details in the essay with details in the poem.
Maya Angelou and Life Doesn’t Frighten Me

Interactive Reading, page 196

Reading Standard 1.4  Monitor expository text for unknown words or words with novel meanings by using word, sentence, and paragraph clues to determine meaning.

Vocabulary Development

- **perceptive, adjective**: able to comprehend through insight or intuition
- **segregated, adjective**: set apart or separated, according to race or gender
- **redefined, verb**: changed the nature of; reinvented
- **inauguration, noun**: ceremony that signifies the formal or official beginning of the President’s term

A. Words in Context

Use the vocabulary words above to complete this paragraph. Use each word only once.

As an African American in the 1930s, Maya Angelou attended (1) _______________ schools. With the help of a (2) _______________ woman named Mrs. Flowers, who sensed her talents, Angelou triumphed over a childhood tragedy. Angelou (3) _______________ herself several times by changing careers; she became a major literary figure with the publication of her autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. One of the triumphs of her life was being invited to write and read a poem for the (4) _______________ of President Bill Clinton in 1993.

B. Sentence Completion

Complete each sentence by writing the vocabulary word that makes the most sense in it.

1. Maya Angelou grew up in poverty. She _______________ herself by becoming a world-famous writer.
2. “Life Doesn’t Frighten Me” is about a _______________ child’s coming to grips with a frightening world.
3. Angelou’s life proves that being raised in a _______________ world was not always a barrier to someone with talent and convictions.
4. The first poet to be invited to recite a poem at a presidential _______________ was Robert Frost in 1961.
Maya Angelou and Life Doesn’t Frighten Me

Interactive Reading, page 196

Reading Standard 3.5 Identify the speaker, and recognize the difference between first- and third-person narration.

A. Circle the letter of the best response to each item.

1. “Maya Angelou” is a **biographical** essay written by—
   A Jane Hansen   C Rosa Parks
   B Maya Angelou   D Angelou’s grandmother

2. Which quote from “Maya Angelou” is a direct quote from Maya Angelou herself?
   F “She was a little girl with a poet’s heart.”
   G “She refused to be controlled by a society that defined her as inferior because she was black and female.”
   H “I decided years ago to invent myself.”
   J “Maya Angelou continues to rise, and we soar with her.”

3. The **speaker** in “Life Doesn’t Frighten Me” is—
   A a little girl   C Joyce Hansen
   B the adult Maya Angelou   D a teacher

B. Write two or three sentences that describe Joyce Hansen’s attitude toward her subject, Maya Angelou.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Chapter 5

Practice Read: The Picture

Vocabulary Check, page 64
A: 1. realm
2. shelf
3. gloss
4. pod
5. signature
B: 1. mirrorlike
2. shallow
3. adults, young ones
4. distinctive
5. territory

Comprehension Check, page 65
A: 1. C
2. G
3. A
B: Passages will vary. Check to be sure the content of the passage remains roughly the same.

Maya Angelou and Life Doesn’t Frighten Me

Vocabulary Check, page 66
A: 1. segregated
2. perceptive
3. redefined
4. inauguration
B: 1. redefined
2. perceptive
3. segregated
4. inauguration

Comprehension Check, page 67
A: 1. A
2. H
3. A
B: Answers will vary, but the responses should indicate Hansen’s respect for Angelou.

What Is Stress?

Vocabulary Check, page 68
A: 1. potentially
2. motivate
3. mobilized
B: 1. get ready to work together; respond
2. real chance
3. sit still; not respond

Comprehension Check, page 69
A: 1. D
2. F
3. C
B: Answers will vary, but students should mention one or more of the facts presented in “What Is Stress?”

from Dear Mrs. Parks

Vocabulary Check, page 70
A: 1. stand
2. chronic
3. race
4. intolerable
5. harassments
6. boycott
7. domestic
B: 1. existed throughout
2. unbearable
3. doing nothing

Comprehension Check, page 71
A: 1. D
2. H
3. B
B: Answers may vary widely. Students should use one or two specific details that people would enjoy knowing about.
In the biographical essay "Maya Angelou," Joyce Hansen gives us a sense of the events that shaped Angelou's life. Angelou's poem "Life Doesn't Frighten Me" presents a more subjective viewpoint. "Life Doesn't Frighten Me" exists as a personal statement in which Angelou tells us how she managed to overcome the fears that otherwise might have beaten her down.

Marguerite Johnson, who became known as Maya Angelou, was born on April 4, 1928, in St. Louis, Missouri. She and her brother, Bailey, were raised by their grandmother, the owner of a country store in Stamps, Arkansas.

During her lifetime, Angelou struggled to overcome many difficult circumstances, a process she believes made her strong. The events of her life became known to millions through the 1970 publication of her autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, which was nominated for a National Book Award and later used as the basis for a TV movie.

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The message she brings through the example of her life and her art is clear. "All of my work is meant to say, you may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated." Maya Angelou continues to rise, and we soar with her.

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In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, the first of her five autobiographies, Maya Angelou begins to chronicle her life. She was a little girl with a poet’s heart. But when she was just six years old, she was rape, which left her with a speech impediment. She found her voice again with the help of her grandmother, who raised her in Stamps, Arkansas, the close-knit black community there, and a perceptive teacher who recognized her literary gifts and introduced her to literature. She graduated from her segregated school at the top of her eighth-grade class. She left Arkansas at thirteen to go to California to live with her mother. By sixteen, she had a child of her own to raise. The great joy of her life was the birth of her son, who was small. She also refused to be controlled by a society that defined her as inferior because she was black and female.
Life Doesn’t Frighten Me

Maya Angelou

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Noises down the hall
Life doesn’t frighten me at all
Big ghosts in a cloud
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Mean old Mother Goose
Lions on the loose
They don’t frighten me at all
Dragons breathing flame
On my counterpane
That doesn’t frighten me at all.

I go boo
Make them shoo
I make fun
Way they run
I won’t cry
So they fly
I just smile
They go wild
Life doesn’t frighten me at all.

Tough guys in a fight
All alone at night
Life doesn’t frighten me at all.
Panthers in the park
Strangers in the dark
No, they don’t frighten me at all.

That new classroom where
Boys pull all my hair
(Kissy little girls
With their hair in curls)
They don’t frighten me at all.

Don’t show me frogs and snakes
And listen for my scream.
If I’m afraid at all
It’s only in my dreams.

I’ve got a magic charm
That I keep up my sleeve,
I can walk the ocean floor
And never have to breathe.

Life doesn’t frighten me at all
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Go Beyond Literary Texts

Think about what you know of Maya Angelou and what you would like to find out. Then write a list of interview questions that you would prepare if you had the opportunity to meet her.

A good interview contains a mix of question types. Avoid asking questions that can be answered by a simple “yes” or “no” or by simple research.

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

Students’ responses will vary but should be thoughtful and in-depth. Questions should not require “yes” or “no” answers.