



The Collected Autobiographies of Maya Angelou

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Superbly told, with the poet's gift for language and observation, Angelou's autobiography of her childhood in Arkansas - a world of which most Americans are ignorant.

The Collected Autobiographies of Maya Angelou Details

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Desi Valentine says

Her attitude toward the men in her life was very frustrating, for me. I understand that she is a child of an earlier generation, and also a remarkable survivor. But often I wanted to shake her young self and scream "WHY DO YOU LET THEM SPEAK TO YOU THAT WAY?" So many of the black men in her stories seemed to want Dr. Du Bois's strength, but not his courtesy, and had forgotten (or never read) his exhortation to stop treating their mothers and sisters like servants and whores. "A Song Flung Up to Heaven" is a prayer of thanks for sisterhood, and my favourite of Angelou's autobiographies.

Nicole (Reading Books With Coffee) says

Maya Angelou really is quite the woman! After hearing that she passed away, I knew I had to read her autobiographies. I read I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings years ago, but it never occurred to me to pick up her other ones. I really am sad that I didn't read them earlier.

I'm actually glad I went with her collected autobiographies, because she did so much, and I felt like her life story flowed a lot better being able to read all of her autobiographies as a collective whole.

I loved seeing her life up to when she started writing I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings, and she had such an eventful life! It did get a little tedious at times, especially with All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes and A Song Flung Up To Heaven. All together, it was a definitely a marathon, and I think by the time I got to her last two books, I kind of wanted to be done with her autobiographies. They were interesting, and I don't want to take away from that at all, but I also wish I had taken a little more time with them.

It's so easy to see how she became the person that she was- she is definitely a survivor, and always landed on her own two feet, no matter what happened to her. I was quite surprised by some of things I read- like running a brothel, and traveling all over the world (and even making an effort to learn the language of every country she visited) and working for both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr...she is truly an inspiration, and I feel like we're so lucky that she shared her story with us.

She really does have a way with words, and there were times when I forgot I was reading an autobiography. There's something very poetic about the way she writes, and she has a way of feeling like she's telling you a story.

Let's Rate It: I feel so honored to have read Maya Angelou's story. I feel like I understand her world so much better after reading her autobiographies, and I really regret taking so long to read them! Reading them as one collective work was daunting, especially with her last couple autobiographies, but I also liked seeing her life as a whole, instead of in shorter stories. Her Collected Autobiographies get 4 stars.

Ron Stafford says

What can be said about all the Autobiographies of Maya in one tome. It is witty, beautiful written, soul

stirring and humors all at once. I had previously read Caged Bird and All God's Children, but to read them all together marvelous. The many twist and turns her life took, she was a Women Phenomenal.

Becky Kapes says

I've read a lot of books and this one had more impact than almost any other. This is an amazing collection that literally changed my life (or at least my way of thinking about the world). I had previously read her best known works, but this included several pieces about her earlier life that were completely amazing. Did you know Maya Angelou was at different times homeless, a lounge singer, a pimp, a mistress, a single mother? Me neither. She's very open and honest about her triumphs and mistakes and this book gave me a much needed dose of courage to make some changes in my own life.

Jeanne Arp says

I highly recommend this collection which contains all six of Ms. Angelou's autobiographies from 'I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings' to 'A Song Flung Up to Heaven'. When read like this, these six books make up chapters in her story that runs from her birth during the Depression through the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Aside from the amazing life and story of Ms. Angelou, it gives us an up close and personal view of the American Black experience during those years. The book left me hungry for more. I want to ask her, "How did you not only survive, but thrive through the terrible adversity of your life?" And "How did you evolve from the angry revolutionary of your youth to the woman full of grace and love that we all came to know?" And finally, "How do I take your wisdom into my own heart and pass it on to our youth who so desperately need it?" I will be looking for more Maya Angelou books seeking the answers to those questions.

Dilshad says

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.

- I know why the caged bird sings.

Marguerite Ann Johnson's autobiography is one of the most genuine account I have come across, laying out in the open her victories and slips as she explores her identity as a Black woman and finds her place in the world, it is full of uplifting and powerful life lessons.

Reading about her life experiences has been thoroughly entertaining and thought provoking at the same time.

This remarkable woman's life story is highly recommended.

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

? Maya Angelou

Makoto Asing says

Maya is an amazing writer! She is poetically beautiful and rich in experience. I love her blunt innocence and desire for life. She really captures her memories of childhood traumas and takes you there to where you feel compassion for both victim and perpetrator. It's a hard read but I'm just taking it slow and really enjoying her literature. So far I have finished "I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings" and started "Gather in My Name". It's been a great history lesson for me of real segregation in the 1930's and pictures of early San Francisco.

Linda says

A Song Flung Up to Heaven is the final volume of the six in The Collected Autobiographies of Maya Angelou. I reviewed the other five autobiographies under their own book titles, but I will review A Song Flung Up to Heaven as part of the six volume set.

A Song Flung Up to Heaven picks up Maya's story as she is returning from Ghana to the United States to work with Malcolm X. She is plagued by the guilt of leaving her son, Guy, in Ghana, and she is almost immediately assaulted with the news of the murder of Malcom X. In this volume, Maya shares her personal life as it intersects with major historical events, including the Watts riots and the death of Martin Luther King Jr. This book was similar in style to the others. Maya's writing is straightforward and easy, but, at the same time, poetic. We see a little less humor in this installment than the others.

What struck me over and over while I was reading all of the volumes is the amount of living Maya did in only 40 years covered by the autobiographies. Her life was truly fascinating, and she was remarkably honest in these memoirs. She never shied away from her flaws and mistakes, but she learned from them. We can, too. She shows us that the human spirit can triumph.

Beth Shields-Szostak says

1st edition thus, signed & inscribed by author

Gina says

I loved discovering the back story behind this woman of great wisdom. Her past becomes the bedrock upon which her wisdom was constructed. Behind every great person is a messy story that shapes who they become. Her stories give me hope!

Marzieh says

This is definitely a book worth reading, especially if one's interested in the history of racism in America and the civil right's movement. It was a long read, but I learned greatly from Maya Angelou's life experiences. Her writing is thought provoking. There were many lines in the book that I read several times because of the powerful message they conveyed and the elegance with which it was expressed. The first half of the book (especially where she talks about her childhood) was truly interesting. I could not put the book down. The second half however was less absorbing for me. Overall, she writes beautifully, even about the most mundane subjects. This is definitely the best autobiography I have read so far.

Maria says

7/16/14

RIP Ms. Maya - I will miss your wisdom.

4/17/14

I think I want to read this again. Got it on my Nook so not so bulky to carry around. Love Ms. Maya - and love reading about her life.

10/25/12

Finished "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" - will read "Heart of a Woman" next - but want to read something else in between...

9/22/12

I've read these several times before and am in the mood to read them again. This volume is actually all of them - I'm reading them one at a time - started "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" today.

Diane says

I'm on page 380. Zipped through I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, almost finished with Gather Together in My Name. Maya Angelou is now only 19 and has lived more than many in a lifetime. She is a vivid writer and very readable. Such a page turner! Next up, Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' a Merry Christmas.

Update, still a page turner...almost done with the fourth book now, page 780-ish. 8/18/14

She's still in her 30's. Starting Book 5, Swing Low Sweet Chariot...she's in Africa, we'll see where she ends up. From the title, it seems this book is 'comin' for to carry her home."

The most memorable one thing about this woman is her resourcefulness and proactivism in the face of downturns. Over and over she gets up and gets going!

Finished Labor Day Weekend. Good one all the way through. My favorites were the first two, which were freshest and most vivid. But easy read and interesting from page one to the end.

Jing says

This is one of the most impressive books I've ever read. What a life! Maya Angelou's writing was direct, beautiful and captivating. But her courage! And her total abandon when she plunged herself in the messiness of life! And her willingness to laugh at herself, to laugh at life, to express such fierce emotions while keeping an open mind, to condemn all the hatred without bitterness. What a free spirit!

And such touching description of Dr. Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. Such insight of the civil rights movement.

Carolyn says

Maya Angelou is a fantastic story teller and now I see why. Her engagement with life in 1950s and 60s America is an incredible journey. Her love affair with Africa and her experiences as part of the Civil Rights movement- in her engagement with Dr King and Malcolm X provide a fantastic insight into life at that time and the very real struggles that a black woman, as a lone parent with incredible self made opportunities faced.

A really uplifting read for all women.
