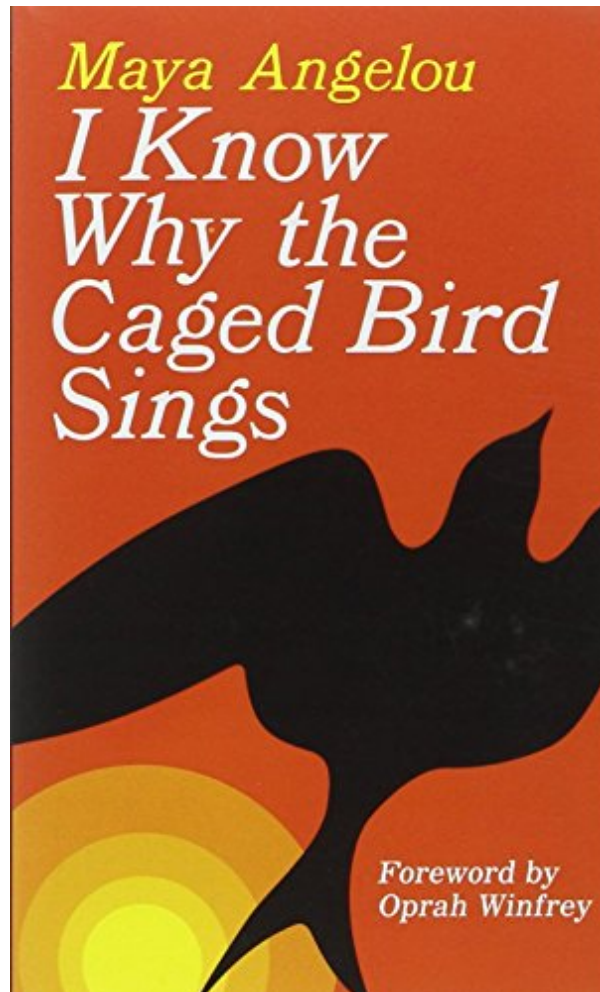
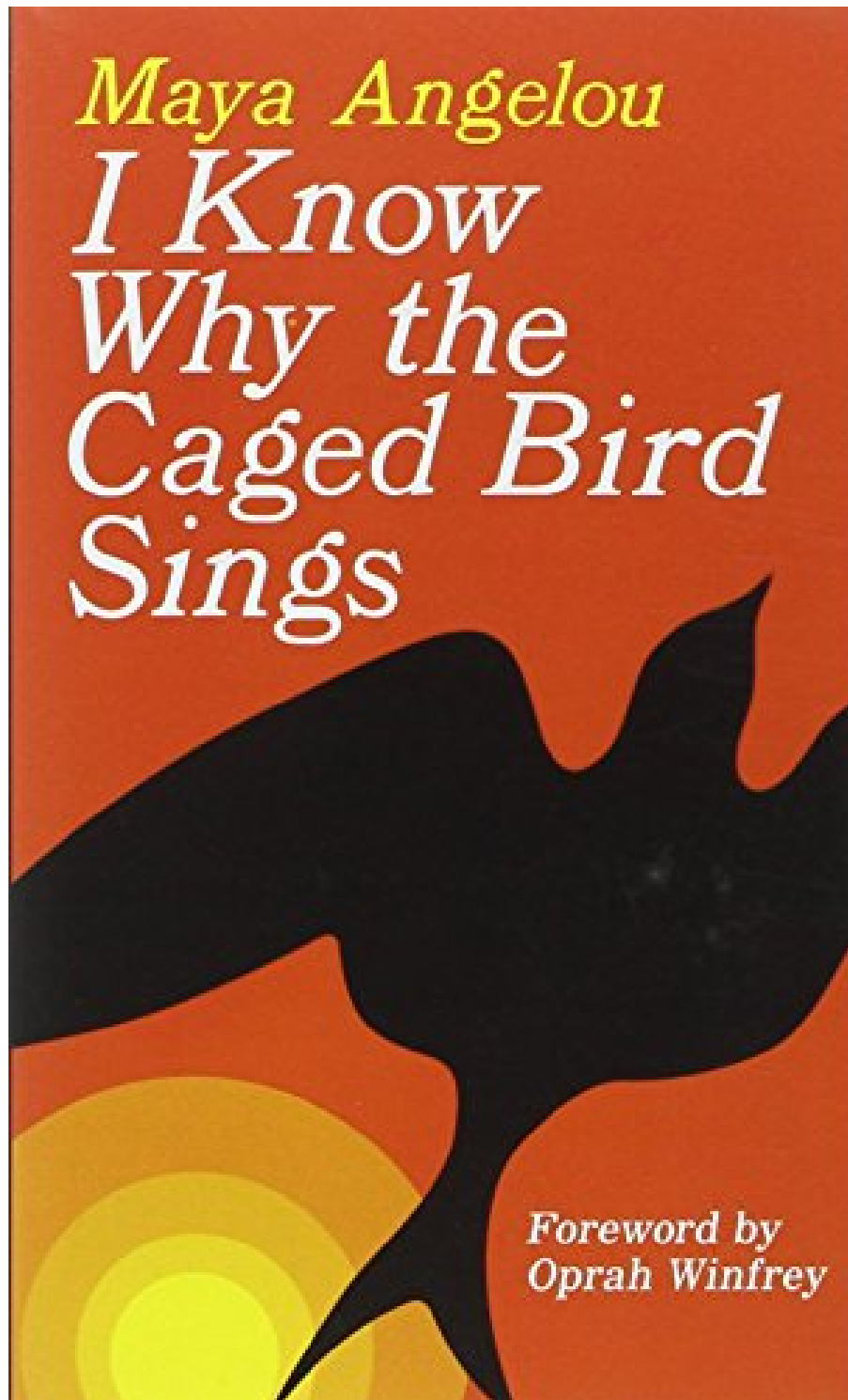


I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS BY MAYA ANGELOU



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Amazon.com Review

In this first of five volumes of autobiography, poet Maya Angelou recounts a youth filled with disappointment, frustration, tragedy, and finally hard-won independence. Sent at a young age to live with her grandmother in Arkansas, Angelou learned a great deal from this exceptional woman and the tightly knit black community there. These very lessons carried her throughout the hardships she endured later in life, including a tragic occurrence while visiting her mother in St. Louis and her formative years spent in California--where an unwanted pregnancy changed her life forever. Marvelously told, with Angelou's "gift for language and observation," this "remarkable autobiography by an equally remarkable black woman from Arkansas captures, indelibly, a world of which most Americans are shamefully ignorant."

From Library Journal

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Review

"*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* liberates the reader into life simply because Maya Angelou confronts her own life with such a moving wonder, such a luminous dignity."—James Baldwin

From the Hardcover edition.

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Here is a book as joyous and painful, as mysterious and memorable, as childhood itself. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* captures the longing of lonely children, the brute insult of bigotry, and the wonder of words that can make the world right. Maya Angelou's debut memoir is a modern American classic beloved worldwide.

Sent by their mother to live with their devout, self-sufficient grandmother in a small Southern town, Maya and her brother, Bailey, endure the ache of abandonment and the prejudice of the local "powhitetrash." At eight years old and back at her mother's side in St. Louis, Maya is attacked by a man many times her age—and has to live with the consequences for a lifetime. Years later, in San Francisco, Maya learns that love for herself, the kindness of others, her own strong spirit, and the ideas of great authors ("I met and fell in love with William Shakespeare") will allow her to be free instead of imprisoned.

Poetic and powerful, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* will touch hearts and change minds for as long as people read.

"*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* liberates the reader into life simply because Maya Angelou confronts her own life with such a moving wonder, such a luminous dignity."—James Baldwin

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From the Hardcover edition.

Most helpful customer reviews

263 of 276 people found the following review helpful.

I agree this book is amazing.

By D. Mabey

In a poetic, yet detached way, Maya Angelou captures the heart of her struggles growing up female and Black during the Depression. Her style and description draw in the reader and keep her spellbound even during the most painful scenes. You feel deeply for the author and her little brother as they drift through their lives living for a bit of affection. Neglected by their divorced parents, Maya and her brother get sent to Arkansas at ages 4 and 5 to live with their grandma and handicapped uncle. Although life is hard and love not demonstrated, Maya learns much from her grandma and uncle.

The theme of this book is the quest for the child to be loved by the adult. Maya feels inferior. She feels ugly and compares herself to her magical brother Bailey. Both children are starved for true affection and daydream a white movie actress on the screen is their long lost mother.

Maya and her brother are eventually united with "Mother Dear" in St.Louis when she is eight. Unfortunately Mother's boyfriend begins to abuse Maya(...). This is graphically portrayed in the book. Maya's feelings of not belonging and not being truly loved are compounded after the abuse.

I admire all the autobiographical books by Ms.Angelou. She has achieved a lot in her life for a person who started out in such a sad situation.

This book should be read and re-read.

153 of 166 people found the following review helpful.

The early years of Maya Angelou

By Michael J. Mazza

"I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," by Maya Angelou, is the first volume in this author's extraordinary series of autobiographical narratives. "I Know..." begins with her childhood and takes us into her young womanhood. This book has, since its publication, become a beloved contemporary classic of African-American literature.

After their parents' separation, young Marguerite (her given name) and her brother, Bailey, are sent to live with their strong-willed grandmother in Stamps, Arkansas, deep in the segregated South. Angelou also describes her time spent with her other grandmother in St. Louis, as well as her young adulthood in San Francisco. The overall time period of the book overlaps that of World War II.

"I Know..." offers important insights into the world of racial segregation, and painfully records the toll taken by racism in its various forms. Also powerful and important is Angelou's recollection of surviving a brutal sexual assault when she was a child. Angelou recalls vividly the authors who made an impact on her during her childhood and young adulthood: James Weldon Johnson, Edgar Allan Poe, William Shakespeare, and others. The book concludes with her sexual awakening as a young woman.

"I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" is an American classic which has lost none of its power in the 30 years since it first appeared. Angelou's prose is direct and personal, and marked with passages of wit and beauty. For scholars of African-American literature, women's studies, or literary autobiography, this is an essential

volume.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Great Insights

By Peter

Maya Angelou is a great writer who took me to her world with this book. In so doing, I learned more about her and particularly her race and culture than perhaps I've ever learned in one place before. The book ends up not just being about the enlightenment of a writer, but enlightening to the reader. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

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