THE AFRICAN AMERICAN LIFE AS REFLECTED
IN MAYA ANGELOU’S STILL I RISE
AND CAGED BIRD POEMS

A SARJANA PENDIDIKAN THESIS

Presented as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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in English Language Education

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Dean,

Rebandi, Ph.D.
Matthew 19:26

“But Jesus looked at them and said to them, ‘With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’”

This Thesis is dedicated to:

My beloved Parents

and

Myself
STATEMENT OF WORK'S ORIGINALITY

I honestly declare that this thesis, which I have written, does not contain the works or parts of the work of other people, except those cited in the quotation and the references as a scientific paper should.

Yogyakarta, 06 November 2017
The Writer

Cyrillia Prima Arthami
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ABSTRACT

Arthami, Cyrillia Prima (2017). The African American Life as Reflected in Maya Angelou’s Still I Rise and Caged Bird Poems. English Language Education Study Program, Department of Language and Arts Education, Faculty of Teachers Training and Education, Yogyakarta. Sanata Dharma University.

Maya Angelou is an African American woman who stands up for her people and becomes the civil rights activist. The research discusses the African American life portrayed in two poems by Maya Angelou, Still I Rise and Caged Bird. Despite the other Maya Angelou’s literary works, like autobiography, the poems are chosen since not many critics chose Maya Angelou’s poems to be examined. On the other hand, both poems have the same concern of the theme, which is the hardship of the African Americans. The researcher decides to analyze the life of African Americans in the twentieth century from the poems.

In order to analyze the poems deeply, there are two research questions to be examined in this research: (1) “What are the poems Still I Rise and Caged Bird mainly about?” and (2) “How was the African American life depicted in the poems?”

The sociocultural historical approach is used as the approach of the research since the poem addresses social issues. Through this approach, the actual condition of the African-Americans in the twentieth century is revealed, since the aims of sociocultural historical approach is to learn the literary work in reference to the civilization where the poems were written.

After understanding and analyzing the poems, the researcher finds out that the theme of the poems about the determination to get up from the adversity with the desire to survive. Still I Rise poem tells about the African Americans who get false assumptions and injustice from the White Americans. On the other hand, the Caged Bird poem conveys the slavery experience to the African Americans and the art movements they made as a result. The study recommends some suggestions to the teachers and students regarding the purpose of education. The researcher also gives some suggestions for the future researchers and for the English Language Education Study Program lecturers who are interested in analyzing Maya Angelou’s poetry.

Keywords: African Americans, Poem, Still I Rise, Caged Bird
ABSTRAK


Untuk menganalisis puisi-puisi lebih dalam, ada dua pertanyaan untuk dijawab dalam penelitian ini: (1) “Apakah isi dari puisi Still I Rise dan Caged Bird?" dan (2) “Bagaimana kehidupan Afro-Amerika digambarkan dalam kedua puisi?" Pendekatan sosial-budaya dan sejarah digunakan sebagai pendekatan dalam penelitian ini yang memiliki hubungan dengan lingkungan masyarakat tertentu. Melalui pendekatan ini, kondisi masyarakat Afro-Amerika pada abad keduapuluh yang sesungguhnya dapat terungkap, karena tujuan dari pendekatan sosial-budaya dan sejarah adalah untuk mempelajari karya sastra yang sesuai dengan latar kebudayaan yang memproduksinya.


Kata kunci: African American, poem, Still I Rise, Caged Bird
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Cyrillia Prima Arthami
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of four sub-chapters. Those are background of the study, problem formulation, significance of the study, and definition of terms. The background of the study is dealing with the reasons for choosing the poems and the topic. The problem formulation provides the problems which are analyzed in the study. The significance of the study provides further information to which the study is beneficial. The last is the definition of terms which provide further definition of the keywords of the study.

A. Background of the Study

Marguerite Johnson, widely recognized as Maya Angelou, is one of the activists of the civil rights movements of African Americans. Maya Angelou was born in 1928 and grew up in the situation of brutality and racial discrimination caused by racial prejudice. Maya Angelou began to write after she was raped by her mother's boyfriend who was later murdered after she told her family about the case. Once silenced and depressed, she was then saved by a teacher from the local community who introduced her to some great authors, namely Charles Dickens, Edgar Alan Poe, and William Shakespeare. She made Maya Angelou able to speak again. Maya Angelou made the literary works as the media to flare up her feeling toward the oppression.

As cited in Rohrberger and Woods (1971), literature is a structure with meaning; that involves experience, gives knowledge, it involves one in
experiences that he values; it provides knowledge that he values; the such experiences affords the greater knowledge and wisdom (p. 5). Indeed literature has a great impact to one's lives, and hopes to give visions for others. Literature has four genres; namely short’ story, novel, poem, and play. In this study, the researcher is concerned with poems. The rhythmical language of poems has opened the researcher’s mind. The poems help the researcher to feel optimist and brave, also to gain new vision of the society condition.

Poets possess two talents, imaginative and mastery of language. As cited in Helen Vendler (2010), imaginative people have the gift of making others see the world as they see it (p. xxxix). As imaginative people, the poets lead the readers to drown in their words and feel the things that the poets feel through their works. The reader must not easily use his imagination to interpret any poem as he wishes to be expected or wanted. The poems have their own meaning and sometimes the poetic words do not explicitly mean as they are written.

Poems show the real condition in the environment and show moments that happened at specific time. Two poems by Maya Angelou entitled Caged Bird and Still I Rise become the concern of this study. Both poems show the condition of the African American life from Maya Angelou’s point of view. Maya Angelou’s works received huge appreciation. Neubauer (2007, p. 115) in her essay states, “The broad appeal of Maya Angelou’s autobiographies and poetry is evidenced in the numerous college anthologies that include portions of her work and in the popularity of the television adaptation of Caged Bird.” It shows that some literary criticisms have made Maya Angelou’s literary works as the subject of the study.
The researcher chose the poems because of three reasons. The first one is that both poems have successfully moved the researcher, since the poems can be felt not only by the African American, but also for the people who experienced bullying, oppression, and injustice in Indonesia especially. There are some issue regarding to religion and race that the minorities have no rights to become the leader and to voice their opinion. People are afraid of the truth and putting the blames to the innocence, just like what the White Americans did to the African Americans. These poems show the reader the way to act bold even in the lowest situation in life, and that people should come together to fight injustice.

The second reason is both poems, Still I Rise and Caged Bird, share the same concern as the theme. The focuses of this study are the life of Africans in America and the factors that affected the injustice addressed for them. Through this study, the researcher learns the conflicts of African Americans at the turn of the twentieth century until the poems were published, which made Maya Angelou was inspired to write about respect and to be concerned with the social issues through her poems. The third reason is that Maya Angelou is one of the empowered women, who has influenced other women. As the African American woman, Maya Angelou shows the humanity through her works. She connects the emotion of the African Americans as a group and their struggle to get their rights. Her works motivates others, especially for women, who are considered weak, to bravely state their opinion and should not give up in every problem in their life.

Her poems do not only have beautiful words, but also share the story and history of African Americans to the world. Thus, the researcher conducted the
research in order to see the African Americans life as reflected in *Still I Rise* and *Caged Bird* poems at the time the poems were written. The researcher limited the time, because the poems were written at the era where the breakthrough of African Americans movements happened.

**B. Research Questions**

The questions in this study are formulated as follows:

1. What are the poems *Still I Rise* and *Caged Bird* mainly about?
2. How was the African Americans’ life depicted in the poems?

**C. Significance of the Study**

There are several significances of this study. Hopefully, this study gives benefits to the readers and those who are interested in doing a literary research. This study is expected as the reading material which is used for teaching reading and poetry subject. Moreover, the researcher wants to help the readers to become more aware that reading and understanding literary work does not only give joy but also a deeper and broader knowledge about the real world condition. This research can also be a reference for students who want to understand more about Maya Angelou’s work. Besides, through the study, readers can see the reflection of the African Americans life, which is mostly about the struggle of life to survive.

On the other hand, for future literary researchers, who plan to conduct a research based on Maya Angelou’s literary works, specifically her poems, the researcher expects that this study becomes a new reference. Also, for those who
are interested in studying poems, hopefully this study becomes a source of different styles of poetry, which can be analyzed by the diction, versification, imagery and figures of speech. The researcher hopes this study is able to help people to be aware of literary works, and enjoy the literary works with pleasure.

D. Definition of Terms

In order to understand the study, there are several terms that need to be elaborated more. There are three key terms, namely African-American, poem, and theme.

1. African-Americans

According to the United States Office of Management and Budget (OMB) as cited in He, Sengupta, Velkoff, and DeBarros report, African Americans refer to people or groups of people whose origins are in any of the black populations of Africa (2005, p. 17). Besides, The Encyclopedia Americana describes the term African Americans as black Africans who were brought from Africa to the slavery in America and black Africans who were born in America. The African American refers to one racial group who experience a racial discriminative treatment in the place where they lived.

2. Poem

According to Brooks and Warren (1960, p. 14), poetry is a “truth” with “decorations”, which may either be pleasant in themselves or dispose the reader to accept the truth. The characteristics of poetry- rhythmical language, figures of speech, stories and dramatic situations- are the bait that leads the reader to expose himself to the influence of the “truth” contained in poem. Poem is the product of
the poetry, which comes from Greek word, poïēma, means a thing made. In other words, poem is a form of rhythmical language with the situation that contains a truth.

3. **Still I Rise**

*Still I Rise* is a poem by Maya Angelou, which is published along with others poems in her volume three poetry book, *And Still I Rise* in 1978. This nine-stanza poem becomes phenomenal since it is part of the advertising campaign for the United Negro College Fund.

4. **Caged Bird**

*Caged Bird* is a poem by Maya Angelou which is published in her volume four of the poetry book along with her other poems in 1983 with the title *Shaker, Why don't you Sing?* This six-stanza poem has almost the same title from her famous autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and become one of the recognize poems she wrote.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter consists of four sections; namely review of related studies, review of related theories, review on the African Americans life in twentieth century, and theoretical framework. The review of related studies explains the previous studies of the certain criticism and author of the literary works, Maya Angelou. Review of related theories covers the relevant theories to the study, which are the critical approach to literature and poetry study. Review on the African Americans life in twentieth century explains about the condition of the African Americans in the 1900s up to 1980s era. Theoretical framework explains how the theories are applied in the analysis.

A. Review of Related Studies

Maya Angelou, who became well-known publicly after President Bill Clinton asked her to read her poem on his inauguration in 1993, successfully inspired many people through her works, which mostly talk about African American life. Some researchers use her literary work as their object of the study. There are three researchers from Sanata Dharma University and two English journal article that used Maya Angelou’s works as their object of the study with different topics. Besides, there is one researcher from the English Letters Study Program of Sanata Dharma University who conducted a research about African American life.
The first study was done by Gatot Hendy Febiyanto (2010). He conducted a study entitled *The Idea of Black Feminism in Maya Angelou’s Still I Rise and Phenomenal Woman*. He focused on analyzing the black feminism in the United States through Maya Angelou’s poems. The study showed that in *Still I Rise*, there was clash among black women versus the white people and black men. Black women would do anything to rise from the white people and black men’s oppression. On the contrary, in *Phenomenal Woman* the researcher found that the black women were confident about themselves. They were trying to break the standard of beauty in society, which claimed that beauty belongs to white women.

The second study was conducted by Mayrina Susanti Puspitasari (2003) entitled *The Reflection of Maya Angelou’s Resistances against Racism in I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. This study was conducted to find out about the factors that bring about the racism, the practices of racism as described in the literary work, and how Maya Angelou sentenced her resistance against the practices of racism in her writing. There were three points of findings in the study. First, the ancestral experience as a consequence of slavery, the Black environment, and the racial prejudice were the factors that bring about the existence of racism. Second, there were two kinds of practices of racism in Maya Angelou’s work, the personal practices of racism, like jokes, abuse, violence, and discrimination from other, and institutional practices of racism, like discrimination in education, in getting job, in public services, and other social institutions. Third, Maya Angelou expressed her disagreement in racism by openly stated her inconvenience by presenting her own experience of survival.
The third study was written by Stevani Indriati (2005) about *The Purposes of the Continuation of Dunbar’s Fight against Racism by Angelou’s Poem and Key’s Song Lyrics toward the Society*. The research discussed about the analysis of two poems and a song lyrics which were written by African American writers. The poems were *Sympathy* by Paul Laurence Dunbar and *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou. Also, the researcher was analyzing about the song lyrics entitled *Caged Bird* by Alicia Keys. The research found out that the fight against racism was revealed through the characteristics of each work, which also indicated the reaction of the writers to racial issues. The continuation of the Dunbar’s fights against racism in Maya Angelou and Alicia Keys works was derived from the same theme, similarity of symbol, and the background of each author. By using the media of art and literature, Angelou, and Keys gave some purposes of the continuation of the fight against racism. The three authors revealed the racism that still exist in the United States, and the struggling Black people, who would never stop to fight for their rights.

The fourth study by Ronny Juwono (2002) entitled *The Life of African Americans during the Period between the Two World Wars as Reflected in Langston Hughes’ poems, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers”, “The Weary Blues”, “Goodbye Christ”, and “Let America be America Again”*, which focused on the poem as the witness and reflection of the society where the poet lived. The poems were written by Langston Hughes, an African American man, and concerned on the same theme. The themes of the poems were the hard life of the African
Americans and the struggle to find the real meaning of justice, liberty, and equality in America.

The next was an article from international journal of English Research. Written by S. Sangeetha (2016) entitled *An explication of self-discovery in Maya Angelou’s Still I Rise*, the journal explained about Maya Angelou’s poem, *Still I Rise*. Generally, the article talked about the theme of hope and confidence within.

The last was an article entitled *Rising from the Dust: A Study of Maya Angelou’s Poetry* by Dr. Darshana Trivedi (2016). The article described Maya Angelou’s poetry and characteristic of some poetry by Maya Angelou. The journal article talked about some of Maya Angelou’s poems theme and gave a brief analysis of each poem, specifically *Still I Rise*. The researcher of this article found out that Maya Angelou’s poems addressed social and political issues involving the African Americans and challenged the validity of traditional American values and myths, also the tone of her poems were optimistic and confident. Trivedi (2016, p. 15) stated that Maya Angelou’s *Still I Rise* poem refer to the indomitable spirit of the black people. She found out that through *Still I Rise*, Angelou expressed the faith that one would overcome, one would triumph and one would rise in spite of adversity, dire conditions and circumstances in site of racial epithets and hostility.

This study shares the same idea about African American life and struggle from Maya Angelou work, which discussed in Febiyanto, Puspitasari, Indriati, Sangeetha, and Trivedi studies. In addition, the previous studies from Febiyanto, Puspitasari, Indriati, Sangeetha, and Trivedi will give some evidences to support
this study. The previous studies are used as the standard to conduct another study and to develop the study of the African Americans life as reflected in Maya Angelou’s poems. However, this study is different from Juwono’s study, which focused on Langston Dunbar’s poems to see the reflection of Africa Americans life. In this study the researcher focuses on two poems by Maya Angelou, *Still I Rise* and *Caged Bird*.

B. Review of Related Theories

This part presents the theories that are synthesized in this study. This study deals with literature, thus it is essential to understand the basic theory of literary research. Besides, the literary works which the researcher chose are poems, so here the researcher will also give the explanation about poetry study.

1. Critical Approaches to Literature

In this study, the researcher discusses the theory of critical approaches in literature. Understanding the approaches to literature is important, since a critical approach to literature helps the researcher to understand the literary work better. Based on Rohrberger and Woods (1971), there are five approaches in literary criticism.

The first one is the formalist approach. This approach insists on the total integrity of the literary piece. It concentrates almost entirely on its artistic value with demonstrating the harmonious involvement of all the parts to the whole and with pointing out how meaning is derived from structure and how matters of technique determine structure. The extreme formalist critic examines the literary piece without reference to facts of the author’s life, without reference to the genre
of the piece or to its place in the development of the genre or in literary history, and without reference to its social milieu (1971, p. 7).

The second one is the biographical approach. In order to understand the literary object, one must appreciate the ideas and personality of the author. The followers of this approach attempt to learn as much as they can about the life and development of the author and to apply this knowledge in their attempt to understand his writings. The biographical material provides useful facts that could put the reader in a better position to understand and appreciate the literary object. Besides, people must be careful to not to allow any moral judgment concerning to the life of the writer to carry over to a judgment of the writing (1971, p. 8).

The next approach is the sociocultural-historical approach. The critics that are interested in using sociocultural-historical approach insist that the only way to locate the real work is in reference to the civilization that produced it. It is necessary that the critic investigates the social setting in which the work was created and which it necessarily reflects. The traditional historical approach to literature usually takes as its basis some aspect of the sociocultural frame of reference, combining it with an interest in the biographical as well as knowledge of and interest in literary history. The main job for historical criticism is to establish the validity of the text. The critics must not only examine the work itself but also the work in relation to others by the same author or to works of similar kind of subject matter by the different authors in the same period—all areas of knowledge that might enrich the reading experience. There are two factors; first, accuracy in the presentation of historical facts is of value to the historian, but not
necessarily to the author. Second, a work of literature might have historical significance, but not necessarily literary significance (1971, pp. 9-11).

The fourth approach is the mythopoeic approach. Critics who make use of the mythopoeic frame of reference seek to discover certain universally recurrent patterns of human thought, which they believe find expression in significant work of art. These universally recurrent patterns are those that found first expression in ancient myths and folk rites and so basic human thought that they have meaning for all men. There is a danger in reducing a work of literature to a mere statement of a pattern if the critics use mythopoeic approach (1971, pp. 11-13).

The last one is the psychological approach. The psychological approach most often uses the knowledge which offers by Sigmund Freud and his followers. Freud’s exploration of the unconscious area of human’s mind led him to the conclusion that it was this area that was the wellspring of man’s rich imagination, his capacity for creation and the complexity of his thought and behavior, and that the contents of this region of the mind found expression in symbolic words, thoughts, and actions. The human personality- which is the ego, the superego, and the id- develops from infancy through childhood until adolescence (1971, pp. 13-14).

This study about Maya Angelou’s poems will apply the sociocultural-historical approach, because the researcher wanted to know the actual situation of African-American people in the twentieth century, so that the researcher understands deeply the concept of Maya Angelou’s poems. Besides, some experts stated that the literary work is the reflection of the condition of the poems and
poets themselves. Rohrberger and Woods (1971) for the example, in their book they stated that poetry is the highest expressions of man’s ideas and experiences, which convey the author’s ideals and thoughts (p. 103). Therefore the study needs to use the approach which will underpin the theme of the poems.

2. **Poetry Study**

McMurry (1976) stated that art organizes consciousness and brings people together with a sense of shared experience, and sympathy of feeling (p. 110). Besides, she also mentioned that, art protected the human values of compassion, love and innocence, and made the freedom for real survival (p. 111). Poetry is an example of art. In this point, the researcher wants to describe the theory of poetry.

Perrine (1969) describes poetry as, “a kind of language that says more and says it more intensely than does ordinary language” (p. 3). Since poetry is much more highly condensed, compressed form of language than prose, the words used have to bear much more meaning than those in prose (Rohrberger & Woods, Jr., 1971, p. 34). Poetry, by its special use of words, makes “massive” kind of communication, which attempt to communicate attitudes, feelings, and interpretation, (Brooks & Warren, 1960, p. 6). It means that poetry hopefully could convey the poet message directly to the reader. Besides, poetry is not a thing separate from ordinary life and that the matters with which poetry deals are matters with which the ordinary person is concerned (Brooks & Warren, 1960, p. 7). In understanding the poems, the researcher needs to understand some elements of poetry and make them as a whole not parts. The elements in poetry are:
a. Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is an important matter in poetry criticism. According to Arp and Johnson, paraphrasing in a poem is restating poems in a different language, so as to make its prose sense as plain as possible (2009, p. 658). The paraphrase of poem might be shorter or longer than the poem, yet it should contain all the ideas of the poem, and made the theme of the poem clear. In paraphrasing the poem, one should change the figurative language to literal language. Additionally, paraphrase retains the using of speaker’s first, second, or third person, and the tenses of the poem (2009, p. 659).

b. Types of Poetry

There are two types of poetry, namely narrative and lyric poem. According to Vendler (2010), narrative poem tells a story. Lyric, on the other hand, may contain a germ of a story (p. 111). According to DiYanni as cited in Maula (2013), narrative poems stress story and action, and lyric poem stress song and emotion (2013, p. 19). Narrative poem consists of epic, romance, and ballad. Lyric poem is typically characterized by brevity, melody, and emotional intensity, which includes the ode, the epigram, the sestina, and last villanelle (2013, p. 19). Lyric dwells less on the plot than the man’s feeling (Vendler, 2010, p. 112).

c. Imagery

The principal matter of poetry is imagery, which refers to the language that appeals to one of seven senses; sight (visual imagery), hearing (auditory imagery), touch such as hardness, softness, wetness, or heat and cold (tactile imagery), taste (gustatory imagery), smell (olfactory imagery), internal sensation like hunger,
thirst, fatigue, or nausea (organic imagery), or movement (kinesthetic imagery) (Arp & Johnson, 2009, p. 689). Through the verbal pictures and other appeals to the senses, rather than through abstract, logical statements, poets tell their readers what they have to say (Rohrberger & Woods, Jr., 1971, p. 36). Imagery particularly has some functions. The first function is that imagery is not merely provide setting or stimulate the imagination or furnish pictures, but as the comparisons of various sorts which makes the difference meaning of the poem. Further, imagery places names in the poem as the example, presents a meaning and provides a climatic “statement” for the poem (Brooks & Warren, 1960, p. 269).

d. Rhyme, Meter, Stanza

According to Rohrberger and Woods (1971), there are two elements in poetry. Those elements are:

1) The role of sound in verse, individual words and of words grouped together into lines and groups of lines. The tonal patterns are an essential element in verse. Rhyme and meter, both basically devices of sound, are the chief things that distinguish verse from prose. The sounds of words are certainly one of the many ways that language does convey and suggest feelings and attitudes.

2) The physical appearance of verse as it is printed on the page. Poets have experimented considerably and have used lines of various length and lines arranged in many ways to convey some part of what poets wish to tell the readers. A recent development is concreted poetry in which poets
consciously exploit not only the sounds of words, but also the way they look on the page and the arrangement of space around them (pp. 36-37).

Rhyme is the repetition of the terminal sound of words in poetry, as in “light”-“right”. There are some kinds of rhymes; namely masculine rhyme for the sound that falls in a stressed position, the feminine rhyme for the sound that falls in unstressed syllables, true rhyme for the same exact repetition, and the imperfect rhyme. The imperfect rhymes are divided into two, eye rhyme, like in “move”-“love” and slant rhyme, as in “young”-“song”. Further, there are other sound patterning devices in poetry; alliteration, assonance, and consonance. Alliteration is the repeated initial sound; assonance is the repeated vowel sounds, and the last consonance where the consonant patterns are repeated, although the vowels are different.

As the spoken art, the way poetry sounds remains an individual part of its technique and its appeal. The main device of poetry as the spoken art is called meter, means the patterned rhythm that the readers find in all the range of verse from mnemonic rhymes. Sometimes, poetry has the verse with no regular pattern of rhythm, which called free verse.

Modern English actually has a combination of two metrical systems; the number of stresses determines the name given to the poetic line, and the syllabic in which the number of syllables determines the name of the line. A poetic foot is a rhythmical unit that contains at least one stressed syllable, and at least on other syllable, which may be either stressed or unstressed. Stressed syllables are marked and unstressed syllables are unmarked. When the feet are arranged in various
combinations of one or more types, they make up a line of poetry. The types of lines take their names from the number of feet or pattern of stressed and the kind of poetic feet which predominate in the line. The group of lines is called stanza or a paragraph in a short story.

Rhymes, meter, and stanza have their own parts in the process of making the poetry. They help the poetry become stand out and gain attention and somehow give meaning to the poetry when it reads aloud. There is also an essential thing that the writer needs to know in the poetry, it is the theme. Understanding the theme of the poetry will elicit the researcher to the deepest value of the poems and the poets.

e. **Theme**

Poems should have a theme for the reader to understand and interpret the poem significantly. Theme as the main idea of the poem underlay the meaning of the works directly or indirectly. George Santayana, as cited from Warren and Brooks (1960, p. 340), says that the words in poetry always carry some ideas within, “the detail of things and the detail of ideas pass equally into his (the poet’s) verse.” The theme is as inevitable to poetry as are words. “The theme of a poem, as we have said, amounts to a comment on human values, an interpretation of life” (Brooks & Warren, 1960, p. 342). Understanding the poem depends on reference to some specific information that is not given in the poem itself. The reader must remember that the meaning of a poem is not communicated by any single element of poem-by the statements, symbols, or rhythms. The meaning of a poem is a result of all of these (Brooks & Warren, 1960, p. 346).
f. **Identity of Poetry**

In the lyric poetry, which expresses the thoughts and feelings of a speaker, the words of speaker in the poems could be spoken to any reader within the culture (Kennedy & Gioia, 2002, p. 10). Vendler (2010) explores the poetry and social identity, where the choice of it depends on the poets. Investigating a specific aspect of identity shows us where the poets renew and deepen the identity itself. It is not enough if ones only point out in what identity or identities the poems are written. Readers and critics need to see how the identity, conferred by biology or society, may be subjected to critique by the imagination, and how it is stylized into poetry (Vendler, 2010, p. 218).

“Our identities are constructed, according to the modern paradox, by others. We are taught to see ourselves first as our parents see us, next as our peers see us, next as society as a whole see us, and even as literature conceives us. It is against these disabling conceptions from outside that inner authenticity makes its struggle. And the disabling conceptions do not have to come from the “outside” group itself” (Vendler, 2010, p. 223).

Identity in poetry has it aims to reach out another, to explain itself, and to bring image that could help clarify it. Thus, the identity must use the diction which represents its mind and stylized form to perform it. Understanding the identity in the poems will remind the readers of standing in the shoes of the poem, not only generally but also individually.

The identity of the poetry would be best understood by its tone. Thus, the researchers need to understand the tone of the poetry. Tone of a poem indicates the speaker’s attitude toward his subject and toward his audience, or sometimes toward himself (Brooks & Warren, 1960, p. 181). Since the poem is an utterance of the speaker about something, therefore the tone in a poem express attitude.
Besides, the identity of the poem could also be viewed from the words. There are two principal methods of describing the meanings of words, namely denotation and connotation. Denotation is the dictionary meaning or meanings of the word. Connotation is what it suggest beyond what it expresses; it overtones of meaning. It acquires these connotations from its past history and associations, from the way the circumstances in which it has been used (Arp & Johnson, 2009, p. 674).

g. Figurative Language

The poetry tends to play the words, which used to say as figurative language. Giroux and Williston described figurative language as a language which comes from the straight-forward use of words and makes a special effect, clarifies an idea, and makes writing more colorful and forceful (as cited in Maula, 2013, p. 20). According to Perrine (1969), there are four characteristic of figurative language. First, figurative language affords readers imaginative pleasure of literary works. Second, it is a way of bringing additional imagery into verse, making the abstract concrete, making literary works more sensuous. Third, figurative is a way of adding emotional intensity to otherwise merely informative statements and conveying attitudes along with information. And at last, it is a way of saying much in brief compass.

The examples of figurative language on poetry according to Brooks and Warren (1960, p. 269) are metaphor and simile. Metaphor and simile are two most common figures of speech in poetry. Simile and metaphor are both used as a purpose of comparing things that are essentially unlike (Arp & Johnson, 2009, p.
Metaphor has an unexpressed comparison yet is created when a figurative term is substituted for or identified with the literal term. Simile somewhat less shortened statement, does not state an identity between the two things being related but merely compares them, usually with the word “like”, “seems”, or “as”.

There are other examples of figurative language, such as allegory, hyperbole, irony, and personification. According to Arp and Johnson, personification is giving the attribute of human being to an animal, an object, or a concept (2009, p. 708). Allegory is a narrative or description that has a second meaning beneath the surface. Although the surface story or description may have its own interest, the author’s major interest is in ulterior meaning (Arp & Johnson, 2009, p. 734). On the other hand, overstatement or hyperbole is exaggeration in the service of truth. In other words, one emphasizes to what he really means. Hyperbole may be used with a variety of effects. It may be humorous or grave, fanciful or restrained, convincing or unconvincing (Arp & Johnson, 2009, p. 750).

The last is irony, which has meaning that extent beyond its use merely as figure of speech. Irony is sometimes confused with sarcasm or satire. Irony is a literary device or figure that may be used in the service of sarcasm or ridicule or may not. Verbal irony is saying the opposite of what one means. Sarcasm is used on the colloquial level. Sarcasm means bitter or cutting speech, intended to wound the feelings. Satire is usually applied to written literature rather than to speech. Satire could be cruel or kind. For irony is neither cruel nor kind; it is simply a device (Arp & Johnson, 2009, p. 753). Since poem has a complexity in its words,
according to Kennedy and Gioia (2002, p. 5), poem needs to be read slowly, carefully, and attentively.

C. Review on the African American Life on Twentieth Century

The researcher uses Maya Angelou’s poems *Still I Rise* and *Caged Bird* to understand and learn more about the condition of African Americans life during the twentieth century, which becomes the productive years of Maya Angelou as the poet. The history of African Americans in the United States of America is needed to help the researcher present the trustworthy issues in the society from that time. The first two decades of the twentieth century were the most violent years for the African Americans in both North and South. Many blacks in the South and the North experienced a bitterness of emancipation, for they faced a degree of racial prejudice and discrimination which insulted their dignity and obstructed their economic improvement (Link & Link, 1983, p. 14).

a. The Beginning

The injustice which happened to Africans had started even before the World War I began. Africans were brought by the Dutch to Virginia in 1619. They were brought there against their will in the slave trade. In fact in their homeland, they were once free farmers, traders and hunters, musicians or dancers, even princes and warriors. Blacks were fitted physically and psychologically to become slaves, as they also would give great profits to the masters.

Citing from *The Black Americans*, written by Milton Meltzer (1984), the myth of white supremacy had become the national belief which the darker races were naturally inferior by the 1900. The newspapers and literary magazines like
The New York Times and Harper’s even played up the crimes where the Blacks were involved, made the stereotype of the criminal Black. The superiority of whites had sketched the Black as dull, ignorant, vicious, and lazy; as the clown, the thief, and the liar (pp. 143-144).

According to Grant (1968, p. 175), in years 1882 to 1927, 3,513 African Americans were known to have been lynched. The economic conditions, disfranchisement and murder drove the African Americans to the North, yet they still faced as much hostility. There were two African Americans lynched in 1908 with four white men killed and seventy persons injured, yet no one was punished after the lynched. Thus, the African Americans did protest. The protest moved into two directions: toward separation and toward integration (Grant, 1968, p. 175).

b. Economic Condition

The economy condition of African Americans during the war in 1914 had brought the African Americans to a great migration from the South to the North cities, demanded for the decent job, proper house, schools, and escaping from the insult and humiliation. Up to 1928, there were about a million and a quarter of migrants had come up. In fact, the migration did not bring the African Americans to the better life, because there are not enough houses to live in and the cost of building is high (Meltzer, 1984, pp. 167-182).

Franklin and Moss, as cited in Juwono (2002), state that the Africans Americans were participated in the World War I, where they could make some remarkable achievements granted from their courage and sacrifice. The African
Americans who could come back home after the war suffered from economic problems and discrimination. The aftermath of the World War I led the country to the great loss of men and economy, which motivated Americans to build a new era. The fact that African Americans contributed to the war, led the African Americans to protest in order to get better citizenship for democratic living in the United States. Since the rising of African Americans protest, the White Americans racist feared of the power and declared that they were against the African American (2002, pp. 11-12).

The clash between the African Americans and the White Americans had brought both groups to the disaster. It reached almost the entire of the states, and also killed both, African and White Americans. The African Americans would not stay in their seat and force the government to be more concerned of African Americans life. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in July 1919 adopted the resolution about the African Americans’ status (Juwono, 2002, 13).

The crash of stock market in 1929 remarked the coming of the Great Depression, where the business collapsed and bank failed. The disaster made more black workers than whites lost their jobs. There were about one of three African Americans was jobless, and one out of four whites in 1931. Throughout the depression, the farmers were forced off their land, many of them were thrown out of work, and cities were left. In the Washington, President Hoover said that business conditions would get better by themselves. In fact, it was wrong, and the African Americans started to march in 1931 (Meltzer, 1984, pp. 210-219).
In 1950s, when the Eisenhower became the President of United States, though the progress happens gradually toward the fuller political, social and legal rights to black Americans, the nation nearly forgot the commitments to equal opportunity for blacks. African Americans in the north experienced the discrimination in education, housing and employment. The African Americans in south were denied economic mobility; limitations were put on their ability to rent or own land, besides they were isolated from using the public facilities like railroads, street cars, parks, hotels, schools, hospitals, even cemeteries.

On the contrary to what happened in 1930s, African Americans gained form of equality, where President Roosevelt encouraged by the black labor to put an end of discrimination in production under World War II contracts. After the war, President Truman established a civil rights commission, order the military services desegregated, and appointed an increasing number of blacks to federal office. During the 1950s, the numbers of African Americans people who could get their rights to education, vote in an election, own their own land, have professional job, and enroll in government were still less than their total population. Then there was the Supreme Court decision in 1954 urging laws requiring separate schools for black and white children were unconstitutional (Olson, 1953, p. 158).

c. The Movements

In the 1920s, the young writers, who were the sons of the rising middle class from Harlem, where the African Americans life in the South, sustained by W. E. B. Du Bois stood for full equality. W. E. B. Du Bois in *The Crisis* discussed
the issue of African Americans’ right to their home and their right to defend it, which got the great publicity. In 1926s, one of the leading young writers, Langston Hughes published an article calling on black artist to look closely to the life around them and write it or painted it as it was (Meltzer, 1984, pp. 195-198).

Between 1940s and 1960s, the main issue of the United States government was the African Americans movements to struggle for justice. The movements happened in two directions: toward separation and toward integration. Two foremost African American leaders, Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois, were leading the movements. Washington advocated self-help and training for jobs and business, which made the African Americans, became independent and socially useful. On the other hand, Du Bois stressed in education whose ultimate goal was integration of the Black into American society with full equality, by the idea of Talented Tenth- an educated elite as the key to uplifting the race, rather than the manual training (Grant, 1968, p. 175). In the 1960s, the country made progress to eliminate the discrimination. Between 1961 and 1964, the former-white schools admitted black children as the act of desegregation. In 1961 came the “freedom rides”, nonviolent protests against discrimination in bus transportation and public facilities. In November 1961, the Interstate Commerce Commission banned segregation in all interstate level (Olson, 1953, p. 166). A massive black demonstration in segregated deep-south city of Birmingham, Alabama happened in 1963, which came as the climax of “the civil rights revolution”. President Kennedy then proposed to Congress the most extensive legislation to eliminate the discrimination in voting, education, employment, and
public accommodations. Led by Martin Luther King Jr. as the black southern
ministry, more than 200,000 blacks and whites Americans marched to the Lincoln
Memorial Hall in Washington on August 28, as a demonstration that raised the
national attention to the demand for equal rights. As cited from Meltzer (1984),
Dr. Martin Luther King in 1964 was awarded the Nobel Prize for peace
recognition of his championship of the non-violence precept. Once, he was
leading the protest movement for the great Montgomery bus boycott of 1955-1956
(pp. 245-246). The bus boycott happened when Mrs. Rosa Parks refused to move
to the Jim Crow section of the bus. In the end, Montgomery black won their battle.

In 1966, the African American startled the nation with its actions and
words, which dismayed the White Americans, with the slogan “Black Power”.
Black power has several connotations, including race pride, an interest in the
history of the America Negro and his part in Africa, and a desire to educate the
black American in the acceptance of black as something good, not bad: and
something beautiful, not something to be ashamed of (Grant, 1968, p. 426).

D. Theoretical Framework

The study aims at understanding the life of African Americans from Maya
Angelou’s poems, *Still I Rise* and *Caged Bird*. The theories above are used to
answer the formulated problems in the first chapter. In order to understand the
meaning of the poems and discuss the poems deeply, the researcher will use the
theory of poetry to answer the first formulated problem, which is about the
explication of *Still I Rise* and *Caged Bird* poems. The researcher uses the theory
of poetry by Rohrberger and Woods (1971), Brooks and Warren (1960), and Vendler (2010).

The study analyzes literary works from their social, cultural, and historical backgrounds. Through the theories of sociocultural-historical approach in literature, the researcher will answer the second formulated problem from Brooks and Warren (1960), Rohrberger (1971), and Vendler (2010). Besides, on identifying the socio-cultural-historical backgrounds of the African Americans in the United States in the twentieth century, the writer will use some reviews from An Outline of American History by Professor Olson (1953) and Szwed (1973) about black Americans, and also The Black Americans, A History in Their Own Words 1619-1983 arranged by Milton Meltzer (1984).
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the writer divided the content into two parts. The first part is the object of the study, which will give further explanation of the two poems by Maya Angelou, *Caged Bird* and *Still I Rise*. The second part is the approach of the study, which outlines the approach that is applied to accomplish the study.

A. Object of the Study

The object of the study is poetry. The writer uses two poems by Maya Angelou, *Caged Bird* and *Still I Rise* as the primary data of the study. The poems represent the quest for freedom that Maya Angelou did on behalf of African-American people. The poems are parts of some literary works that Maya Angelou made as the activist of Civil Right Movement.

*Still I Rise* was published with the other poems in Maya Angelou’s third volume of poetry, *And Still I Rise* (1978). The poetry consists of nine stanzas. The first seven stanzas are quatrains. The eighth stanza consists of six lines and the last stanza consists of nine lines. The first seven stanzas have the *abcb* as the rhyme pattern. Along with the other poems from the book, these poems are inspired and spoken by a confident voice of strength that recognizes its own power and will no longer be pushed into passivity. *Still I Rise* is one of her phenomenal poems, which become the advertising campaign for the United Negro College Fund.

The next is *Caged Bird*, a poem by Maya Angelou, which is collected on the forth volume of her poetry book, *Shaker, Why don’t you sing?* (1983)
published by Random House. The poem uses bird as the representation. Here the poem uses the contrasting situation of two birds, one is a free bird; another is the bird in a cage. The poem has six stanzas, which consists of 38 lines as a whole.

B. Approach of the Study

Rohrberger and Woods (1971), state that there are five critical approaches to literature. Those approaches are formalist approach, biographical approach, sociocultural-historical approach, mythopoeic approach and psychological approach. The various kinds of critical approaches on literature show that there are many ways for the critics to discuss the literary work. Here, the writer chose the sociocultural-historical approach to be implemented in this study.

The approach sees literary work as mainly the reflection of its author’s life and times or the life and times of the characters in the work. Guerin (2005, pp. 52-53) believes that poets are the historians, the interpreters of contemporary culture, and the prophets to their people. The poets are concern about their social situation and the effect for the people. The study deals with the relation of the historical society of the author of literary work. In order to acknowledge the African American life during the twentieth century, as reflected in Maya Angelou’s poems, the researcher uses the sociocultural-historical approach as the bases of the analysis. Since this approach considers that the authors are affected by their own experiences and their concern about social matters, by using sociocultural and historical approach, the researcher becomes helpful to analyze how the black society reacted to the condition that happened to them.
CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS

This chapter answers the questions which have been formulated in Chapter One. There are two parts in this chapter. The first part is the analysis of two poems by Maya Angelou, *Caged Bird* and *Still I Rise*. The second part is the discussion of the relation of the poems and the African American life. In order to do the analysis the researcher takes some steps. They are paraphrasing the poems, formulating the theme of the poems, clarifying the deeper understanding of the poems, examining the background of the poems, and relating the poems to the life of African Americans.

A. The Analysis of *Still I Rise* and *Caged Bird*

1. *Still I Rise*

   *Still I Rise* is Maya Angelou’s short lyric poem which is published with 31 other poems in Maya Angelou’s third volume book of poetry, *And Still I Rise* (1978). *Still I Rise* is one of the two popular poems in this book. *And Still I Rise* focuses on the poems with the message of determination to fight against the oppression.

   a. The Paraphrase of *Still I Rise*

      You can tell your descendants for the deflectd truth about me. The misguided history that you write about all of the accusation you threw at me. You can discriminate me and treat me disrespectfully, but I will continue my worthless life that you think I am. Do you get upset with my self-confidence? When I act
like everything that I need is provided for me, you think I am impudent. Yet, I do not care about that, because my presence is valuable, and just like the moon and sun that rise and set in a certain time, so do I. I will rise and have strength to live.

You wanted to see me become sad, repressed, and weak. You wanted me to feel sorrow with my shoulder falling down. You were wrong that you expect me to be miserable. I have my pride and everything that support me. Your sharp words may hurt me. Your vicious gaze may offend me, but nothing will kill me, because like I will rise like air, and no one can hurt me. Also, the beauty that comes within me might surprise you.

Finally, out of the historical cruelty of being an African American woman, I have found myself and have risen above the pain of the history. Like the big ocean, I have a great power inside me. I have willingness to leave the gloom and looking for the new hope which is near. I am the hope for the new generation and the true worth of African Americans. Hence, I will persistently fight against the injustice.

b. Background

Still I Rise, which is one of the well-known poems by Maya Angelou, was published in her poetry book, entitled And Still I Rise. The poem was written at the productive time of Maya Angelou. She had written three autobiographies, two other poetry books, being an editor, producer, and screenplay writer before publishing And Still I Rise. She began her writing career as the member of Harlem Writers Guild from the suggestion of one popular author, John Oliver Killens.
After her meeting with Martin Luther King Jr. and Fidel Castro, she started as the activist of human rights and anti-apartheid.

In 1977, she was cast in a television series based on Alex Haley’s book, entitled *Roots*. The television series was about African American slaves in the eighteenth century. In order to keep her sound her empathy and protest, she wrote poems besides her autobiography. Published in 1978, *Still I Rise* represents the voice of African Americans. Written in the era of civil rights movement, she gave a strong tone and powerful words with the respect to the society. Thus, the poem aimed to remind the oppressors that in every situation, the victim has hope and is able to rise from adversity.

c. **Figure of Speech, Imagery, and Symbols**

According to Rohrberger and Woods, poems could be recognized by its two elements, the role of sound in verse and the words in lines or group of lines, and also the physical appearance of its work (1971, p. 36). The researcher understands that *Still I Rise* is a poem based on the role of sound in the literary work, which is called rhyme. Rhyme distinguishes the poetry from prose. The rhyme scheme of the poem is *abcb* for the first until seventh stanza, *ababcc* for the eighth stanza, and *ababcebb* for the ninth stanza. Poems are so much shorter than other kinds of literature. Since poetry is much more highly condensed, compressed form of language than prose, the words used have to bear much more meaning than those in prose (1971, p. 34).

In order to understand the poem better, the researcher needs to understand the tone in the poem. The tone in the poem helps the readers to recognize the
situation which is built by the poet. The researcher finds that the tones in the poem are persistent, critical, optimistic, and sarcastic. The poem is clearly directed to the oppression that happened to the speaker. The words “I’ll rise” and “I rise” which are repeated in the poem are the proof that the poet is persistent or assertive, because the speaker is so sure of what she has done and what she will do. It somehow has an optimistic tone. The speaker of the poem believes that the pressures from the outside do nothing to her future, and that nothing could stop her to get her rights.

The tone of the poem is critical, because it is concerned with the people the speaker is addressing to. The poem has the message to the oppressors which have a wrong expectation about African Americans. In the poem, the critical tone can be found in the first and second lines.

You may write me down in history (1) With your bitter, twisted lies, (2)

The use of “You” in the poem shows that the aim of the poem is to remind or warn a group of people, in this case the oppressor of the African American.

Furthermore, the poem also has a sarcastic tone. The poet wants to express the opposite meaning of the words in her poem with a little humor. The poet expresses the sarcasm on the second, fourth, fifth, and seventh stanzas.

(S2) 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.

(S4) Did you want to see me broken?
    Bowed head and lowered eyes?
    Shoulders falling down like teardrops.
    Weakened by my soulful cries

(S5) 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 back yard.

(S7) 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?

Those stanzas show that the conditions being described are the opposite with the condition which the Whites saw toward African Americans. The stanzas above also show the dream of African Americans, where they want to have the wealth for the sake of their life.

Does my sassiness upset you? (5)  
Why are you beset with gloom? (6)  
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells (13)  
Pumping in my living room. (14)

The lines above tell about the stereotypes of African Americans and how the Whites expected them to be. The words are somehow sarcastic, because the African American women in the eye of the Whites were not sassy, haughty and sexy, as they were despised by White Americans. The questions show the rhetorical question in which they do not need to be answered, since they show the furious emotion of the poem.

In understanding the poem, *Still I Rise*, the researcher has found that the poem uses connotative meaning of the words. The connotative meaning in poetry or the figurative language of poetry also brings message of the poem. There are three figurative languages in *Still I Rise*. Those are simile, metaphor, and personification.
The poet uses simile in lines four, seven, nine, eleven, fifteen, nineteen, twenty-four, and twenty-seven. In line 4, *But still, like dust, I'll rise*, describes the passionate meaning. Dust in the denotative meaning is particles or very small substances which people consider as the dirt. In this situation, the poet wants to explain the situation of African Americans who are considered themselves as worthless, even sometimes they are not seen as humans by the Whites, but they still can live freely and lightly without any burden. In line 24, *But still, like air, I’ll rise*, the poet also wants to express that she will passionately be free and will stand for her rights. Additionally, the poet shows the readers that she is worth it, just like the air which people need so that they can breathe.

The seventh, nineteenth, and twenty-seventh lines have the similar message of the simile.

‘Cause I walk like I’ve got oil wells (7)  
‘Cause I laugh like I’ve got gold mines (19)  
That I dance like I’ve got diamonds (27)

The poet wants to show the readers that she is proud and happy because of the things that she has. The poet who is African American wants to remind the readers that the African Americans will not be silent to the oppression that they received. The poet illustrates that the African Americans are worth just like the oil, gold, and diamonds, which are considered being the precious and costly things.

Further, in lines nine and eleven, through the simile the poet expresses the message of the desire of someone to be risen. The image of the sun and the moon become the representative of spirit which is consistently rising. According to
Febiyanto (2010, p. 31), Maya Angelou explains the willingness to rise very high as the moon and the sun which are placed very high in the sky. Also in line 11, she adds that she will rise as high as hopes that everyone wish. Here, the hope is positive which is followed by the desire.

Just like moons and like suns, (9) 
Just like hopes springing high, (11)

Besides in line 15, *Shoulders falling down like teardrops*, the simile brings the message of sadness and depression.

The next figurative language is personification. The personification is placed on the sixth stanza.

You may shoot me with your words, (21) 
You may cut me with your eyes, (22) 
You may kill me with your hatefulness, (23) 
But still, like air, I'll rise.

In lines 21, 22, and 23, the poet wants to deliver the message of defamation, hatred, and humiliation toward the African Americans. Those lines want to show the act of character assassination. It is reflected from the diction *shoot me with your words, cut me with your eyes, and kill me with your hatefulness*, where the oppressors said the wrong fact about African Americans, so they got the false objection and made African Americans look bad. The further explanation about this is described in part B. Besides, here, the poet uses the repetition of *You may* in the stanza. The repetition shows the clear point and emphasizes that the poet does not put too much attention to the downtrodden and the intimidation toward her. In his work, Febiyanto (2010, p. 33) stated that Maya Angelou tried to emphasize on what someone did to her. She would not care about what people did to her
continuously to make her down, she would still rise. As well as the repetition of *I Rise* in the poem, the poet emphasizes the strong will and confidence that in every situation the speaker will always soar.

In the poem, the poet uses metaphor as the figurative language too. The metaphors are presented in line 33 and 40. In line 33 which should be best read along with line 34, the poet writes *I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide* (33), *Welling and swelling I bear in the tide* (34), deliver the message about her strength. The great amount of water in the ocean with the tides and receding waves represent the courage and persistence. As in line 40, the poet wants to highlight that the speaker is the hope for her people. *I am the dream and the hope of the slave* (40), the line wants to share that the African American women in the era of early 20 century need to empower the people and rise from the slavery. It also reminds the reader that they still exist to fight for the people.

The poem has visual and kinetic imageries. Through the visual imagery, the poet wants to create the image of oppression and despise the oppressors of the African Americans, and also creates the contradiction of the powerless situation of the speaker related to the White Americans’ view. Moreover, the kinetic imagery leads the readers to understand that the speaker does not surrender easily. However, the speaker always moves on from the past and the insult addressed to her only makes her becomes tougher.

d. **Theme**

After reading and understanding *Still I Rise* poem, the researcher has concluded the theme of the poem. The theme of the poem is about the
determination to stand up and get up from adversity. *Still I Rise* gives the reflection of the life of African Americans, especially women, who experienced the discrimination and brutality from white people. As the African American woman, the poet believes that nothing can bend her and her people. As she has found out that being an African American is a gift for her and also being black American is a privilege for her life, thus she will rise by the hope. The reflection of African Americans can be seen in line 33, where the poet writes *I’m a black ocean, leaping and wide*. The term of *black ocean* gives the interpretation of the character of the African Americans.

The poem has the persistent act of defense by African Americans. It is one of the voices of African Americans as the act of protest to the majority. The poem wants to show that out of the darkest condition that life has offered to African Americans, she will always fight for her rights. She will not kneel down to the whites and beg for their mercy. When she feels down, she will not stay in anguish, but rather she soars. It can be shown by the repetition of “I rise” along the poem, where “I rise” is mentioned more than seven times.

Beginning with the defiant words which express her feeling that she feels from the others who do not like her presence, the first stanza shows the act of slavery that happened towards her people (the other African Americans).

(S1) You may write me down in history
    With your bitter, twisted lies,
    You may tread me in the very dirt
    But still, like dust, I’ll rise.

The first and second line from the stanza tell the researcher the time where the African Americans voice are not heard from telling the history of slave and the
oppressors may do anything to hurt their pride. As written by Sangeetha (2016, p. 7) in her article, the first line tells the history of slaves in America controlled by whites who decided what was recorded in books and what was true according to them, but never told the real condition of the slaves, where they were forced to leave their homes and were treated like property as if they were no longer humans. Even though the Whites treated her unfairly as the slave, she will stand up for her pride.

Maya Angelou understands that it is not easy to live the life that is full of pressure and injustice. Moreover, she is an African American woman with the fact that the economic conditions of African Americans were not stable in the twentieth century. Still, she believes in herself, that she has everything she needs. It is all about the self-esteem that one has. The condition can be shown in the second, fifth, and seventh stanza. Those stanzas remind the oppressors that the African Americans were not like what they have seen throughout the times. African Americans have self-confidence to be proud of. The self-confidence is represented as sassiness, haughtiness, and sexiness. Here the writer will give the example from the fifth stanza.

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 back yard

The poem, being the strong fortress for African Americans, talks about the social problems, like racial segregation, oppression, bullying, and slavery. Maya Angelou wants African Americans to be proud of their existence. Even though there is a sound of hate depicted in the poem, where she is not pleased with the
history and that the history is painful for her. She expresses the situation in lines 29 and 31,

Out of the huts of history's shame (29)  
Up from a past that's rooted in pain (31)

Thus, she shows the oppressors that she is great, that she will leave the past behind and she can be the heroine for her people. She expresses the emotion to move on from the gloom and depression to the hope for the new pleasant life without any difficulties and the injustice which blocked her freedom in the last stanza.

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

Still I Rise summarizes what the poem wholly talks about. It tells that in every situation the speaker, “I” will always stand for her rights confidently. In this poem, the speaker “I” does not only stand for an individual, but it portrays the African Americans as the group. The purpose of Maya Angelou’s writing is, to be representative rather individual authoritative, and not for confessional purpose (Tivedi, 2016, p. 15). Hence it is clear that the “I” does not only represent one person, but the group of people who experience bullying, injustice, and oppression which is explained in the poem. The poem tells the desperate evidence of African Americans’ life, since the poet is an African American woman and also from its figurative language. However, in the desperation, she wants to show the
oppressors that they stereotype the African Americans wrong. She persistently tells them that she is valuable and she will fight for the freewill. In other words, the poem mostly wants to express the anthem of survival.

2. **Caged Bird**

*Caged Bird* is collected on the fourth volume of Maya Angelou’s poetry book, *Shaker, Why don’t you sing?* (1983) published by Random House. The poem consists of six stanzas and has the message of the willing to survive and be free like the other feels.

a. **The Paraphrase of Caged Bird**

There is a bird that flying high in the sky and down above the water. He can move so freely and even he feels the sky is his, that nothing can stop him. There is another bird. He has an unhappy life, where he cannot go anywhere, because he is inside the bird cage. Someone has put him inside the cage and torture him. The bird only has him voice and always chirps then. Even though the bird is frightened, he is still shouting the voice for freedom which others do not understand. He is listened by others, but they do not want to hear, because he wants the freedom and rights for him.

A free bird thinks about all of the privileges he has, all of the wind he could feel, the worms as the food, and even the sky as his home. He can do anything he wants and he is still longing for other things. For a pathetic bird, it seems like the dream has died, and even in his lowest situations of his life, the bird still tries to say what is in his mind. Lastly, even in the hardest situation and under the oppression, the bird still does something to fight for what he wants.
b. Background

*Caged Bird* is one example of free verse poem. It has six stanzas in which the sixth stanza is the repetition of the fourth stanza. The poem has almost the same title as Maya Angelou’s first autobiography book *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969). An article about *A brief guide to Maya Angelou’s poetry* (2015) from poetry foundation writes that the image of the work is not hers originally. It was taken from Paul Laurence Dunbar’s most popular poem, *Sympathy*. It has a story about racism, where a caged bird as a symbol of a chained slave under the desperate situation who pray for the bliss for the better future.

The poem was published along with other poems in Maya Angelou’s poetry book *Shaker, Why don’t you sing?* (1983). According to Neubauer (2007), the poems mostly talk about the love poem or the subject of love between woman and man who deals with pain, loss, and loneliness as characterized by unrequited love. However, not all Angelou’s poems talk about love. They also talk about the anguish of the black race. Several of the poems are about inhumane treatment of the slaves in the South America, as shown by her most powerful poem entitled *Caged Bird*.

Angelou was sympathized the black people, so she wrote about them in order to express her emotion as the civil rights activist. Indriati (2005) in her research states that, the assassinations of the black activists’ leaders, such as Malcolm X in 1965 and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, had made Angelou learnt that the Africans were trapped in the caged where their struggles were
dominated by the rage of emotion to fight against racism (p. 37). Somehow the assassination happened because the activists wanted to shake the Whites by doing the unharmed protest, but it was meaningless. The feeling of being绝缘 became one reason the assassination of the civil rights activist leaders happened.

c. Figure of Speech, Imagery, and Symbols

The tone in this poem is pervaded by the sad, gloomy, miserable, joy, and greedy atmosphere. The dissimilarity of the two conditions in the poem makes the contrasting tone in the poem. The first stanza and the fourth stanza of the poem show the free, joy, and greed mood. It can be revealed from the use of the “free bird leaps”, “dares to claim the sky”, “names the sky his own”, and “thinks of another breeze” phrases. The mood changes in the rest of the stanzas. The use of caged bird who “stalks”, “clipped”, “tied” and “stands on the grave of dreams” indicate the miserable condition that one feels about his life.

Reading and analyzing the *Caged Bird* poem, the researcher realizes that the poem has a period as the punctuation on each stanza. The punctuation is placed after the last word of the stanza. The poet makes the poem sound like a song or a hymn, so that the readers should read the lines continuously to create the emotion. It shows that the poem needs to be sung. Also, the stanza needs to read continuously without any pause from each line to deliver the message of the poem delivered easily to the readers. As a critic, Keefe (1984) said that *Caged Bird* is a wise and deeply felt poem, with the rhythmical and hypnotic chant that cries out to be sung, where the actual form is depicted in its theme (p. 607).
*Caged Bird* poem from the title shows the reader clue to the poems before the reader reads it. It shows that the poem will be about the boundary that a bird is experienced. The poem is about the ability to survive under the pressure of slavery. The immobilization of black people because of the white suppression shows through the imagery in the poem. The imagery later can be the foundation of the powerful image to understand figurative language.

The imagery which is used in the poem is visual, auditory, and tactile. Maya Angelou wants to describe the freedom by using the words like “floats downstream”, “the sky”, and “waiting on a dawn-bright lawn” as the visual image to the environment around the man who has liberty. On the other side, the poet is using words like “narrow cage”, “bars of rage”, and “the grave of dreams” as the visual image for the suffered man. Besides, Maya Angelou also uses the auditory image like “his tune is heard on the distant hill”, “the sighing trees”, and “shadow shouts” to represent the voice of protest and the calm situation. As for the tactile imagery, she writes “dips his wings”, “wings are clipped”, and “feet are tied” in order to depict the condition of being free and being suppressed.

The most recognizable type of figurative language in *Caged Bird* is irony. Maya Angelou puts the irony on a phrase “so he opens his throat to sing” on stanza two and stanza five and “the caged bird sings with a fearful trill” which tells about the condition of the caged bird, as written below:

(S2) 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.

(S3) The caged bird sings
with fearful trill
of the things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

Maya Angelou is using irony to convey her feeling. Here, the poet creates the irony where the one who sings is the caged bird not the free bird, and the song is rather mournful than joyful. The anaphora of “his wings are clipped and his feet are tied” aligned with the irony creates the scene to the poem and send the deeper message to the readers. The fact that the man is isolated and tortured does not stop him from fighting to save his life. The man who is frightened of his future still wishes the hope for the freedom. Thus it makes the readers appreciate freedom more.

Besides, Maya Angelou creates another figurative language as the imaginative pleasure. In Caged Bird, the reader could find personification in phrase mention below:

(S1) A free bird leaps
on the back of the wind

(S2) But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage

(S4) The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees
(S5) But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream

The personification creates the rich images to the poem. The opening of the poem
shows the impossibility of a bird which is leaping in the back of the wind, since
we could not see whether wind have a back. The first personification on the first
stanza discloses the privilege of having liberty in life and one can do whatever he
wants. The contrasting situation happens on the stanza two, where the
personification is “his bars of rage”, the poet pictures that the downtrodden and
the limitation cause the anger of the slave. Again, in the fourth stanza, the poet
gives another image of the free man, which represents the human character, where
one never gets enough for what he has. The greed makes him forget about the
beautiful things that life has offered to him. The last is the condition of the slave
where it seems hopeless, but he has the power within that give him strength to
fight for the equality and justice for his people.

The repetition of the third and sixth stanzas makes them as the chorus of
the poem. At this point, Maya Angelou emphasizes that even though the man who
represents as bird is in plight, he will not fall. The man who is physically beaten
by the oppressor expresses his determination to be free and be equal. The stanza
tells that the protest is heard by the people. So, it wants to reveal that the protest
needs to be heard since it is the representation of the slaves’ hope for equality.

In the poem, the researcher finds that the poet chooses the bird as the main
symbol of the poem. Bird as the symbol portraits the freedom, liberation, and
about finding the voice. On the other hand, a bird could also be a particular type
of person (“Bird”). Maya Angelou in her autobiography wrote that the African
Americans were called niggers, jigs, blackbird, and crows for centuries (1969, p. 91). Something about birds which soaring through air motivates human to rise above his concern (Hopler, 2017). Thus, it can be concluded that the poet represents the bird as the man who lives in liberty and the man who lives in sorrow but bravely utters his grief and desire.

d. Theme

The poem is contrasting the situations of two birds. The first bird is the bird which has opportunity to be free. The bird can do whatever it wants. On the other hand, the other one is a bird which is unable to do things, because of some boundaries. After reading the poem, the writer gets the theme of the poem, which is the willingness to survive under the hard situation. The poem contrasts two situations of people, the one is a person who can freely do what he wants, and another is the pathetic person that wants to be free. The feeling to be free and to survive is natural.

Maya Angelou starts the poem by telling the condition of one free bird, where the free bird stands for the people who never feel the oppression in their lives. She represents the condition by writing that the bird can freely fly up and down. It also has its own place. Next, she writes about the bird inside the cage, which symbolizes the person who is trying to fight for freedom but is limited by its circumstance. The researcher perceives that the poem is about the contrasting conditions of African Americans and White Americans. The first and second stanzas show the fact of the condition.

(S1) A free bird leaps
    on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wings
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

(S2) 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 poem is about the African Americans and the White Americans, since there is the same history of the condition. Moreover, the story of discrimination is strengthened by the fact that Maya Angelou’s brother was imprisoned in Sing Sing. Thus, Dr. Martin Luther King told her to fight and win, so that she has the role in civil rights movement. Later, the history related to African Americans is discussed in the relation between the poem and life of African Americans.

The poem is the voice of the slaves who longed for their freedom. It ironically depicts the same creature with the different life and destiny. Also, the free bird, which is mentioned in the poem does nothing but fly and get what he wants easily. On the other hand, the caged bird must struggle against the boundary and he is the one who sings. Neubauer’s (2007) in her critical essay about Maya Angelou’s life and work, states that the poems in Shaker Why Don’t You Sing? imply that such melodies are need to be sung and heard, since hope and strength will overcome the defeated dream (p.142). It shows that song of protest is the only way the slaves could do under the oppression, and hopefully becomes the strength to overcome the defeated dream.
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

Taking a closer look to the fifth stanza above, Maya Angelou wants to depict the dispirited condition of African Americans, where they have buried their dream. Despite the hopeless condition, they still struggle and do the only thing that they can do to protest, because they are physically immobile. In the relation of the previous stanza, where Maya Angelou shows the hunger of free bird, here she wants the reader to focus on the difference between two fates of two men, and about their different dreams.

The repetition of stanza three, which is the same as stanza six, gives the strong evidence of the tenacious spirit form the slaves to be free. Indriati, in her thesis states that the African Americans see themselves as the ‘caged bird’ that longs to be free from its cage, the African Americans want to be free from the cage of racism, discrimination, and prejudice of the society (2005, p. 44). Thus, it is clear that the poem is about striving to reclaim rights. Moreover, the poem has the aim to become the voice of inferior in the United States.

B. The Relation of the Poems to the Life of African Americans

1. Still I Rise

*Still I Rise* was written on the era of civil rights movement, not long after Maya Angelou decided to write. She started to become an activist after she met Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and she started to express her protest through writing.
The life of the African Americans reflected in this poem is the wrong assumption of the image of the African Americans by the White Americans.

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

Taking a closer look to the first stanza, the poet clearly mentions the history which made the African Americans look bad. Even the most respected newspapers and literary magazines played up the crimes in which Blacks were involved, as they were creating the Black criminal stereotypes cited from Meltzer (1984, p. 143). The life of the African Americans in the South was so tough, where they were always seen as clowns, thieves, and liars. The letter by one African American mother as cited from Meltzer’s (1984) shows that the acknowledgement of the Whites to them brought sorrow to the Blacks, but the mother believes that there will be someone on behalf of the African Americans who will compel the world that his people deserve justice (1984, p. 148).

Later in the poem, the poet conveys the sarcastic language. Starting by depicting the blissful set of people who do not have any worries about the future and the days to come, the poet tries to set the image of African Americans from the Whites philosophy.

(S2) 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.

(S5) 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 back yard.
(S7) 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?

On the contrary, the African American mother, in her letter cited in Meltzer (1984), pictures African Americans’ feeling as the restless, insecure, and panic among the best class of Negroes in the South. She tells that they felt the injustice every day of a week. Even for the place where they should stay, house to rent, the real estate agents have “white property” and “colored property”. The worse thing happened to the African Americans, when a crime was committed by the South policemen looking for the Black Americans in the case. The mother says that, “A young white boy’s badness is simply the overflowing of young animal spirits; the black boy’s badness is badness, pure and simple” (1984, p. 147).

In the industrial society in 1915, there were still 86.3 per cent African Americans who stayed in the South of the Maxon Dixon Line (Link & Link, 1983, p. 12). The typical of southern and rural areas made the African Americans lived in an oppressive environment, where they were confronted by the rigid and strict caste system (1983, p. 12). The black freemen, who were once slaves and be freed later, did not migrate to north; they had a goal to build schools in the south. It happens that African Americans hardly had a proper education for them in the past. Luckily, there was the development of establishment of schools in South. Also, there was demonstration from the black teachers, the abolitionist and the missionary of the inherent of superiority and inferiority of races were wrong
As the “nigger teachers”, African American teachers were often insulted, even their schools were burned. Also, the African Americans equal opportunity was easily forgotten by the nation in 1950s. Thus, many African Americans experienced discrimination in education, housing, and employment, also the limitations in their economic mobility and living both in the north and south.

Maya Angelou as a poet reflects the hardship through the poem, where she tells that the oppressors placed the African Americans as the weak and suffered. They were there in the United States to become labors that needed to work hard, and did not able to live an easy life. Despite that, *Still I Rise* wants to remind the African Americans and the reader about the suffering life of the past, where the ancestors needed to struggle really hard to get the freedom. Around the annoyed and unfriendly stare for African Americans, under the injustice that is addressed to them, they must not give up.

*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.*

In stanza six above, Maya Angelou is trying to reveal the wicked things that the Whites did to the African Americans. As cited in Meltzer (1984), a Black mother and her husband moved to the new neighborhood dominated by the Whites. The stares of the annoyed White Americans were following them along their house (p.146). African Americans were hated by the Whites, when a crime happened they were the ones who needed to pay for the fine. They were told to have more respect to the White folks; even the guilt was clearly the white (p.147).
Maya Angelou herself also experienced hatred by the white, when she was ten years old; the “powhitetrash” girls taunt her grandmother. The reaction from her grandmother touched her heart, since she learned the better way to respond to the humiliation. She explained that her grandmother politely waved them good-bye and this reaction that once surprised her. Then, she realized that her grandmother was winning, since she proved that African Americans are not like the White girls. African Americans were neither dirty nor impudent. They have dignity and politeness which show that they are the champion (Walker: 1995, p. 95).

The role of the ancestors’ struggles is highlighted as the pride for African Americans. The poet gives a message for the readers that the African Americans particularly should be proud of their origin. Besides, Maya Angelou as a poet states that the shame of the past where African Americans were slaves should be left behind, even though it was painful and left deep scars.

*Still I Rise* is not only a poem about a person who has self-confidence and strong belief that one can save his life under the injustice. This poem is the reflection of the unity of African Americans who stand together to get the freedom for the people. The civil rights movements that happened for the justice between 1940s and 1960s are the evidence that for the downtrodden African Americans, the people who cared for their plight moved together to voice their protest to the government.

Maya Angelou who repeats to write “I Rise” in her poem encourages the people that under every rough and tough circumstance, they need to get up and go.
They need to become one to create the prosperity for now and for the future. Also, through the symbol of “black ocean leaping and wide”, the poet wants the readers, especially the African Americans to remember that they are strong and powerful. The poem becomes the media to show the black power, where the African Americans accept themselves as they are. They need to fight for their dignity, for their future, and their dream, so they should be aroused.

2. Caged Bird

The *Caged Bird* implies the racism towards African Americans, which made they had the lowest social status in the United States. It has a relation with the slavery which happened to the African Americans which had been started before the twentieth century. Janouskova (2005) in her study has described that Maya Angelou reflects on the past experience of her ancestor to produce the literary work. Maya Angelou had been impressed by the survival of her ancestors and the generations before, from their misfortune and mishaps. Her poems are the reflection of the hopeless situation of her past generations and look back in anger and despair (p. 10).

The slavery happened in the United States before the 1890s. Link and Link (1983) noted that before 1890, the African Americans in the South got intimidated economically and also politically, which made the whites would hold the upper hand and was not fixed until the twentieth century (p. 14).

(S1) A free bird leaps on the back of the wind and floats downstream till the current ends and dips his wings
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

In the poem, the first stanza shows the readers about the condition of a man, who can do anything he wants and claims something as his own. The man than reflects as the White Americans who had the higher social status than the African Americans. The White Americans can easily take control of the government. They were forcing the African Americans as their labors and discriminate them in every aspect of life, like the economy, politics, and administratively.

As the African Americans, they were kidnapped and forced to be slaves. Meltzer (1984) in his book cited a story from African Americans about the slavery which happened to them. The free African Americans were arrested by the police officers under accused of assault and many other assumptions. They were arrested and imprisoned, later they were pronounced to be slaves. One African American man was arrested, bound in chains and dragged through the streets. They were treated inhumanly and mercilessly by the oppressors, the White American officers (Meltzer, 1984, p. 45). The story continued to the slave sale. The African Americans were paraded, and forced to dance. The owner of the slave pen made them remember their place, and forced them to appear smart and lively. They were then bought by the old gentlemen to become their slaves. There was one mother who had a son and a daughter. Her son was bought by a man, but he could not afford to buy her and her daughter. She insisted the man not to buy her son unless he bought them three. The owner of the slave pen whipped her, ordered her
to stop her noise. Despite her request, his boy was taken away from her (1984, pp. 47-48).

*Caged Bird* reflects the life of the African Americans slaves who were experiencing the hardship of life. The African Americans were apart from their family and became limited to do anything unless work. The reflection of the story above is described in stanza 2 and 5 as written below:

(S2) 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.

(S5) 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 African Americans then used the art as the media to express their protest and concern. Langston Hughes, one of the African Americans who started to write a poem as the rhythm, became the one who began the new black movement of young writers.

(S3) 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 third stanza shows that the African Americans still manage to fight through art. They were heard by the others that they sounded their voice of despair. In
relation with McMurry’s (1976) statement that art organizes consciousness and brings people together with a sense of shared experience, and sympathy of feeling (p. 110), the third stanza shows that African Americans will come together and protect their human value of making the freedom for the real survival. Moreover, as cited in Meltzer (1984), Maya Angelou as an African American artist felt that she really obliged and compulsive to make literary work to fight for racism (p. 277). In conclusion, it is clear that in order to protect their values in life, the African Americans share their experience and protest through art.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter presents the result of this study. It consists of three sections. The first section is conclusion of the analysis, where the researcher will summarize the condition of African Americans’ life as reflected in the poems. The second is implication of the study, for teaching, teachers, and education. The last is suggestion for the future researchers and English Language Education Study Program lecturers.

A. Conclusions

There are two points as the conclusion of this research. The first conclusion deals with the first research question; i.e. what are Still I Rise and Caged Bird poems about? The researcher discovers that the Still I Rise poem is about the determination to stand up from adversity. The speaker of the poem wants to remind the readers that the pressure and the dark history which are addressed to her play no roles to her future. They only make her stronger. Almost similar to the previous poem, the Caged Bird poem has the concern about the two contrast condition of a privileged man and a persecuted man who under the rage has a willing to survive.

The second point concludes the answers to the question on the reflection of African Americans life in both poems, Still I Rise and Caged Bird. Still I Rise is dealing with the life of African Americans where the White Americans stereotyped them wrongly. In the White Americans’ point of view, the African
Americans were inferior. It also reflects the injustice which happened to their lives, like the limited public facility for them. The poem reflects the hard life of African Americans even from their ancestors. The *Caged Bird* poem implies the racism towards African Americans, which made them the lowest social status in the United States. African Americans became slaves for the White Americans. The poem shows that African Americans were trying to protest using art. Thus, the first and second questions are clearly answered through the analysis.

**B. Implications**

The study is about the message of two poems by Maya Angelou, *Still I Rise* and *Caged Bird*, and the reflection of African Americans’ life in the poems. The theme about the determination to fight against the oppression reminds the researcher about the education especially in Indonesia. Even though the main concern of education is to educate young generation for their better future, there are some cases about bullying and discrimination that happened to the students and also the teachers in Indonesia. The bullying, which in serious condition could also be violence and the discrimination for the students in poverty and disability, become the concern of the educational problem. The teachers and the students both could be the oppressor and the victims.

The lacking character and critical situation above need to be fixed. The teachers, who become the role model for the students, need to understand that they should guide and lead the students in developing students’ positive characters. Teacher should come together with students and parents to create the supportive atmosphere for the students to build their competence, conscience and
compassion. The poems *Still I Rise* and *Caged Bird* by Maya Angelou could be the tools to build the teachers’ spirit, so that they understand that they could fight the oppression that happened to their students or also the fellow teachers. Sometimes, the teachers also experienced the lack of respect from their students, fellow teachers, also the parents. The poems by Maya Angelou could remind them that in every situation, there are still some people who support and some people who repress them. They just need to remember that they should not give up, and have to believe themselves. They should not take revenge by doing violence. On the other hand they should learn to give their best, so that no one will humiliate them.

This study could also be implemented as the character building for the students, in order to fix the critical situation about the education in Indonesia. The poems are about the racial problem in the United States and telling about the difficulties of African Americans to have the decent life in the United States. Not to mention the persistence from the African Americans to fight for their people’s rights. Reading literature especially the poems by Maya Angelou could be the reference for Indonesian students particularly, which have many ethnic groups and cultures to have more respect for each other. Additionally as the Indonesian, one should be grateful that nowadays there is no tough and hard slavery, but still racial conflict happens in Indonesia. The students also experienced the bullying and discrimination to them. The poems, *Still I Rise* and *Caged Bird*, could motivate the students to have the power and persistence to build their courage and to fight
for their dreams. The students could learn to appreciate each other, in spite of their physical appearance, race, and religion.

C. Suggestions

The study analyzes the African Americans’ life which is related to the poem by Maya Angelou. Here, the researcher offers two suggestions which hopefully give benefits for the reader. The first suggestion is for the future researchers. The second one is for the English Language Education Study Program lecturers.

1. Suggestion for the Future Researchers

There are some elements of poetry which future researchers need to comprehend like the theme, figurative language, and tone in the poem to examine the message of the poem. In addition, the study also uses the sociocultural historical approach to analyze the society and background condition African Americans in the United States in the twentieth century. Hence, reading and understanding about the history of America, especially the African Americans’ history is needed to reveal the deeper message of the poems.

The future researchers also suggested that by understanding the nature and the flow of the poem, they gain a new vision about another way of delivering the protest. Both poems are about the response to the injustice and the way African Americans struggle for their happy and bright future. Maya Angelou considers that the creativity, dignity, and pride keep the African Americans’ struggle alive.
2. The Suggestion for the English Language Education Study Program Lecturers

The poems *Still I Rise* and *Caged Bird* for the ELESP lecturers could be the supporting media for the students to learn English as the second language. Moreover, the poems could be the source for the students to understand the free verse and lyric poems. The critical knowledge and skill of reading comprehension can be enhanced through reading the poems. Understanding the deeper meaning and considering the language in these poems are not simple, thus the researcher suggests that the poems be given to the intermediate level students on the sixth semester.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

PLAGIAT MERUPAKAN TINDAKAN TIDAK TERPUJI
Still I Rise

by Maya Angelou (1978)

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may tread 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 back yard.

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.
I rise.
Appendix 2

Caged Bird

by Maya Angelou (1983)

The free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wings
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 fearful trill
of the 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
Appendix 3

Maya Angelou’s Biography

Born on April 4, 1928, in St. Louis, Missouri, writer and civil rights activist Maya Angelou is known for her 1969 memoir, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, which made literary history as the first nonfiction best-seller by an African-American woman. In 1971, Angelou published the Pulitzer Prize-nominated poetry collection *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water ’Fore I Die*. She later wrote the poem "On the Pulse of Morning"—one of her most famous works—which she recited at President Bill Clinton's inauguration in 1993. Angelou received several honors throughout her career, including two NAACP Image Awards in the outstanding literary work (nonfiction) category, in 2005 and 2009. She died on May 28, 2014.

Early Years

Multi-talented barely seems to cover the depth and breadth of Maya Angelou's accomplishments. She was an author, actress, screenwriter, dancer and poet. Born Marguerite Annie Johnson, Angelou had a difficult childhood. Her parents split up when she was very young, and she and her older brother, Bailey, were sent to live with their father's mother, Anne Henderson, in Stamps, Arkansas.

As an African American, Angelou experienced firsthand racial prejudices and discrimination in Arkansas. She also suffered at the hands of a family associate around the age of 7: During a visit with her mother, Angelou was raped by her mother's boyfriend. Then, as vengeance for the sexual assault, Angelou's uncles killed the boyfriend. So traumatized by the experience, Angelou stopped talking. She returned to Arkansas and spent years as a virtual mute. During World War II, Angelou moved to San Francisco, California, where she won a scholarship to study dance and acting at the California Labor School. Also during this time, Angelou became the first black female cable car conductor—a job she held only briefly, in San Francisco.

In 1944, a 16-year-old Angelou gave birth to a son, Guy (a short-lived high school relationship had led to the pregnancy), thereafter working a number of jobs to support herself and her child. In 1952, the future literary icon wed Anastasios Angelopulos, a Greek sailor from whom she took her professional
name—a blend of her childhood nickname, "Maya," and a shortened version of his surname.

**Career Beginnings**

In the mid-1950s, Angelou's career as a performer began to take off. She landed a role in a touring production of *Porgy and Bess*, later appearing in the off-Broadway production *Calypso Heat Wave* (1957) and releasing her first album, *Miss Calypso* (1957). A member of the Harlem Writers Guild and a civil rights activist, Angelou organized and starred in the musical revue *Cabaret for Freedom* as a benefit for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, also serving as the SCLC's northern coordinator.

In 1961, Angelou appeared in an off-Broadway production of Jean Genet's *The Blacks* with James Earl Jones, Lou Gossett Jr. and Cicely Tyson. While the play earned strong reviews, Angelou moved on to other pursuits, spending much of the 1960s abroad; she first lived in Egypt and then in Ghana, working as an editor and a freelance writer. Angelou also held a position at the University of Ghana for a time.

After returning to the United States, Angelou was urged by friend and fellow writer James Baldwin to write about her life experiences. Her efforts resulted in the enormously successful 1969 memoir about her childhood and young adult years, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, which made literary history as the first nonfiction best-seller by an African-American woman. The poignant work also made Angelou an international star.

Since publishing *Caged Bird*, Angelou continued to break new ground—not just artistically, but educationally and socially. She wrote the drama *Georgia, Georgia* in 1972—becoming the first African-American woman to have her screenplay produced—and went on to earn a Tony Award nomination for her role in the play *Look Away* (1973) and an Emmy Award nomination for her work on the television miniseries *Roots* (1977), among other honors.

**Later Successes**

Angelou wrote several autobiographies throughout her career, including *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* (1986) and *A Song Flung Up to Heaven* (2002), but 1969's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* continues to be regarded as her most popular autobiographical work. She also published several collections of poetry, including *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water 'Fore I Die* (1971), which was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize.

One of Angelou's most famous works is the poem "On the Pulse of Morning," which she wrote especially for and recited at President Bill Clinton's inaugural ceremony in January 1993—marking the first inaugural recitation since 1961, when Robert Frost delivered his poem "The Gift Outright" at President John F. Kennedy's inauguration. Angelou went on to win a Grammy Award (best spoken word album) for the audio version of the poem.

In 1995, Angelou was lauded for remaining on *The New York Times* paperback nonfiction best-seller list for two years—the longest-running record in the chart's history.
Seeking new creative challenges, Angelou made her directorial debut in 1998 with *Down in the Delta*, starring Alfre Woodard. She also wrote a number of inspirational works, from the essay collection *Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now* (1994) to her advice for young women in *Letter to My Daughter* (2008). Interested in health, Angelou has even published cookbooks, including *Hallelujah! The Welcome Table: A Lifetime of Memories With Recipes* (2005) and *Great Food, All Day Long* (2010). Angelou's career has seen numerous accolades, including the Chicago International Film Festival's 1998 Audience Choice Award and a nod from the Acapulco Black Film Festival in 1999 for *Down in the Delta*; and two NAACP Image Awards in the outstanding literary work (nonfiction) category, for her 2005 cookbook and 2008's *Letter to My Daughter*.

**Personal Life**

Martin Luther King Jr., a close friend of Angelou's, was assassinated on her birthday (April 4) in 1968. Angelou stopped celebrating her birthday for years afterward, and sent flowers to King's widow, Coretta Scott King, for more than 30 years, until Coretta's death in 2006.

Angelou was good friends with TV personality Oprah Winfrey, who organized several birthday celebrations for the award-winning author, including a week-long cruise for her 70th birthday in 1998.

After experiencing health issues for a number of years, Maya Angelou died on May 28, 2014, at her home in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The news of her passing spread quickly with many people taking to social media to mourn and remember Angelou. Singer Mary J. Blige and politician Cory Booker were among those who tweeted their favorite quotes by her in tribute. President Barack Obama also issued a statement about Angelou, calling her "a brilliant writer, a fierce friend, and a truly phenomenal woman." Angelou "had the ability to remind us that we are all God's children; that we all have something to offer," he wrote.

Source: https://www.biography.com/people/maya-angelou-9185388
Appendix 4

REFLECTION

Writing about the life of Africa Americans as reflected in Maya Angelou’s poems *Still I Rise* and *Caged Bird* brings me to some reflection of life. The process of writing the thesis is not an easy process. I needed to walk on the rough path. Changing the title which affected the whole thesis encouraged me to do better than before. Arranging the new idea is not simple, I become more diligent to read more book and references than before.

The whole process makes me learn that the important matter in order to make the things work is the desire to write and the commitment to do the work seriously. I realize that staying in the pace is not easy, sometimes I did not know what to write and left the thesis aside, but the support from friends made me rise again and started to write again. Just like the poems by Maya Angelou which I analyze, I need to stand up and have the self-esteem.

Furthermore, I acquire new information and develop knowledge. I have a broader knowledge about African Americans and their history. Besides, I become more critical in understanding the message of poems. The poems, specifically *Still I Rise* and *Caged Bird*, have made me learn that in order to reach happiness and freedom, people should struggle for them. It is not right just to wait. I also think that people should be grateful for the things that they have. Some people are still struggling just to sleep and eat. Besides, the poems give a message for me to become more aware of unfortunate others.
The poem about the history of African Americans somehow is related to the life of Indonesian. People somehow need to remember the hardship from the ancestors to unite the nation, so that they will appreciate the struggle and keep the good things to perpetuate the harmony of fighting for freedom. In Indonesia especially, the diversity which lit the pride of the Indonesian heroes to fight together against the oppressor should be the base for the new generation to always come together to rise for the country, instead of destroying the diversity. In fact, the condition in Indonesia nowadays seems to move to the dark side, where some people think that diversity was made to be destroyed. The injustice treatment which brings about the religion and race became the biggest issue which has no end. The issue which makes people thinks that they are the only one that right, others are wrong. This issue covers up the biggest inhumane issue in Indonesia, which is corruption. The poems could be the best example for Indonesians that the injustice would be best to fight if people stand together and understand each other.

Moreover, the poems which tell about the oppression to the inferior remind me of my own experience. As a young generation, I feel that some of the older underestimate us. In my experienced to work with the older, some of them thought that my experiences were not enough for them to listen to my opinion. This kind of social oppression concerned me whenever I wanted to do something that I felt so limited to move. The poems from Maya Angelou enlighten me. The poems show that in their hardship, the African Americans still have the spirit to move, and do not cares about what others think about them. The poems tell me that we as the young people, are warned by Maya Angelou to have the power,
even though our dreams seem to dim and people belittle us. We still have the passion, which save ourselves. We should know ourselves deeper and become happy with it. We also need to love others who do not appreciate us, not to please anybody, but as the reflection of ourselves.