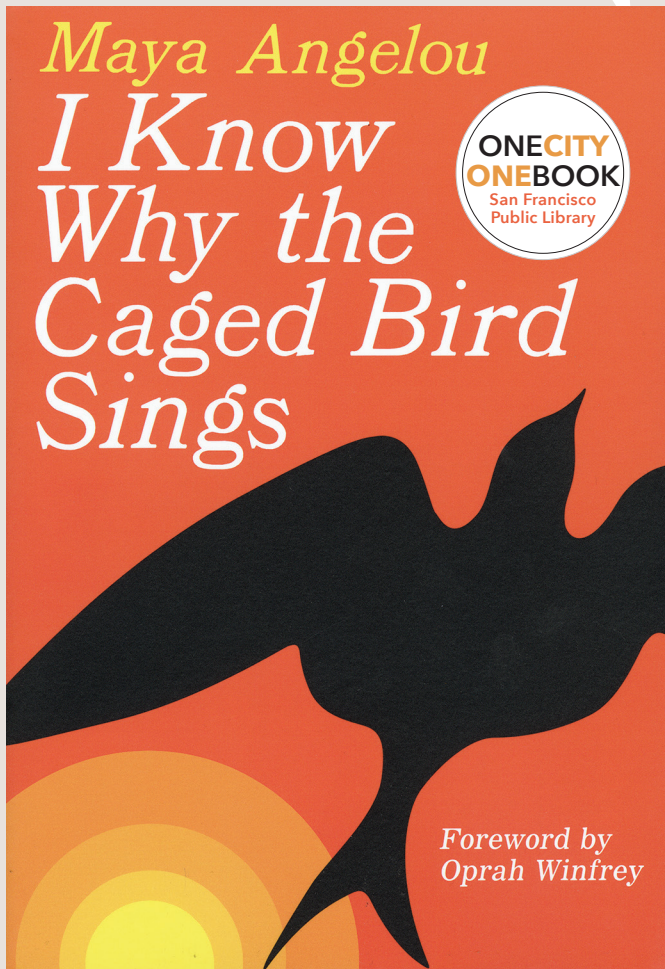


SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY PRESENTS

# ONECITY ONEBOOK

San Francisco Reads



San Francisco Public Library

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We honor and acknowledge the many Ohlone tribal groups and families, including the Ramaytush and Chochenyo, as well as the Coast and Bay Miwok, Southern Pomo, Wappo and Patwin peoples as the rightful stewards of the lands on which we reside.

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## Welcome



Michael Lambert

Dear readers,

I am so incredibly proud to announce San Francisco's 19th One City One Book title, Dr. Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. A modern classic, this memoir captures the childhood and coming-of-age of an American icon in searing detail. In these pages we are given an intimate glimpse into the places that shaped her: Stamps, Arkansas, where Angelou spent her early years being raised by her grandmother; St. Louis, where she got her first library card; and San Francisco, where she set her sights on becoming the first Black streetcar conductor.

Angelou is generous in sharing her triumphs—and does not spare us her pain. One City One Book affords us the shared reading and discussion opportunities that can help us come to a deeper understanding of her experience and the world she lived in.

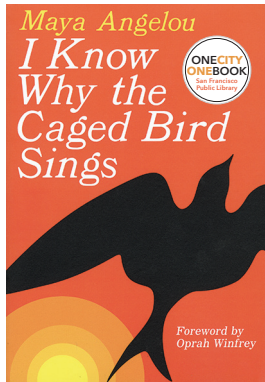
This selection marks a departure from previous One City One Book selections, which have featured works by living authors. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* was chosen to coincide with the unveiling of the new monument honoring Dr. Angelou, *Portrait of a Phenomenal Woman* by Lava Thomas, on the front steps of the Main Library overlooking Civic Center. This is the first monument commemorating a Black woman in San Francisco's Civic Art Collection and is the foundation of an entire citywide celebration of Dr. Angelou this year.

I warmly invite you to partake in the exceptional programs that we have lined up this fall to celebrate Dr. Angelou's legacy, and to read (or reread) the book in community with one of the Library's book clubs, your own reading groups, your family and your friends.

Sincerely,  
Michael Lambert  
City Librarian

## Together, we read.

## About the Book



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

**M**aya Angelou's debut memoir is a modern American classic beloved worldwide. Her life story is told in the documentary film *And Still I Rise*, seen on PBS's American Masters.

Here is a book as joyous and painful, as mysterious and memorable, as childhood itself. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* captures the longing of lonely children, the brute insult of bigotry and the wonder of words that can make the world right.

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

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

## About the Author

**M**aya Angelou was raised in Stamps, Arkansas. In addition to her bestselling autobiographies, including *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and *The Heart of a Woman*, she wrote numerous volumes of poetry, among them *Phenomenal Woman*, *And Still I Rise*, *On the Pulse of Morning* and *Mother*. Angelou died in 2014.



Maya Angelou GLIDE Historical Records, San Francisco History Center.

## Readers' Guide: Discussion Questions

1. How old were you when you first read *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*?
2. How has the book changed for you on later readings? Did any characters or scenes stand out more than before?
3. How are the themes of the memoir—like racism, violence, trauma and displacement—still relevant today?
4. How does Angelou describe her molestation and later her rape at the hands of Mr. Freeman? Were you surprised by her emotions? Was this terrible experience the defining moment of the book or of Angelou's childhood? Why or why not?
5. Now that sexual assault has been at the forefront of current conversations, thanks in large part to Tarana Burke and the #MeToo movement, did you read this section any differently?
6. As the granddaughter of a comparatively poor businesswoman, Marguerite's understanding of the world is shaped as much by class experience as by race. Can you think of some examples of class distinctions or inversions in the book?
7. How, if at all, do you think issues of class and race have changed today?
8. Angelou writes, "Every person I knew had a hellish horror of being 'called out of his name.'" When Mrs. Cullinan renames her "Mary," she exacts her revenge. Can you think of other examples of naming and renaming in the book? What do you think it means to be "called out of [one's] name"? Is this something that you think still happens to people of color today?
9. What are some of the communities that welcome Marguerite during her childhood? Which communities nurture her successfully? Which are less successful?
10. "He was my first white love," Angelou says of Shakespeare, but most of her teachers are Black. How does Angelou describe her education, both formal and informal? What lessons does she learn from those around her?
11. "We survive in exact relationship to the dedication of our poets," Angelou says of Black people. What do you think she means by this? Do you think that this is true of all cultures?
12. The memoir's title is a reference to a poem by Paul Lawrence Dunbar. Why do you think Angelou chose this title?

## Book Clubs

Discuss *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou with your community.

**Dec. 3, 7 p.m., Virtual Library**  
Register: [on.sfpl.org/REG12-3-24](https://on.sfpl.org/REG12-3-24)

**Club de Lectura de Los Visionarios - Dec. 10, 1 p.m., Main Library, Talking Books & Braille Center, 2nd Floor**  
El Club de Lectura de Los Visionarios se reúne mensualmente para discutir libros y ensayos. Este mes, leeremos *Yo sé por qué canta el pájaro enjaulado* de Maya Angelou. Para registrarse, llame al Centro de Libros Parlantes y Braille: (415) 557-4253. Information: [on.sfpl.org/12-10-24](https://on.sfpl.org/12-10-24)

**Dec. 12, 6 p.m., Merced Branch**  
Register: [on.sfpl.org/OCOB12-12-24](https://on.sfpl.org/OCOB12-12-24)



# One City One Book Related Programs

## Panel Discussions

### Women in Public Art

Nov. 7, 6 p.m., Main Library, Koret Auditorium

A not-to-miss discussion with artists Lava Thomas, Mildred Howard and Cheryl Derricotte as they explore the role of women in shaping San Francisco's public art. These artists bring powerful narratives of identity, history, activism and community to the Bay Area landscape. The conversation coincides with the unveiling of Lava Thomas's monument *Portrait of a Phenomenal Woman* at the Main Library. Moderated by Sarah Hotchkiss, arts writer at KOED.



Lava Thomas  
Photo: Carolyn Fong

**Lava Thomas** addresses race, gender and memorialization through multidisciplinary art, including drawing, sculpture and installations. Her work, rooted in her Southern heritage, has been exhibited nationwide, including at the National Portrait Gallery and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Thomas is represented by Rena Bransten Gallery.



Mildred Howard  
Photo: Raymond Holbert

**Mildred Howard** is renowned for her sculptural installations and mixed-media assemblages. Her work, often exploring themes of home and gentrification, has been exhibited internationally. Howard has received numerous accolades, including two Rockefeller Fellowships, and is represented by Anglim/Trimble.



Cheryl Derricotte  
Photo: Nye' Lyn Tho

**Cheryl Derricotte** is a visual artist specializing in glass and paper. Based in San Francisco, her work includes the Harriet Tubman monument Freedom's Threshold. Derricotte is the 2023/2024 Kala Art Institute Municipal Artist-in-Residence and a licensed city planner.

### The San Francisco Black Theater Movement

Nov. 10, 2 p.m., Main Library, Koret Auditorium

In the spirit of Dr. Maya Angelou's performing arts past, prominent artists from San Francisco's Black theater movement discuss how the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and '70s revolutionized San Francisco theater and paved the way for current trends in Black theater production. The talk accompanies the exhibition *Black Theater—Go Home!*, a selection of historical theater posters, programs and ephemera on view in the African American Center through November.

### (Re)discovering San Francisco: Public Art

Nov. 19, 6 p.m., Main Library, Koret Auditorium

Panel presentation on San Francisco's public art and monuments and the preservation of the City's community heritage in a changing cultural landscape. Learn more about public art surveys including San Francisco Art Commission's San Francisco Redevelopment Public Artwork Inventory and ongoing initiatives.



#### Panelists (shown L to R) include:

**Hannah Simonson**, Cultural Resources Planner (Page & Turnbull) and the San Francisco Redevelopment Public Artwork Inventory

**Allison Cummings**, Senior Registrar, Civic Art Collection and Public Art (San Francisco Art Commission)

**Jon Rusch**, Architectural Historian & Preservation Planner (Architectural Resources Group)



Dr. Maya Angelou at GLIDE, 1993.  
Photo by Alain McLaughlin. GLIDE Historical Records (SFH 744), San Francisco History Center.

### Exhibition: *Dear Sister Maya Angelou*

Nov. 8, 2024–Feb. 16, 2025

Main Library, Saroyan Area, 6th Floor

Come visit our One City One Book exhibit at the Main Library. Celebrating Dr. Maya Angelou, the 6th Floor exhibition shows Angelou's longtime association with Tenderloin's GLIDE Memorial Church. *Dear Sister Maya Angelou* draws from the San Francisco History Center's recent archival acquisition, the GLIDE Historical Records, to focus on Angelou's involvement with GLIDE and her dedicated friendships with Reverend Cecil Williams and poet Janice Mirikitani.

Materials on view include photographs, brochures, correspondence and newspaper clippings. In addition, the exhibit highlights Angelou's enduring legacy and the impact she had on the church and city she loved.

### Film: *Maya Angelou and GLIDE: Rainbow in the Clouds* Screening and Discussion

Nov. 14, 5:30 p.m., Tenderloin Museum, 398 Eddy St., San Francisco

The Tenderloin Museum and the San Francisco Public Library present a screening of *Rainbow in the Clouds* and other footage to outline Dr. Angelou's deep and meaningful history with the Tenderloin's radical church, GLIDE. In 1992, the Detroit Educational Television Foundation produced a documentary called *Rainbow in the Clouds* about GLIDE Memorial Church from the perspective of poet, writer, Civil Rights activist and longtime GLIDE congregation member Dr. Maya Angelou. Originally broadcast on PBS, this extraordinary hour of TV gives a snapshot of GLIDE in the early '90s: its robust Sunday celebrations, expansive programs serving the Tenderloin and collective activism, along with profiles of the remarkable individuals who comprise the GLIDE community. Dr. Angelou conducts interviews with her friends Rev. Cecil Williams and Janice Mirikitani as well as with many folks who have found community, transformation and love at GLIDE.

NR, 59 mins., 1992. Closed captions (CC) in English.



GLIDE Historical Records, San Francisco History Center.



L to R: Raymond Nat Turner, Avotcja, Tureeda Mikell and Darius Simpson.

### Performance: *Echoes of Maya: A Celebration of Voice and Verse*

Nov. 17, 2 p.m., Main Library, Koret Auditorium



Dr. Kim McMillon

An afternoon of powerful words and performances as Bay Area artists and creatives come together to honor the legacy of Maya Angelou. Through poetry, music and reflection, this program will explore how Angelou's profound work and life continue to inspire generations.



Dorothy Lazard

Public historian Dorothy Lazard will provide a historical perspective on Angelou's impact on both African American and American history, setting the stage for a night of artistic celebration. With selected poets reading from *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and sharing their own works. Featuring Avotcja, Dorothy Lazard, Tureeda Mikell, Darius Simpson and Raymond Nat Turner. Curated by Dr. Kim McMillon.



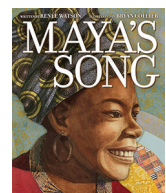
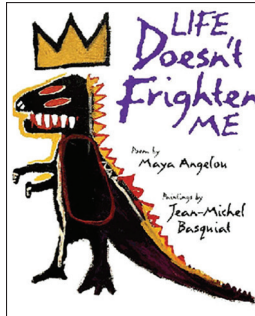
# Books, Music and Journeys

## Books for Kids

[on.sfppl.org/OCOB24ReadKids](https://on.sfppl.org/OCOB24ReadKids)

### Life Doesn't Frighten Me

Visionary full-color artwork by Jean-Michel Basquiat accompanies a stirring poem—by the world-renowned poet and author of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*—celebrating courage, strength and fearlessness.



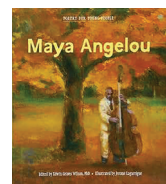
### Maya's Song by Renée Watson

A breathtaking picture book introduces young readers to the life and work of Maya Angelou, the first Black person and first woman to recite a poem at a presidential inauguration, and how her work still resonates today.

### Rise! From Caged Bird to Poet of the People, Maya Angelou by Bethany Hegedus



A biography of African American writer, performer and activist Maya Angelou, who turned a childhood of trauma and emotional pain to become one of the most inspiring voices of our lifetime.



### Poetry for Young People by Maya Angelou

This collection includes 25 of her powerful poems, beautifully illustrated by Jerome Lagarrigue, with introductions by Dr. Edwin Graves Wilson.

## Maya Angelou's Favorite Songs of All Time

[on.sfppl.org/OCOB24Music](https://on.sfppl.org/OCOB24Music)

Inspired by Maya Angelou's love of music featuring jazz, soul and gospel tracks.

### The Very Best of Roberta Flack

Angelou loved the classic "Killing Me Softly With His Song."

### Stevie Wonder: The Definitive Collection

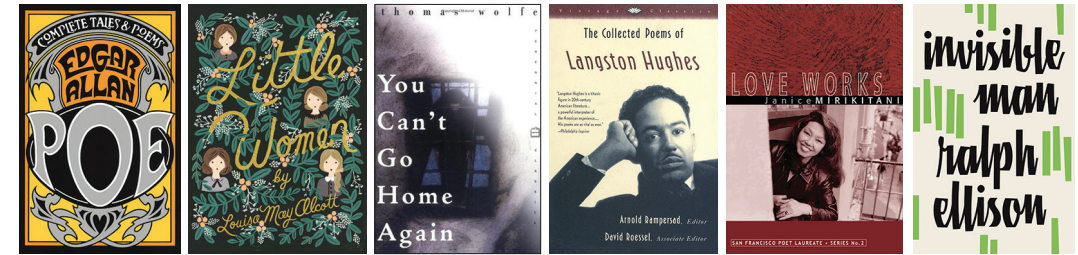
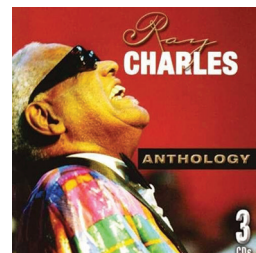
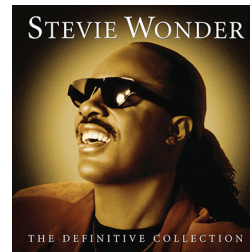
"I Just Called To Say I Love You" is the Angelou favorite on this collection.

### Ray Charles Anthology

"Georgia On My Mind" was a perpetual favorite.

### Sarah Vaughan Anthology

Angelou loved Vaughan's version of "East of the Sun."



## Maya Angelou: Her Favorite Books & Influences

[on.sfppl.org/OCOB24Favorites](https://on.sfppl.org/OCOB24Favorites)

Maya Angelou's literary DNA is shaped by the narratives, characters and styles of her favorite authors, including Anne Spencer and Kwesi Brew.

### The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe by Edgar Allan Poe

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) was an American writer known for macabre tales, Gothic poetry and inventing detective fiction, inspiring Angelou's appreciation of *The Raven*.

### Little Women by Louisa May Alcott

Follows the March sisters as they navigate family, duty and personal growth during the American Civil War.

### You Can't Go Home Again by Thomas Wolfe

A posthumous novel about George Webber, a writer criticized by his hometown for depicting its residents, exploring identity, nostalgia and change. Angelou memorized chapters.

### The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes

*Collected Poems* showcase the poet's rhythmic style and commitment to celebrating and confronting Black life in America.

### Love Works by Janice Mirikitani

A collection of poems exploring love, resilience and community with a direct, passionate voice rooted in cultural heritage.

### Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison

*Invisible Man* (1952) is an introspective yet vast novel that tells the story of an unnamed Black man's search for identity and place in a racially divided America.

## A Maya Angelou-Inspired Journey Through the History of SF Streetcars and Cable Cars

[on.sfppl.org/OCOB24Streetcars](https://on.sfppl.org/OCOB24Streetcars)



### San Francisco Cable Cars

A highly recommended in-depth documentary told by historians and the people who still work with the cars. Some may be surprised by their origins and how San Francisco nearly lost its iconic streetcars entirely. (DVD)



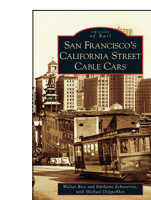
### San Francisco's Magnificent Streetcars by Kenneth C. Springirth

This book offers a chapter-by-chapter history of streetcar lines, featuring color photographs of streetcars and people, capturing 1970s and 1980s fashion.



### On Track: A Field Guide to San Francisco's Historic Streetcars and Cable Cars by Rick Laubscher

This guide offers historic details of vintage streetcars with color photos and illustrations, riding tips and a comprehensive rail timeline starting in 1848.



### San Francisco's California Street Cable Cars by Walter Rice

The California Street cable car line, one of just three remaining in the city, was rebuilt after the 1906 earthquake and fire. Its distinctive clang still echoes along its route.

Together, we read.



## About the Monument

**P**ortrait of a Phenomenal Woman by artist Lava Thomas honors Dr. Maya Angelou (1928-2014) in recognition of her many accomplishments as a literary artist and a civil rights leader. The first monument commemorating a Black woman in San Francisco's Civic Art Collection, *Portrait of a Phenomenal Woman* is located on Larkin Plaza at the Main Library overlooking Civic Center.

Styled in the form of a book, the front of the monument features a portrait of Dr. Angelou drawn by Lava Thomas, based on an image still from a 1973 interview of Dr. Angelou in conversation with Bill Moyers.

The monument measures 96" high x 72" wide x 26" deep, atop a 12" high x 80" wide x 30" deep basalt stone base, standing at a total height of nine feet.

The monument also features the quote "Still I Rise" along the front base, and a secondary quote on the back:



*"Information helps you to see that you're not alone. That there's somebody in Mississippi and somebody in Tokyo who all have wept, who've all longed and lost, who've all been happy. So the library helps you to see, not only that you are not alone, but that you're not really any different from everyone else. There may be details that are different, but a human being is a human being."*

– Dr. Maya Angelou



Come visit the monument to remember and celebrate the legacy of this phenomenal woman. View a recording of the Sept. 19 unveiling event: [on.sfpl.org/monumentunveiling](https://on.sfpl.org/monumentunveiling)

## Acknowledgments

### THANKS TO THE 2024 ONE CITY ONE BOOK SELECTION COMMITTEE

Lawrence Gallegos, Adult Engagement Manager, SFPL

Michelle Jeffers, Chief of Community Programs and Partnerships, SFPL

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Anissa Malady, Adult Engagement Coordinator, SFPL

Susan Mall, Commissioner, San Francisco Public Library Commission

Denise Schmidt, Collections & Cataloging Manager, SFPL

Connie Wolf, President, San Francisco Public Library Commission



## *Portrait of a Phenomenal Woman* By Lava Thomas

Dr. Maya Angelou Monument & Dedication Ceremony  
September 19, 2024 • San Francisco Main Library

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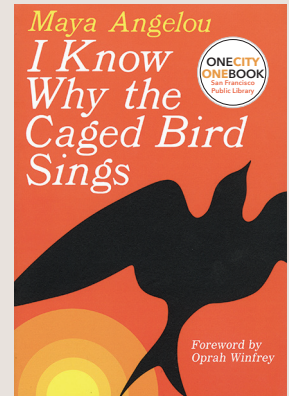
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All SFPL locations are wheelchair accessible. For accommodations (such as ASL), call (415) 557-4557 or contact [accessibility@sfpl.org](mailto:accessibility@sfpl.org). Requesting at least 3 business days in advance will help ensure availability.