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Salem Press Announces a New Addition to the Critical Insights Series; *Critical Insights: Maya Angelou*

Edited by Mildred R. Mickle, Associate Professor of English and Co-Head of the Letters, Arts, and Sciences Department at Penn State University Greater Allegheny, this collection investigates the complexities of Maya Angelou's prose and poetry. In eighty-six years, she published over fifty books of prose, poetry, and children's literature. Her most famous work, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), is the work that has received the most scholarly attention. This collection does contain a few essays that discuss *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*; however, its primary focus is on her other autobiographies, her essays, and some of her poetry.

The first chapter is a biographical sketch of Maya Angelou in which Mildred R. Mickle provides an overview of Maya Angelou's life, highlighting her major accomplishments; her participation in American theatre; her influence on major twentieth-century figures, like Oprah Winfrey; and her legacy of poignantly written poetry and autobiography. The volume then breaks down into three parts: **Critical Contexts**, **Critical Readings of Angelou's Prose**, and **Critical Readings of Angelou's Poetry**. The **Critical Contexts** section offers essays by Robert C. Evans, who defines what formalism is and then applies a formalist or New Critical approach to analyzing and interpreting some of Angelou's early poetry. Martin Kich writes a historical background chapter that presents some of the major scholarly sources on Angelou's work. Mildred R. Mickle's comparative analysis chapter investigates the evolution of black folk forms in the poetry of Angelou and compares and contrasts her treatment of spirituals and blues with the poetry of Langston Hughes and Sterling A. Brown. Martin Kich also does a chapter on the ambivalent reception that Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* has received, sparking some to ban it from reading lists and others to denounce it as offensive for its graphic subject matter.

The **Critical Readings: Angelou's Prose** section contains essays that critique Angelou's autobiographies and essays and present select information from her interviews. Robert C. Evans analyzes and interprets how Angelou's paradoxical shiftings are a successful structuring device in her second autobiography, *Gather Together in My Name* (1974). Jason Shifferd investigates Angelou's use of humor in her third autobiography, *Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry Like Christmas* (1976), which chronicles her time touring with the show *Porgy and Bess*. Sarah Fredericks' chapter discusses how Zora Neale Hurston's autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road*, influenced Angelou's later autobiographies, including *A Song Flung Up to Heaven* (2002) and *Mom & Me & Mom* (2013). Christina M. Garner presents and interprets excerpts from Angelou's interviews compiled before 1989 in Jeffrey M. Eliot's *Conversations with Maya Angelou* (1989). Kelley Jeans then presents a sampling of Angelou's interviews from 1989 onward. Stephen Paul Bray critiques Angelou's use of ethos, pathos, and logos in her essay collections *Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now* (1993), *Even the Stars Look Lonesome* (1997), and *Letter to My Daughter* (2009). And, Claudine Raynaud closely reads *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969) and critiques how Angelou dismantles stereotypes of race and sexuality.

The **Critical Readings: Angelou's Poetry** section offers essays that discuss select poetry by Maya Angelou. Tomeiko Ashford Carter analyzes and interprets Angelou's political poems, written for President William J. Clinton, President George W. Bush, the United Nations, and Nelson Mandela. Mildred R. Mickle explores Angelou's thematic investigation of Africa in the poems from *Oh Pray My Wings Are Gonna Fit Me Well* (1975). Rounding out the volume is Robert C. Evans' discussion of the theme of gender and love in Angelou's first three collections of poetry. Since Dr. Maya Angelou died on May 28, 2014, this collection serves in part as a tribute to her life and legacy and strives to encourage further exploration of Angelou's works.

Each essay in *Critical Insights: Maya Angelou* includes a list of Works Cited and detailed endnotes. Also included in this volume is a **Bibliography**, biographies of the **Editor** and **Contributors**, as well as an alphabetical **Index**.

The *Critical Insights* Series distills the best of both classic and current literary criticism of the world's most studied literature. Edited and written by some of academia's most distinguished literary scholars, *Critical Insights: Holocaust Literature* provides authoritative, in-depth scholarship that students and researchers will rely on for years. This volume is destined to become a valuable purchase for all.

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