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**PHENOMENAL WOMAN- LIFE DEFINING**
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**Abstract:** Courage may be most important of all virtues, because without it one cannot practice any other virtue without consistence. --Maya Angelou

Dr. Angelou has been an inspiration to many women since Forever. As an African American woman/poet/mother/friend, I reflect on her work and find nothing but encouragement. "Phenomenal Woman" by Maya Angelou is one of the powerful poems that represents the rise of hope and pride of a woman (especially African-American woman) despite the abuse, torture and neglect she has experienced. Instead of being ashamed or guilty or blaming herself, she has gained the hope and strength, which makes her the "Phenomenal Woman". This is one self-confident woman with exceptionally strong compelling persona and very high self-esteem, who loves herself in spite of the discrimination and the exploitation from society and people. The poem uses a special and repetitious pattern in each stanza, e.g. the stanza begins with a description of society's reaction to the woman as they notice her. These reactions are all categorized by wonderment about the vivacious woman, why she is so happy and what others see in her. Ms. Angelou expresses her feeling of a hidden frustration and anger at the society who questions the subject's self-confidence and strength., This poem, is based on Poet's personal experiences intertwined with the social issues faced by minorities in general, although not unique to only Women and African-Americans - the topic often disregarded and unexplored by many. This poem despite the discriminatory treatment, the strength and pride of the subject, Phenomenal Woman, builds and rises in all proportions from the venomous neglect she receives. The strong inspirational message of determination and will power to fight and conquer the injustice, and not to give in at any cost is portrayed in the poem.

**Introduction:** Dr. Maya Angelou is a remarkable Renaissance woman who is hailed as one of the great voices of contemporary literature. As a poet, educator, historian, best-selling author, actress, playwright, civil-rights activist, producer and director, she continues to travel the world, spreading her legendary wisdom. Within the rhythm of her poetry and elegance of her prose lies Angelou's unique power to help readers of every orientation span the lines of race. Angelou captivates audiences through the vigor and sheer beauty of her words and lyrics.

Dr. Angelou's words and actions continue to stir our souls, energize our bodies, liberate our minds, and heal our hearts.

Phenomenal Woman is a phenomenal poem that speaks to us of where we are as women at the dawn of a new century. Here is a poem that radiates wisdom and conviction, renewing our belief in the glory and tender mercies of our gender.

The poem 'Phenomenal Woman' is a celebration of a woman's successful life. The poem is a powerful dramatic poem, written for performance to an audience. It helps if you imagine the poet's body movements on stage as she acts out the poem. Maya is a big woman, 'phenomenal'.

In the first stanza she says that she confuses the celeb types, the pretty fashion models. They often ask her to explain the impact she makes, as she is neither cute nor thin. When she tells them her so-called secret they don't believe her. Maya says her success

comes from her confident body language, the way she walks, the rhythm of her hips and the way she smiles. Her body expresses her womanhood. As a woman she claims to be supreme.

In the second stanza, Maya boasts that no matter how cool an entry she makes into a room, men fall for her and fall around her. She claims that the passion of her eyes, the shine of her teeth in a smile, the sway of her waist and the lightness of her feet win the men over. Maya, men are like honey bees flying around a hive. Why? It is because she is a supreme woman.

In the third stanza, Maya says that men can never quite say why they fancy her or make such a fuss over her. Maya remains a mystery to men. She points out to them that her mystery is not hidden but expressed in her body language from the curve of her back to her smile and the rhythm of her bosom [breasts]. Her impact lies in her grace, in her womanliness.

In the fourth stanza, Maya simply restates that she is a supreme woman.

In the fifth stanza, Maya restates the point about her self-confidence. She doesn't pose or seek attention. Maya hopes she inspires people to be self-confident like her. She claims her power lies in the way her body expresses her self-belief as a woman. There is no single factor that accounts for Maya's impact. It varies from the curve of her hair to the sound of her heels. It's got to do with the way people like her warm, caring ways and how they feel a need for Maya to care for them. They find her motherly!

Finally, Maya repeats the point that she is a supreme woman and people know it.

Maya has great self-belief, confidence in her body language and a deep sense of being a woman. She is empowered by womanhood: 'I'm a woman, phenomenally'. By her own admission, Maya is a sort of wonder woman without the looks. She is huge in physique and personality. She knows that she baffles pretty women and draws men around her. She is so confident that she repeatedly calls herself a 'phenomenal woman'. She sings out her inner self, though without claiming to be better than anyone else. The way she walks coolly into a room and becomes the focus of all the men illustrates her self-assurance. Maya is trying to share her joy, reveal her secret so that others can be as confident and fulfilled as she is. Maya feels powerful, but not superior.

Maya argues that true self-expression lies at the heart of a successful personality. Body language is the means of such self-expression. Every gesture, every shape her body makes causes people to look at her with admiration. She impresses men and intrigues women with her energetic body movement. Maya is not influenced by the views of others about her African American identity or any facts from her background: 'my head's not bowed'. At the heart of the poem lies Maya's certainty about her grace as a woman. Yet she doesn't need to show off, to 'shut or jump about'. In her role of poet, many of the words of the poem are of one syllable and easy to understand. They communicate her joy very well. By contrast the word 'phenomenal' [a cause of wonder] stands out and gets across her theme of being yourself, being a true woman, very well.

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