

Getting a Job

from *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (page 411)



Active Reading SkillBuilder

Identifying Cause and Effect in Nonfiction

Recognizing **cause-and-effect** relationships helps readers better understand the events that a writer relates in a work of nonfiction. A **cause** is an event or action that directly results in another event or action. An **effect** is the direct outcome of an event. When reading this selection, use the diagram below to record three causes that led Marguerite to seek the job of streetcar conductor. Then list three effects that this experience had on Marguerite's life.

Marguerite's desire to be a streetcar conductor

Cause	→	Effect
Cause	→	Effect
Cause	→	Effect

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Literary Analysis SkillBuilder

Narrative Nonfiction

A work of **narrative nonfiction** tells a story about real-life people, places, and events. It uses elements typically found in fictional narratives to present factual information and to bring these facts to life for the reader. For instance, the vivid settings that Angelou creates in this piece include the offices of the Market Street Railway Company and the hills of San Francisco. As you read this selection, identify passages in Angelou's text that illustrate the specific elements of fiction listed in the chart below. Record each passage in the appropriate section of the chart.

Passages from "Getting a Job"
Plot:
Character:
Setting:
Theme:
Point of View:

Getting a Job**from I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (page 411)****Words to Know SkillBuilder****Words to Know**ascend
charadecomprehend
dexterousdiametrically
haphazardlyhaughty
hypocrisyostensibly
terse

A. Circle the correct word in each group that is an antonym, or means the opposite, of the boldfaced word.

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|----------|----------|
| 1. ascend | stumble | meander | descend |
| 2. terse | withdrawn | rambling | concise |
| 3. haughty | humble | smooth | arrogant |
| 4. dexterous | reluctant | awkward | agile |
| 5. haphazardly | purposefully | randomly | slowly |

B. Decide which Word to Know is described by each clue. Then write the word in the blank to the right of the sentence.

- You would show this if you said and did the things you did not really believe in.
- This word means what "seems to be."
- If you grasp the meaning of this message, then you are doing this.
- This word describes ways of thinking that are completely opposite.
- This is an act that is really a sham, with no basis in truth.

_____ (1)

_____ (2)

_____ (3)

_____ (4)

_____ (5)

C. Write a letter to Maya Angelou. Include your reaction to her experience getting her first job. Use at least **four** of the Words to Know.

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Selection Quiz

Read over the questions and think about the events described in the story. Then answer each question in sentences or phrases.

1. Why does Marguerite want to work on the streetcars of San Francisco?

2. Why does the receptionist try to get rid of Marguerite?

3. How does Marguerite's mother encourage her to continue seeking her dream job?

4. How does Marguerite finally get a job on the streetcars?

5. Why does Marguerite feel different from her schoolmates?

C. Words to Know. Write the letter of the best answer. (4 points each)

- _____ 1. If you ascend in an elevator, you
a. go up. b. go down. c. get trapped.
- _____ 2. A haughty person is
a. withdrawn. b. shy. c. arrogant.
- _____ 3. A terse headline in a newspaper is
a. misleading. b. to the point. c. wordy.
- _____ 4. When you comprehend a problem, you
a. explain it. b. are confused. c. understand it.
- _____ 5. Dexterous people can best be described as
a. skillful. b. jealous. c. cowardly.

D. Answer one of the following questions based on your understanding of "Getting a Job." Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper. (20 points)

1. In "Getting a Job," how do you think Marguerite's self-worth was affected by her experience? Did she come away from the experience feeling better about herself or worse? Use details from the selection to support your ideas.
2. Typically, when you think of figurative language, you think of fiction and poetry. In this excerpt, Angelou shows how nonfiction and factual writing can be brought to life by using figurative language. Give some examples of figurative language in the selection. For each example, explain how it gives you a better understanding of what Angelou was feeling.

E. Linking Literature to Life. Answer the following question based on your own experience and knowledge. Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper. (18 points)

There are many ways to deal with prejudice if you encounter it. Think about how Marguerite dealt with prejudice and racist attitudes when she applied for a job. Do you think you would act similarly if you were in her situation?