



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1991 Volume III: Afro-American Autobiography

Amazing Grace

Curriculum Unit 91.03.10
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This unit is a continuation of a unit which I wrote in 1985, *Against the Tide* (Vol. V). In the first unit, I discussed three contemporary native New Haveners who became successful world renown individuals: New York Judge Constance Baker Motley, Raymond St. Jacques (late actor), and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. (late Congressman from New York).

The previous unit discussed their achievements, education, religion, and strong family ties that were guiding influences in their lives. Classroom activities were devised around these objectives for a seventh or eighth grade Remedial Reading Class.

The unit which follows uses the term "Amazing Grace" which the above individuals certainly had or acquired. The two units may be used separately, as well as together.

This unit will present two individuals, one female and male, who are considered famous for their acts, works, words or deeds. The two individuals are Maya Angelou and James Comer. Students will be introduced to the formative years of these personalities: where they lived, the events and people who molded their lives, and the place of religion as an anchor in their lives will be discussed. The term "Amazing Grace" will be introduced, at this point, and how the term applies to the individuals will be assessed.

Seventh and eighth grade Remedial Reading Teachers may use the selections included in this unit to reinforce reading skills. These particular selections are of events in the lives of the two individuals and may be used during Black History Month (February). The students will be able to use the skill lessons located at the end of the teaching unit to enhance a specific skill in reading. These exercises will consist of *Degrees of Reading Power (DRP)* which are *Cloze Stories* (choosing the correct meaning among several words displayed to give the selection meaning), finding the main idea or topic sentence of a specific selection, story mapping, comprehension and oral discussion.

The students whom I teach are mainly Hispanic and African-American and have poor academic skills and are low achievers. They are aware of their ranking in school which may contribute to the negative behavior. In the article "They're Not Dumb, They're Different," author Sheila Tobias states that teachers can get rid of these feelings and labels and help students come closer to using their skills by understanding others who have achieved in spite of the odds against them.

In the 1980's a study reported that two out of five Hispanic-American children lived in poverty, and nearly half

of all African-American children were among the working poor. Low income, poor access to adequate health care, poor nutrition are variables that effect a student's performance in school. "The more things change the more they stay the same" is a saying known to many Blacks.

Amazing Grace will be beneficial for my minority students to understand that they can be rich in spirit while poor in material possessions. This has been true of the lives of James Comer and Maya Angelou who had very little material wealth but had an over abundance of spiritual wealth. Under the nurturing eyes of their kin folk they blossomed. Students may associate someone in their family who is the "Amazing Grace" character which is their "rock." For the purpose of this unit, the term "Amazing Grace" is used to denote the special qualities of particular people who have, inspite of the system, survived and flourished.

The unit will begin with understanding the term "Amazing Grace." What does it mean? Have you heard it before? If so, where and under what circumstances? Next, the students will discuss the difference between a biography and an autobiography. Why do people write autobiographies? This section will introduce the authors, Maya Angelou and James Comer, to the students. The author's short biographies will help the students understand the rationale for this unit.

Next, the students will be reading excerpts taken from *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou and *Maggie's American Dream* by James Comer. These selected excerpts will focus around a specific theme: a strong family support system, buttressed by a meaningful church life, can prove invaluable. During the presentation of the lessons, students will draw conclusions, make comparisons, use inferential thinking to see similarities, and cause and effect to understand particular circumstances.

BACKGROUND MATERIAL

Some children of today are not aware of the term "Jim Crow," for this term was used in another time and another era. It is important for them to visualize human beings living under such abuse . . . especially Black men. Since the students that I teach are of the "Here and Now" generation, the terms "apartheid" in South Africa and "Jim Crow" need to be compared and discussed. This lesson will not be taught to cause friction between the students, but to teach young Black students a pride in their heritage. Also, to have them see how far they've come despite the obstacles put before their ancestors. Hopefully, they will come to the realization that "intestinal fortitude" was and is the foundation for survival then and now.

The southern way of life was designed to divide the races and to separate Black people from the benefits of mainstream American life. Poor education, limited opportunities, reduced income plus low standards of living, and a shorter life span was the legacy handed down to the African-American. This custom was brutally enforced with intimidation, violence and lynching. This occurred with the real or imagined refusal of a Black man to observe the "Jim Crow" rules. To give a case in point, an attempt to vote or join a union, or perhaps showing disrespect to a white woman or man, or not being subservient.

This was the south of Maya Angelou and of any other Blacks who happened to live below the Mason-Dixon Line. From cradle to the grave, both races lived separate lives: one race having the comforts of life (by accident of birth), and the other race the discomforts of life (by accident of birth). Although James Comer did not live in the south, he lived daily with the same problems. The major difference between the two types of "Jim Crow" was that in the north it wasn't as blatant as the south. African-Americans in the north had access to better paying jobs; however, they still remained on the bottom ladder of the economic scale.

Both Ms. Angelou and Mr. James Comer were victims of this "American tragedy," yet they survived and thrived

because of positive role models in their lives. The Johnson family and the Comer family had strong female “oaks” to lean on. Mrs. Henderson, Maya’s grandmother and Jim’s mother, Mrs. Comer were both semiliterate in book learning, but rich in “mother wit” and common sense. This “Grace,” I think, was a key ingredient of these strong woman which they passed on to their children. Mrs. Maggie Comer, who worked for white families, always observed her surroundings which enabled her to become more knowledgeable. With this information, she was able to take what she could use and discard the rest. Eventually, when she had her children, she used this knowledge to raise her them. Mrs. Henderson, living in Stamps, used another technique: she just taught her granddaughter to be extremely careful and to be proud of her heritage and never take a back seat to anyone. The philosophies of these strong woman prevailed and, in later years, they produced two outstanding individuals. Strength, endurance, common sense, and “mother wit” was their “Amazing Grace.”

During this pre-civil rights era, white schools were bad but Black schools were even worse because the people in power did not see fit to encourage a learning atmosphere. It was the belief of southern whites that schooling of Blacks was simply a waste of time. This was the legacy which the African-American inherited. From slavery to the 1950’s this was the common practice.

STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

In order to attain the objectives of this unit, the students will participate in large and small group instruction, as well as oral and written activities. This will encourage active involvement from the student which in turn will help the quiet retiring student as well as the talker.

OBJECTIVE I : To learn and understand the meaning of the term “Jim Crow.” How this term originated, when it was used, and did it serve its purpose?

Many students have no idea what the term “Jim Crow” means. They know about the Martin Luther King era but minimize it to “the not being able to sit in the front of the bus” syndrome. They know of Ms. Rosa Parks who refused to take a back seat which initiated the boycott and that’s about it! Because my students are of the “Here and Now” generation, it is important for them to realize the pain and the agony which was endured living daily with “Jim Crow.”

PROCEDURE : The teacher will introduce the term “Jim Crow” by writing it on the chalkboard along with the names of James Comer and Maya Angelou, the authors presented in the knowledge they may have about the authors. The teacher will write the student’s thoughts on the chalkboard. At this point, the teacher may ask the class if any have seen the movie or video *The Long Walk Home* . If not, or very few have seen it, the teacher may show this video. This movie depicts the life style, social, and economic problems of the Black race prior to the Civil Rights movement. After viewing the tape, the students and teacher will discuss the attitude and actions of both races.

ASSIGNMENT : The students are to follow directions on their worksheets. They are to read a brief description of “Jim Crow” and then complete their assignment.

OBJECTIVE II : The students will read two short biographies of Maya Angelou and James Comer. The students will be aware that both authors had strong family support systems which was beneficial for survival.

Many inner-city children do not have strong family support systems. Many of their support systems are found in their peer group relations. Students need to belong and if they don’t have a place at home they will

certainly find a place in the streets. Although today's students have different problems, these problems are as devastating to them as problems were to the two individuals being studied.

Sociologists have invented various names for today's troubled youths: "culturally deprived", "culturally deprivated" and "culturally disadvantaged." Notice the term "culturally" is being used with negative implications. Fortunately, the students are not devoid of a culture, but some are lacking a strong support system which would teach them the social skills they need to know in order to navigate in today's society.

Excerpts from the two author's lives, and the short biographies, will help the students see that growing up Black in the north and in the south, during the precivil rights era, was not a pleasant experience. Pain, injustice and intimidation was used to keep the African Americans in their place.

PROCEDURE : The teacher will discuss with the students the short biography of the individuals. Using a map of the United States, the students will locate the two states where the authors lived during their formative years. The students will (hopefully) come to the conclusion that regional distance made no difference in the treatment of African-Americans.

ASSIGNMENT : The teacher will pass out the worksheets containing today's assignment. The students are to skim silently the material to prepare for oral reading. After class discussion, the students are to complete the assignments working in pairs or individually.

OBJECTIVE III : To compare and understand the terms "financial poverty and spiritual poverty."

Usually when the word "poverty" is used or discussed students automatically think of no funds or being broke. Through readings and discussions, the student will recognize the difference between the two "terms."

PROCEDURE : The teacher will print the words "financial and spiritual poverty" on the chalkboard for discussion purposes. The teacher will then ask for definitions for each of the words. Next, the students will read and interpret specific paragraphs which focus on the these being studied. By way of class discussion in small groups, the students will make a determination regarding the types and causes of poverty. In this lesson and in others, the teacher may use mapping. This method helps to stimulate participation and does liven up a class.

Assignment : Worksheets will be passed out to the class. The students are to read the directions and complete the assignment individually or with a partner. Students may use their own mapping skills. Some students might choose to become actively involved in social action work such as Farnam House which addresses both aspects of poverty. Other students might write an account of how he/she would feel if he/she lived as young Maya for a day in Stamps, Arkansas, or do a 20/20 interview with James Comer. This type of student participation can be fun, enjoyable and educational.

OBJECTIVE IV: To understand that the church and religion had an important role in the lives of the individuals.

PROCEDURE: In large group discussion, students will discuss the importance of religion as it pertains to the authors and to themselves. The students may share any experiences (similar or otherwise) they may have had while attending church services. This exercise is purely voluntary so those students who do not wish to participate may just listen. The students will take up questions such as: How did the characters view religion? Did religion give them inner strength? Why do you think the hymn "Amazing Grace" is such a universal hymn? The above questions will be open ended to enable the students to continually add information. For example,

students who have a strong religious background might enjoy reading excerpts such as the Mrs. Monroe episode by Maya Angelou, or the “Amen Corner” by Jim Comer. I’m sure many students could relate to these incidents which are visually rich with colorful language.

ASSIGNMENT: The teacher will pass out the selection for today’s reading assignment. After reading the selection, the students, through discussion, may compare any similarities they may have had with those of the authors. At the teacher’s discretion, the hymn “Amazing Grace” maybe introduced and to show its relationship to the unit.

Along with Mrs. Comer, Mrs. Henderson, other individuals were positive role models for Maya Angelou and Jim Comer. These models were Ms. Flowers, and Hugh Comer. Ms. Flowers played an important role in Maya’s formative years. Mr. Hugh Comer, father of James Comer, showed his son there was dignity in work. All of the above mentioned had “Amazing Grace.” This “special grace” was an aura, a mantle which they passed on. Hence the title of this unit “Amazing Grace” will mean achieving inspite of the odds.

It is interesting to note that the author of this hymn “Amazing Grace” was once the captain of a slave ship. This captain, James Newton, had a revelation one day which revealed to him the evilness of his profession. He took heed and ended his slave trading and studied for the ministry. He became an ordained minister of the church of England. It was during this time as a pastor, he wrote the hymn “Amazing Grace.”

Because both families’s lives centered around the church and religion, they must have sung this hymn numerous times. The words are inspirational and have helped many individuals through trying times.

(verse one)

Amazing Grace! how sweet the sound,
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

(verse three)

Through manly dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come; ‘Tis grace has brought me
safe this far, And grace will lead me home.

(church hymnal)

BIOGRAPHY: James Comer's Early Life

James Comer was born during the depression in 1934. Because his father was still working, the family didn't feel it that much because his parents had saved from the time they had gotten married, his parents had a little nest egg ready. Later his brother, Norman, was born then Charles, and Thelma who became the youngest after Ralph, the baby died at birth.

During Jim's childhood, the children were raised the way in which his mother watched the white folks she had worked for. "I had worked for people that knew what this was all about. I had watched the doctors. I worked were there were nurses. I had helped to take care of their babies. The way I had helped to care for wealthier babies was the way I wanted my babies taken care of."

Jim and his brothers and sister grew and matured in this loving environment. During his elementary, middle, and high school years, he became an excellent debater, school leader, and advocate for other Black students. Although he excelled academically, he was too small for such sports as football.

The Comer family lived and thrived in East Chicago. Later while in college, Jim's father, Hugh Comer, became ill with asthma and had to move to Arizona for his health. Even with his father's illness, the family carried on and took loving care of each other. Hugh Comer never lived to see his son become a world renown social psychiatrist.

BIOGRAPHY: Maya Angelou's Early Life

Maya Angelou was born Marguerite Johnson in 1928. As a young child she lived in California, Missouri, and Stamps, Arkansas. Young Marguerite called Stamps her home. When Maya was three and her brother four, they were sent to Stamps, Arkansas to live with her father's mother, Mrs. Annie Henderson.

Maya and her brother called their grandmother Momma. She owned a general store and often smelled of the items she sold such as: oranges and onions, etc. Maya and her brother learned how to sell merchandise as soon as they were old enough.

On Saturdays the town's people gathered to exchange news on the front porch, or barbers would cut their client's hair. It was a busy place. Maya and her brother played and read together. At times, they would act out their favorite stories by Rudyard Kipling and Edgar Allan Poe.

When Maya was eight she and her brother, Bailey moved to St. Louis, Missouri to live with their mother. Maya remembers, "She was too beautiful to have children . . . she was like the climbing, falling colors of a rainbow." They remained in St. Louis for only a short period of time because their mother could not provide for them. Although she did what she could, it was not good enough. It was in St. Louis that Maya experienced a painful ordeal. Because of this experience, she decided to take a vow of silence. For one year she spoke to no one except to her brother. Then one day she met Mrs. Flowers who was shopping at grandmother's store. It was from Mrs. Flowers that Maya learned that "words mean more than what is set down on paper."

The following are a list of suggested lessons designed to meet the previously stated objectives.

SAMPLE LESSON FOR MAGGIE'S AMERICAN DREAM

Please look at your work sheet to complete this assignment.

1. In the first paragraph the word *it* refers to _____
2. In the first paragraph the phrase *nest egg* refers to _____
3. In paragraph three, the Comer children grew and *matured* . What does the word mature mean?

4. In paragraph three, give your opinion of James Comer's accomplishments during his school years. _____
5. What does the term *excelled academically* mean in paragraph three? _____
6. The first sentence in paragraph four describes someone's illness and movement. Who was ill and where did he or she go? Write the name and location of the state and why you think it was chosen? _____
7. In the last paragraph, what is the author's profession and his status? _____

SAMPLE LESSON FOR BIOGRAPHY

Use each of the following words in a sentence. Show by your sentence that you understand the word's meaning.

merchandise: _____

vow: _____

recite: _____

clients: _____

silence: _____

ordeal: _____

(note: Excerpts from Caged Bird and Maggie's American Dream will be found in the appendix of this unit .)

WORKSHEET FOR LESSON PLAN I

Below is a brief description of Jim Crow. Please read it and then answer the questions . . . use your dictionary.

After the Civil War, white southerners devised a system to *subjugate* the Blacks. The subjugation was known as Jim Crow which became a way of life for both races in the South. It was a set of laws or customs which *excluded* Blacks from the "good life." This meant that African-Americans had no rights and could not *assert* themselves when wronged. During this era, Blacks were *lynched* by hanging from a tree or tarred and feathered for any minor *infraction* . Therefore, the Blacks, especially males had to be *subservient* in order to survive. For example, if a Black supposedly became arrogant or disrespected a white woman or man next day he would be hanging from a tree. "Jim Crow" and *segregation* was the *yoke* of the Black man. This *burden* was to follow him until the 1960's and the Civil Rights Era.

1. Why do you think the South used this tactic of fear? _____
2. Do you think Jim Crow could be enforced today? _____
3. The Civil Rights Movement changed many things in the South. Can you name at least two things which has made life better for all Americans? _____
4. Pretend that you are a young Black child and there is only one park to visit. What do you do?

WORKSHEET FOR LESSON PLAN II

Mrs. Henderson decides to tell her grandchildren how to "travel the safe road" in the south.

Momma intended to teach Bailey and me to use the paths of life that she and her generation and all the Negroes gone before had found to be safe ones. She didn't cotton to the idea that white folks could be talked to at all without risking one's life. And certainly they couldn't be spoken to *insolently* . In fact, even in their absence they could not be spoken of too harshly unless we used the *sobriquet* "They." If she had been asked to answer the question of whether she was cowardly or not, she would have said that she was a *realist* .
(Caged Bird p. 89)

To the students: You have just read a brief excerpt on survival in the south. The underlined words could be new vocabulary . . . so use your dictionary, if you need help.

1. What is the main idea of this selection? (It is not given so you will have to use your head for the

answer.) _____

2. In your opinion, what is the topic sentence of this selection? _____

3. Give a definition for the word “sobriquet?” _____

4. In your opinion, a realist is _____

Survival

Maggie Comer is explaining Hugh Comer’s and her philosophy on survival and self respect.

“Me and Mr. Comer felt pretty much the same about race—there is good and bad in every group. You don’t dislike the good because of the bad. He used to say, “Don’t take nothing off the white man. And don’t “cut the fool” to get along with them. But don’t go out of your way looking for trouble either. Don’t let him stop you from doing whatever you want to do. Just prepare yourself, your time will come.” (Maggie, p. 79)

WORKSHEET FOR LESSON PLAN II

After reading the above paragraph, give your opinion on it. You are free to agree or to disagree, but you must give reasons for one or the other. _____

Why do you think the Comer family believed this was the way to survive in the north? _____

In your opinion, what does “cut the fool” mean in the paragraph above. _____

The phrase “just prepare yourself, your time will come” means _____

Do you agree with the Comer’s philosophy?

WORKSHEET FOR LESSON III

Please fill in the blank spaces using words from the *Word Bank* below.

WORD BANK

permanent job employment

time misery money

usually lack condition
poverty financial connected

The term “Financial Poverty” alludes to the fact that _____ is scarce due to lack of finances. This type of _____ can be _____ temporary or can be _____. It is _____ to the _____ market and a person’s _____ of _____.

Most people have had _____ poverty at one time or another. It is _____ not a permanent _____.

When there is _____ financial _____ ends _____.

WORD BANK

individuals worthlessness spirit
nobody what’s the use low
longer begins anything
selfworth broken someone

The term “Spiritual Poverty” alludes to _____ who feel they are _____. This feeling of _____ can lead to _____ self-esteem. The _____ is broken and _____ syndrome takes over. There is no _____ any inner struggle to be _____, and soon the individual _____ to believes that he or she will never amount to _____. With little _____ and feeling useless, the spirit is _____.

WORKSHEET FOR LESSON PLAN IV

After reading the church incident by Maya Angelou, please answer the questions below. If a word is unfamiliar to you, look it up!

1. What caused Sister Monroe’s absence from previous church services? _____
2. Why do you think she acted this way? _____
3. Do you think the congregation was use to this type of behavior? _____
4. How did Reverend Taylor’s actions *escalate* the situation? _____
5. What exactly did Reverend Taylor do? _____
6. Did others join Sister Monroe, if so, who were they? _____
7. What were the “famous” words Sister Monroe shouted just before the *fracas* ? _____
8. Do you think Reverend Taylor ended the affair with dignity? _____
9. If any of these people had been your parents, how would you have felt? Write down your feelings. _____

WORKSHEET FOR LESSON PLAN IV

Ms. Angelou used colorful language to describe the Reverend Taylor's church ordeal. What do you think each phrase means? Enjoy this episode because it is really humorous. Use your imagination and visualize what is happening. Remember: "words mean more than what is set down on paper."

- A. shaking like a freshly caught trout
- B. hung loose like stockings on a wash line
- C. gave a scream like a falling tree
- D. their legs spiked out like kindling wood
- E. raised her flinty voice
- F. in a chokey voice
- G. shouting phrases like home run balls
- H. just visited by a mighty spirit

MAPPING

Below is an example of mapping. These are only suggested terms. The teacher may use own discretion when choosing words used for the mapping lesson.

(figure available in print form)

Bibliography

(This bibliography serves for teachers and students alike.)

Angelou, Maya. *I Know Why The Caged Birds Sings* . New York: Random House Inc., 1969.

The life and times of a young girl and her brother growing up in Stamps, Arkansas with a strong loving grandmother.

Edited by Bell, Parker, and Guy-Sheftall. *Sturdy Black Bridges*. New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1979.

This book discusses the works of individual writers . . . Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker as well as essays of other Black women in literature.

Braxton, Joanne M. *Black Women Writing Autobiographies* . Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989.

Essays on Black women's autobiographies which emphasizes the African-American women's experiences.

Comer, James, *Maggie's American Dream* . New York: NAL Penquin Inc. 1988.

A delightful book written by a Yale Child Study Psychiatrist about his childhood, his family and especially his mother, Maggie. It also tells of his college years to the present time, and his work in the public schools in a specific town.

Hayden, Robert, *Words in the Morning: Poems by Robert Hayden*, New York: October House Inc., 1970.

Various poems which tell of the African-American experiences.

Edited by John F. Kain. *Race and Poverty* . New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1969.

These article reveal the economic effects of racial discrimination in housing, education, and the labor market. It also examines the attitudes of African-Americans and whites toward civil rights and integration.

Weinstein, Gerald and Mario Fantani. *Toward Humanistic Education* . New York: Prager Publishers, 1970.

This book unlocks the secret of motivating the child to involve him or herself in the learning process whatever his or her age, socio-economic level, or cultural background.

APPENDIX

Caged Bird

Mrs. Flowers was a frequent visitor to Mrs. Henderson's store. She noticed the silent child and decided to help her realize that the human voice is an instrument to used. Maya spent her afternoons with Mrs. Flowers. This was during the time in her young life when she would not talk to anyone but her brother, Bailey, for over a year, this silence occurred after she had been raped by her mother's friend. Because of this, Mr. Freeman was found murdered supposedly by her uncles and this contributed to her year of silence among other things.

"For nearly a year I sopped around the house, the store, the school, and the church, like an old biscuit, dirty and inedible. Then I met, or rather got to know the lady who threw me my first life line." (Caged Bird p. 77)

"Your mother says you read a lot. Every chance you get. That's good, but not good enough. Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with shades of deeper meaning." (Caged Bird p. 82)

Grandmother Henderson

Maya describes her Grandmother with this visual description.

"People spoke of Momma as a good looking woman and some, who remember her youth, said she used to be

right pretty. I only saw her power and strength. She was taller than anyone in my personal world, and her hands were so large they could span my head from ear to ear. Her voice was soft only because she choose to keep it so. Each Sunday, after she had taken her seat, it was then the minister would announce, “We will now be led in a hymn by Sister Henderson.” (Caged Bird p. 38)

Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Comer

James Comer describes his parents as loving, caring people. Although his father was a quiet man, he showed his love in his daily actions. His mother was the forceful one who demanded that her children be treated fairly in their growing years in East Chicago, and to be exposed to culture. This strong family support system allowed Jim Comer and his brothers and sister to flourish.

“Mom and dad had this notion that there were fine things in life that kids should experience—educational places and activities, successful people going places and achieving great things. They felt that would cause us to strive to do the same. We had to have this cultural enrichment . . . but piano lessons, ugh!

At first I enjoyed the piano. I got one gold star after another for my performance. But I was young, eight years old. By the time I was ten I hated that damn *metronome* that I was supposed to keep up with—tick-tock, tick-tock.” (Comer p. 131)

Religion: Maggie’s American Dream

This incidence takes place at Sunday Church Services, Jim and his brothers and sister were seating in the second row behind his father who was sitting with the other deacons. His mother was sitting across from her children to keep a watchful eye on her brood.

“One day after service we got called on the carpet for giggling while the elderly ladies on the Mother’s bench were singing. In self-defense I argued that we didn’t mean any harm, but those old ladies couldn’t sing, “Why do you allow them to sing?”

Mom said, “You ought to show more respect. Some of those ladies were born in slavery!”

“Slavery? What’s that?” I asked hesitantly.

“All of our people. You had to be strong to make it. That’s why we’re such strong people now.”

I didn’t ask any more questions. I was stunned. After that, not only did I give those ladies respect, I looked at them in awe. I didn’t know how they survived something like that. (Comer p. 116)

Religion: Caged Bird

This episode takes place while Maya and her brother are attending church services on a hot muggy Sunday afternoon. They sat on the front bench which was quite uncomfortable to listen to the day’s sermon.

“On my way into church, I saw Sister Monroe . . . she opened her mouth to return a neighborly greeting. She lived in the country and couldn’t get to church every Sunday, so she made up for her absences by shouting so hard . . . that she shook the whole church. As soon as she took her seat, all the ushers would move to her side of the church because it took three women and sometimes a man or two to hold her.

Once when she hadn't been to church for a few months (she had taken off to have a child), she got the spirit and started shouting, throwing her arms around and jerking her body, so that the ushers went over to hold her down, but she tore herself away from them and ran up to the pulpit. She stood in front of the alter, *shaking like a freshly caught trout* . She screamed at Reverend Taylor, "Preach it. I say preach it." Naturally he kept preaching . . . then she screamed, "I said preach it" and stepped up on the alter. The Reverend kept on throwing out phrases like home-run balls and Sister Monroe made a quick break and grasped for him. For just a second, everything and everyone in the church except Reverend Taylor and Sister Monroe hung *loose like stockings on a washline* .

I have to say this for our minister, he never stopped giving us the lesson. The usher board made its way to the pulpit . . . truth to tell, they fairly ran to the minister's aid. Then two of the deacons joined the ladies in white on the pulpit. Each time the deacons and sisters pried Sister Monroe loose from the preacher he took another deep breath and kept on preaching and Sister Monroe grabbed him in another place, and more firmly. Reverend Taylor was helping his rescuers as much as possible by jumping around when he got the chance.

I'll never know what might have happened, because magically the pandemonium spread. The spirit infused Deacon Jackson and Sister Willson, chairman of usher board, at the same time Deacon Jackson, a tall, thin, quiet man who was also a part-time Sunday school teacher, *gave a scream like a falling tree* , leaned back on the thin air and punched Reverend Taylor on the arm. It must have hurt . . . it caught Reverend unawares. There was a moment's break in the rolling sounds and Reverend Taylor jerked around surprised, and hauled off and punched Deacon Jackson. In the same second Sister Willson caught his tie, looped it over her fist a few times, and pressed down on him. There wasn't time to laugh or cry before all three of them were down on the floor behind the alter. Their legs spiked out like kindling wood.

Sister Willson, who had been the cause of all the excitement walked off the dias, cool and spent, and *raised her flinty voice* in the hymn, "I came to Jesus as I was, worried, wound, and sad, I found Him in a resting place and He has made me glad."

The minister took advantage of already being on the floor and asked *in a choky little voice* if the church would kneel with him to offer a prayer of thanksgiving. He said we had been visited with a mighty spirit, and let the church say Amen." (Caged Bird pp. 32-34)

Answers to worksheet—Lesson III—Financial Poverty

The term *Financial Poverty* alludes to the fact that money is scarce, due to the lack of finances. This type of *poverty* can be temporary or it can be *permanent* . It is *connected* to the *job* market and one's lack of *employment* . Most people have had *financial* poverty at one *time* or another. It is *usually* not a permanent *condition* . When there is employment financial *misery* ends.

Answers for worksheet-LESSON-III-Spiritual Poverty

The term *Spiritual Poverty* alludes to *individuals* who feel they are *nobody* . This feeling of *worthlessness* can lead to *low* self-esteem. The *spirit* is broken and *what's the use* syndrome takes over. There is no *longer* any inner struggle to be *someone* , and soon the individual *begins* to believe that he or she will never amount to *anything* . With little *selfworth* and feeling useless, the spirit is *broken* .

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