

All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes Study Guide

**All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes by Maya
Angelou**

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Plot Summary

All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes is the fifth installment in a series of narrative memoirs by the poet and writer Maya Angelou. This installment recalls several years in the mid-sixties that Ms. Angelou spent in Ghana discovering the Africa of her ancestry. This book opens the reader's eye to the turbulent time of the Civil Rights Movement, introduces key figures of that time period and explores the ancestry of a people taken wrongly from their homes. Maya Angelou is a celebrated poet, writer, performer and producer. With *All God's Children*, Ms. Angelou opens a deeply emotional time in her life and shares it with the world.

Ms. Angelou arrived in Ghana in 1962 to settle her son, Guy, in university before moving on to a new job and a new life. However, an accident in which her son broke his neck forced Ms. Angelou to remain in Ghana. After a period of intense mourning and self-pity, Ms. Angelou found herself searching for a job and a place to live with the assistance of newly made friends. Soon, Ms. Angelou had a job at the same university she had come to enroll her son in and was living at the local YMCA.

Ms. Angelou, normally an outgoing person, quickly made friends among the other lodgers at the YMCA. Ms. Angelou and two of these friends, American Returnees Alice and Vicki, decided to get a house together. Their living room soon became a meeting place for other American Returnees. Often there would be great political discussions that would last late into the night at their home or the home of a mutual friend, Julian Mayfield. With the quick recovery of her son, Ms. Angelou soon found comfort in her new life in Africa.

Guy attended classes at the university, while Ms. Angelou did clerical work at the university and helped a professor and friend with the production of her many plays. Ms. Angelou even starred in one of these productions. However, Ms. Angelou realized the pay would never help her pay off her son's tuition and the car she had purchased. Ms. Angelou went to the local paper and offered her skills as a writer. She was hired on the spot to write a piece about the racial unrest in America. However, this job too would only pay the local minimum. Ms. Angelou went to the local broadcasting office to offer her services there and was quickly dismissed by the unfriendly receptionist. This episode caused Ms. Angelou to rethink her ideas of discrimination and to ponder why the Africans did not welcome the American Returnees with open arms.

While living in Ghana, Ms. Angelou and her housemates employed a houseman who helped with the cooking and cleaning. This man, Otu, had a cousin whom he persuaded Ms. Angelou to take on as her small boy, or servant. In the beginning, Ms. Angelou was reluctant because money was tight. When she discovered the boy wanted to go to school as well, she felt she had been tricked into providing this for him. However, Ms. Angelou later found out the boy came from a wealthy family and had been sent to her simply to learn from her the white ways, as his family described her knowledge.



Ms. Angelou attended the annual harvest ritual with a friend. Later, while at a club dancing, she met a man named Sheikhal, a cattle barren from Mali. Ms. Angelou and Sheikhal had a passionate affair that ended when Sheikhal insisted Ms. Angelou become his second wife and she refused. Ms. Angelou was a strong and independent woman, and Sheikhal wanted a woman who would be at his beck and call. Ms. Angelou was not prepared to be that kind of woman.

In Ghana, Ms. Angelou met a tribal king, Nana Nketsia, who became one of her champions, searching for a higher paying job for her. Ms. Angelou also participated in the organizing of a march across from the American Embassy on the same day of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s march on Washington. Ms. Angelou also met Malcolm X when he came to Ghana to gather support from various governments as he made a bid to visit the United Nations and present the plight of the black American. Ms. Angelou was chosen to drive Malcolm around to his various meetings and had many private discussions with him in regards to civil rights, as well as subjects of a more personal nature. Malcolm showed Ms. Angelou pictures of his children on several occasions, expressing how much he missed them.

Shortly after Ms. Angelou had an argument with her son regarding his right to live his own life, she took a part in a play that was performed in Germany and Venice. While in Germany, Ms. Angelou made the acquaintance of a German couple who invited her to breakfast at her home. Ms. Angelou took along a black Jewish actor she had met at the hotel bar. The breakfast proved to be tenser than Ms. Angelou had expected. With relief, Ms. Angelou returned to the hotel and the play. When the play finished its run, Ms. Angelou took a side trip to Cairo, Egypt to visit some old friends and to meet up with Julian and others during a conference there. At a party for the Liberian president, Ms. Angelou was invited to sing, an experience that was deeply touching to her.

Toward the end of Ms. Angelou's time in Ghana, shortly before she would return to the states to head up an office of the Organization of Afro American Unity for Malcolm X, Ms. Angelou took a trip to the western edge of Ghana to a village called Keta. While in route to this small village, Ms. Angelou experienced a strange episode in which she was grasped with unexplainable fear when faced with crossing a bridge into the village. Later, in the marketplace, Ms. Angelou was mistaken for a relative of some of the villagers who had been taken by the slavers many, many years before. This experience finally gave Ms. Angelou the sense of coming home she had searched for since coming to Africa.

Section 1 (pages 3-32)

Section 1 (pages 3-32) Summary and Analysis

All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes is the fifth installment in a series of narrative memoirs by the poet and writer Maya Angelou. This installment recalls several years in the mid-sixties that Ms. Angelou spent in Ghana discovering the Africa of her ancestry. This book opens the reader's eye to the turbulent time of the Civil Rights Movement, introduces key figures of that time period and explores the ancestry of a people taken wrongly from their homes. Maya Angelou is a celebrated poet, writer, performer and producer. With *All God's Children*, Ms. Angelou opens a deeply emotional time in her life and shares it with the world.

Ms. Angelou arrived in Ghana with the intention of staying only long enough to settle her son at the University of Ghana in Accra. Then she planned to move on to Liberia and take a job with the Department of Information. However, three days into their trip, Ms. Angelou's son, Guy, was in a car accident in which his left arm and leg were broken as well as his neck. Filled with anger at the drunk who should have been behind the wheel instead of her son and with the self-pity of a single mother deeply grieved by her son's injuries, Ms. Angelou became self-centered and stopped attempting to show any type of social grace to those around her. As a result of this unpleasant attitude, Ms. Angelou felt she must move from the home of a friend where she and her son had been staying in Accra and move into the YMCA.

A friend of Ms. Angelou's, Julian Mayfield, became concerned for her. One day Julian picked Ms. Angelou up at the YMCA and drove her to the home of a female friend he felt she needed to meet, all the while lecturing her on her selfishness and her unkind demeanor. This friend, Efua Sutherland, a poet, playwright, teacher and head of Ghana's National Theatre, told Ms. Angelou that she believed that she needed a sister to care for her and a job to occupy her time. Then Efua told Ms. Angelou that she needed to cry, which Ms. Angelou did for the first time since her son's accident.

Refreshed, Ms. Angelou went to the hospital after this visit and found her son in high spirits and recovering well. Ms. Angelou then turned her attention from her injured child, cutting her visits down to only once a day, and began to pay attention to her own hygiene and dress. She scrubbed her room with cathartic efficiency. Ms. Angelou made friends among the other tenants of the YMCA, especially two American women, Vicki and Alice.

Efua introduced Ms. Angelou to a professor friend of hers, the chairman of the Institute of African Studies at the university, who in turn gave Ms. Angelou a job. Professor J.H. Nketia also promised Ms. Angelou that he would help her find a car, although her pay would be on the Ghanaian scale, which Ms. Angelou knew was much less than the foreign employees.



Another professor went on leave for three months, so Ms. Angelou moved into his house while he was gone. Guy was released from the hospital and moved in with his mother. Ms. Angelou quickly found acceptance in her new home through the group of black immigrants who often gathered at Julian's home to discuss politics, civil rights and Africa. The group contained many refugees from America, some running from encounters with the FBI and CIA and others coming to Africa to find acceptance and their roots. Ms. Angelou called the group 'Revolutionist Returnees.'

Ms. Angelou felt as though she had finally come home to a place where she could be accepted the way she was and not discriminated against because of her skin color. Ms. Angelou knew many of her fellow Returnees felt the same. Many of Ms. Angelou's friends had come to Ghana specifically because of its new president, Kwame Nkrumah, an American-educated Ghanaian who encouraged the migration of American blacks. However, Ms. Angelou had also discovered already that not all Ghanaians were eager to welcome the Americans into their country, since they were busy with their own concerns and the rebuilding of their country after having been freed by Britain only five years before.

Guy, whose neck injury was quickly healing, enrolled in the university with a metal and leather neck brace securing his injury. The professor returned, and Ms. Angelou once again took a room at the YMCA. During a meal in the dining room there one afternoon, a woman from Sierra Leone made a loud complaint about the lack of rice served with the meals. Ms. Angelou, who recalled how her own grandmother would make rice with every meal no matter what else she served, spoke to the cook and encouraged him to bring the woman some rice, which he did when he found out that the woman was not American.

Ms. Angelou and her friends Alice and Vicki decided to share a house. They found a nice three-bedroom bungalow that was perfect except for the small kitchen. Vicki had a Master's degree in economics and had been a union organizer in America. Vicki had come to Ghana with the hopes of working with labor unions there, but she was finally forced to settle for a job as a typist in a foreign embassy. Alice had a Master's in sociology and had come to Ghana in hopes of working as a social worker. However, Alice could only find a job as a receptionist at a foreign embassy. Both women believed Ms. Angelou's job as an administrator assistant was the best of the three. However, Ms. Angelou's pay barely covered all her expenses.

The opening pages of *All God's Children* introduce Maya Angelou, the author, and her motivations for being in Ghana. Ms. Angelou's perspective of herself is painted as a grief stricken single mother, a woman sunk deep in depression who has found herself forced to stay in a country she never had any intention of living in. However, as Ms. Angelou comes out of her depression, thanks to the help of fellow Americans living in Ghana, she discovers a maturity that her son has developed while she was not looking and wonderful friends all around her. The introduction of these friends in the group of 'Revolutionary Returnees' and mention of its politically charged members begins an introduction to the author's thesis as it relates to the civil rights struggle taking place in America.



Ms. Angelou's first person point of view in these pages also allows the reader to view this country through Ms. Angelou's own perceptions. The reader can see hints within these first pages of Ms. Angelou's happiness to be in a country full of people who look like her and do not discriminate against her due to the color of her skin. Ms. Angelou often mentions how her ancestors possibly came from this place and how close she felt to them on her return. Not only does this let the reader in to Ms. Angelou's emotions and frame of mind, but it also foreshadows events later in the book that will take Ms. Angelou closer to understanding her own past and the past of this country.



Section 2 (pages 32-58)

Section 2 (pages 32-58) Summary and Analysis

Ms. Angelou knew that her salary would not continue to cover all her expenses, and she went in search of other work. Ms. Angelou first went to the office of the *Ghanaian Times* and offered her journalistic experience to the editor, T.D. Kwesi Bafoo. Mr. Bafoo told Ms. Angelou to write a three-hundred-word article on America Today, including capitalism and racial prejudice. Ms. Angelou was not happy with the assignment because she believed it would take many more words to do the subject justice. However, when Ms. Angelou agreed, she was further dismayed by the fact that Mr. Bafoo would only pay her scale, what she was already making.

Ms. Angelou then went to the Ghana Broadcasting office. Here when Ms. Angelou asked to talk to whoever hired writers, the receptionist was deliberately belligerent, causing Ms. Angelou to lose her temper. The receptionist made a remark about how American blacks are crude. Ms. Angelou left the building wondering if it was not her skin color that had always caused the discrimination she had suffered, but the fact that her ancestors were slaves. This led Ms. Angelou to wonder if she would ever find a true home in Africa without discrimination. However, her friends and everyday life distracted her from such thoughts.

Ms. Angelou wanted her hair done in the fashion of the Ghanaian women, so she called for a woman to visit in her home and do her hair. This woman teased Ms. Angelou about the fact that she only had one child and laughed at Ms. Angelou's expense. However, she fixed Ms. Angelou's hair exactly how she had wanted it and arranged to continue coming to fix her hair every few weeks.

Much like Julian did, Ms. Angelou, Vicki and Alice often had people to their home in order to discuss politics. One night a couple fresh from America came to their home. The couple, a Chicago stockyard worker and a Playboy Bunny, had saved for years in order to move to Africa for the acceptance they believed they would find there. However, Alice and Vicki berated them with so many stories of how hard life would be for them there that the man threatened to leave. However, Ms. Angelou convinced him to stay and assured him they were only trying to prepare the couple. The man and his wife decided to move on to Guinea.

After Ms. Angelou turned in her article, she was called into T.D. Bafoo's office. Ms. Angelou expected termination, but she was invited to an outdoor ceremony, a baby naming ceremony, for the baby T.D. and his wife were expecting. Ms. Angelou went to T.D.'s home to meet his wife and discovered a loving couple who promised to help Ms. Angelou discover a deeper part of Ghana. It had bothered Ms. Angelou for a while that some of the people sold into slavery many years before had been sold by their own family members. By meeting and getting to know T.D. and his wife, Ms. Angelou thought she could use their love for each other to forget that sad fact of history.



One morning, Ms. Angelou went into the Senior Common Room during a break. In the room some foreign professors, an Englishman, a Yugoslav woman and a Ghanaian were discussing the Civil Rights Movement in America. The Englishman thought it was ridiculous that the blacks were so up in arms about their treatment three hundred years after the fact, and the Yugoslav woman agreed. Then the Englishman made a rude remark about the government of Ghana, and the Ghanaian agreed. Ms. Angelou finally had enough and exploded at the group, telling them how ignorant she believed them to be. The steward, a Ghanaian man, followed Ms. Angelou outside and chastised her for allowing her emotions to get the better of her.

At home, Ms. Angelou's steward Otu introduced her to a young boy, Kojo, who was looking for a job. Ms. Angelou had no money to hire the boy, so she resisted. However, Kojo asked for no money and wanted only to be her small boy and work for tips. Kojo reminded Ms. Angelou of her brother, Bailey. Finally, Ms. Angelou agreed to hire Kojo. Ms. Angelou had second thoughts a few weeks later, however, when Kojo asked to speak to her. Kojo wanted to go to school in Accra. At first Ms. Angelou believed the boy had taken a job with her so that she could pay his tuition. However, the boy assured her that his tuition was paid for, although the boy did need her help with his homework. Ms. Angelou resented this at first, because she had thought she was beyond homework when her son left for university. However, she quickly discovered that she enjoyed working with Kojo.

Ms. Angelou's attempts to get another job to supplement her salary develop the author's thesis in two ways. First, Ms. Angelou meets T.D. Bafoo, who later becomes her good friend and a doorway into the intimate details of a culture she aches to learn. Second, Ms. Angelou finds discrimination coming from a black face, a fact that shocks her into wondering if it is not the color of her skin that has caused discrimination all these years, but the idea that her ancestors had been slaves. This idea shakes Ms. Angelou's beliefs for a while, forcing her to face the issue of slavery and how it has affected her life. This foreshadows a subject that will continue to be explored throughout the memoir.

Ms. Angelou's explosion at the professors in the break room at the university allows the reader insight into her character and emotions, reflecting not only her own intolerance on the subject of discrimination but the attitudes of the Europeans with whom she works at the university. This insight shows Ms. Angelou's perspective, developing emotions shared with the reader when the receptionist at the Ghana Broadcasting office treated her so poorly. Additionally, when the steward chastises Ms. Angelou for reacting as she did, the reader is also made aware of how others see her.



Section 3 (pages 58-93)

Section 3 (pages 58-93) Summary and Analysis

Efua took Ms. Angelou to the thanksgiving feast in Aburi, a town about thirty miles from Accra. They watched a parade, and Ms. Angelou got lost in the sounds of the beating drums. When the drums stopped, the crowd became very quiet until a group of men walked by them scraping sticks against dry gourds. Again the crowd became silent, and Efua handed Ms. Angelou a handkerchief, which Ms. Angelou did not feel she needed until the crowd began to cheer again, as the local chiefs paraded past the crowd and everyone began to wave handkerchiefs. Ms. Angelou was carried away with the excitement and waved her handkerchief high in the air.

Ms. Angelou watched the dancers on the dance floor while resting from her own turn on the floor. Across the room, she saw a large man whom she found attractive. The man stood when two women and a man left the dance floor to join him, commanding the women as though they were his. The man who was with this large, attractive man came to Ms. Angelou's table and told her that the large man, Sheikhali, would like to have dinner with her. Ms. Angelou agreed.

Sheikhali picked Ms. Angelou up at her house and was greatly relieved when she suggested they converse in French, a language he knew better than English. The two went to a local restaurant and shared a meal as well as information about their pasts. Sheikhali was a cattle baron from Mali, who as a child survived destitution to take care of his mother and family. Ms. Angelou found herself attracted to Sheikhali. However, Ms. Angelou was upset when Sheikhali suggested they leave the restaurant for a local hotel. Unable to voice her objections because of Sheikhali's persistent conversation, Ms. Angelou was relieved to find Sheikhali had taken her to the hotel not to see his rooms but to dance. After a night of dancing and romantic speech, though, Ms. Angelou was ready to see Sheikhali's rooms.

Ms. Angelou enjoyed spending time with Sheikhali. However, she did not like Sheikhali's attitude toward women. He was more interested in a docile woman than the independent woman Ms. Angelou was. When Sheikhali sent a brand new refrigerator as a gift to Ms. Angelou, she sent it back despite the protests of her small boy, Kojo. Then when Sheikhali asked Ms. Angelou to marry him a few nights later, explaining that he already had a wife and that she would be his second and could teach his eight children English and French, Ms. Angelou was appalled. Ms. Angelou refused the proposal. Sheikhali promised to ask again because he had found that few women could refuse his offer.

One day, Kojo announced to Ms. Angelou that she had visitors waiting to speak to her in the backyard. Surprised that Kojo would show them to the backyard rather than bringing them into the living room, Ms. Angelou went to invite her visitors into the living room herself. There were many people, an older couple, a middle-aged couple, teenagers



and more. Ms. Angelou offered them the few seats she could in the living room and waited patiently for them to speak, as she had learned was a custom in Ghana. The older man told her that they were Kojo's family from Akwapim and that they had come to thank her for taking care of Kojo. The family had felt it was important for Kojo to have a proper white education and felt it was lucky that Kojo had come to Ms. Angelou.

Ms. Angelou learned that Otu was Kojo's cousin and that his family members were middle class farmers, not the poor family she had first imagined them to be. In thanks for her help with their son, the family gave Ms. Angelou many crates of fresh fruits and vegetables from their farm, including some snails. The family promised to continue sending Ms. Angelou these gifts every month as long as Kojo worked with her. When the family left and Ms. Angelou had a few minutes alone with Kojo, she demanded to know why he had not told her. However, it was immediately clear to Ms. Angelou that Kojo had no idea what she meant. The thought never would have occurred to him to explain his family situation to her. Ms. Angelou let the subject go.

Ms. Angelou felt the visit with Kojo's family had taken her deeper into her journey to discover Africa, and she was not happy with the experience. Ms. Angelou, during this brief visit, had learned the depth of innocence in which the Africans live and the depth of history they share. She felt as though she were an outsider and would forever remain one. Black Americans had matured beyond their African roots, and the possibility of fitting in to the African culture had never seemed more distant to Ms. Angelou, whose deepest wish was to find a home within Africa's boundaries.

Ghana was flourishing during this time, due mostly to the charismatic President Nkrumah. The Revolutionist Returnees were enjoying a freedom they had never known in America, living their lives accepted by their new country's president and without threat of racial discrimination. The situation changed on the day that someone attempted to assassinate the president. The president survived unharmed; however, suspicion flew through the country. Initial suspicions pointed toward the soviets. The idea held that the soviets had tried to assassinate the president in order to send the country into chaos in order to make them susceptible to the spread of communism. However, this thought did not last long. Soon the finger of accusation turned toward the black Americans, claiming that if America wanted to harm Ghana, who better to send than their black citizens, people who could fade into their surroundings without much trouble. Some Americans were deported, and others were imprisoned as rumors continued to fly. None of Ms. Angelou's circle was accused. However, in the light of accusation, they lost some of their zeal for their adopted country.

For several weeks, Ms. Angelou worked with Efu at the National Theatre, assisting with the production of an English translation of a Chinese play. Finally, with the play concluded, Ms. Angelou returned to her job at the university. Upon her arrival, glad to be back to her familiar routine, Ms. Angelou learned that a favorite dance teacher's pay envelope had been lost. Ms. Angelou felt sorry for the woman because she knew she supported a large family. While going through the mound of paperwork on her desk, Ms. Angelou found the pay envelope, and she was excited to return it to its rightful owner.



The dance teacher, Grace Nuamah, was equally grateful, promising to give Ms. Angelou a gift in reward.

Later that afternoon, after working steadily for many hours, Ms. Angelou decided to treat herself to a proper lunch. All the employees of the university were assigned to a specific hall in which to eat. Ms. Angelou's was Volta Hall. Here, Ms. Angelou joined the professors with her meal, lamb curry. Not satisfied with the taste, Ms. Angelou asked the steward for red pepper to put on it. The steward was offended and explained that they did not provide that. Ms. Angelou insisted and even suggested that he ask one of the students for some. Ms. Angelou could feel the disapproval of those around her and felt that the steward was treating her as some sort of traitor to their race. Therefore, Ms. Angelou made a point of enjoying every bite of her meal and even ordered a dessert that she did not want.

After the meal, Ms. Angelou went to the Senior Common Room for coffee. Here there was a discussion going on regarding a trip one of the professors took into the bush. The professor and her husband stopped in what they had thought was a deserted area to sleep in their car. However, they were discovered by a member of a local tribe who took them in, provided them housing and fed them. The chief of the tribe gave them a lecture when they tried to repay this kindness with money about how they were children of God and it was not the tribe they should thank for their existence, but God. Another professor took offense at the woman's outraged take on the situation, suggesting she should be a little more accepting when living in a foreign country. Ms. Angelou quietly applauded this second professor for her bravery in standing up against someone so prejudiced in her opinions.

A few days later, Grace asked to take Ms. Angelou to lunch to thank her for finding her pay. Ms. Angelou agreed. Lunch took place at the home of a rich Ghanaian, Mr. Abatanu. Ms. Angelou did not like her host at first sight, although Grace made many attempts to encourage the two to get to know each other. However, Mr. Abatanu was clearly much more interested in Grace than Ms. Angelou. On the drive back to the university, Grace explained that she had set up the meeting because she thought Mr. Abatanu was perfect for Ms. Angelou. However, Ms. Angelou suggested perhaps Mr. Abatanu was more interested in Grace, who denied the possibility. Grace was offended that Ms. Angelou did not enjoy the gift Grace had given, putting it down to the fact that Ms. Angelou was American.

The tone of the book changes slightly in this section. Ms. Angelou has met a man who she greatly enjoys being with. However, it becomes clear from the beginning that this cannot be a long-term relationship because Sheikali wants a demure woman, not the strong individual Ms. Angelou has fought a long time to become. When Grace introduces Ms. Angelou to another man with whom she believes Ms. Angelou should become involved with, again Ms. Angelou is faced with the idea that men want women who are demure and is instantly offended by the mere idea.

The author's thesis has also shifted slightly in these pages as well. Ms. Angelou came to Ghana to settle her son and move on. However, once she accepts that she must stay



because of her son's accident, Ms. Angelou is excited about being in a country of acceptance, of being somewhere she can finally call home. These beliefs are challenged in these pages, first by the visit of Kojo's family, who show her the depth of these people's sense of past and cause Ms. Angelou to fear that without this past she will never be accepted into their world. Second, when the president is nearly assassinated and the blame immediately turns to the Americans, Ms. Angelou discovers that things are not nearly as different in this country as she thought they would be.



Section 4 (pages 93-128)

Section 4 (pages 93-128) Summary and Analysis

When Sheikhalı was over two hours late for a date, Ms. Angelou stopped waiting and went to a local hotel for dinner. When Ms. Angelou was nearly finished with her meal, Sheikhalı walked in with his assistant, Mamalı. Sheikhalı was angry and spoke through Mamalı because his French was not good enough to truly express his emotions. Sheikhalı explained that he did not appreciate Ms. Angelou getting upset at his tardiness and that a good woman should understand such an important man had reasons for being late. Sheikhalı said that he was intelligent in business and the workings of the world and that Ms. Angelou was book smart. Sheikhalı believed his own intelligence superior and that he was doing Ms. Angelou a favor by offering to marry her and take care of her and her entire family. Sheikhalı told Ms. Angelou he would ask only one last time for her to marry him. If she refused this time, Sheikhalı would not longer see Ms. Angelou. Ms. Angelou refused, amused by the idea of her extended family, not to mention herself, living under Sheikhalı's control. Sheikhalı called Ms. Angelou a civil worker and then walked out on her.

One weekend, Ms. Angelou decided to take a trip into the bush, to a small village a student had told her about called Dunkwa. On the way, she passed the Cape Coast. Many black Americans would go here first in order to visit Elmina Castle, which had been a holding fort for captured slaves. Ms. Angelou refused to go, although she was filled with longing to know about her past, to know where her ancestors had been stolen and if they had been sold out by their relatives. Ms. Angelou was haunted by her imaginings of her relatives tied together with ropes and chains, of their pain and exhaustion, of their refusal to cry or show pain.

Finally, Ms. Angelou was able to continue the journey. When Ms. Angelou arrived in Dunkwa, she parked her car and searched for a hotel on foot. Afraid she could not reach the next biggest town with the gas left in her tank, Ms. Angelou became desperate for some sort of lodging. Finally, Ms. Angelou stopped a woman in the street and spoke to her in Fanti, the local dialect. The woman immediately took Ms. Angelou to one of the tribal leaders. This man wanted to know where Ms. Angelou was from, though he wanted to guess and would not allow her to tell him the truth. The man guessed Ms. Angelou was Bambara from Liberia. Ms. Angelou was happy to be mistaken for a native African.

The man, Kobina, arranged for Ms. Angelou to spend the night with a local set of newlyweds, Patience and Kwame. This couple took Ms. Angelou to their small home and fed her a traditional meal with help from their neighbors. Ms. Angelou watched the preparation and was reminded of when she was a child. A black traveler would be sent to a parishioner's home by the minister to stay the night since he could not stay in the local hotels, and the neighbors would all bring over food to aid the hostess's burden. The next morning, Ms. Angelou took a shower in the outdoor bath with all the women



neighbors and was teased for having only one child. Then Ms. Angelou drove back home, filled with hope at finally being accepted by her adopted country.

One afternoon, Otu became very rattled when a car belonging to Nana Nketsia, a local tribe chief and advisor to the president, pulled up in front of the house. Ms. Angelou had met Nana once before, when she was having trouble getting Guy into the university because he had not completed some course work the university expected. Nana had helped get Guy into the university, with only the requirement that he take an entrance exam.

Ms. Angelou was taken to Nana's home by the chauffeur. When Ms. Angelou arrived, she found Nana speaking to a poet Ms. Angelou knew, Kwesi Brew. Left alone in the entrance hall of Nana's house, Ms. Angelou walked into the room where Nana and Mr. Brew were speaking and introduced herself. Nana found this amusing. Nana ordered Schnapps for everyone even though Ms. Angelou expressed her dislike of the drink and then recanted upon Nana's displeasure. The conversation turned to America, with Nana expressing his own distaste of the racism that ran wild there. Nana quoted Dr. Kwegy Aggrey, who said if he died and went to heaven and God offered to make him white, he would chose to come back as a black man.

After more conversation about African pride, Nana came around to his reason for requesting Ms. Angelou's company. Nana was aware that Ms. Angelou made little money at the university, and he knew of a position in Kaneshie at a diamond mine. The money would be twice what Ms. Angelou was making at the time, and Kaneshie was only several hours from Accra. Ms. Angelou began to think of all the things she could do with the extra money, including paying off her car or her son's tuition. The idea was very exciting to Ms. Angelou.

Nana brought his children into the room before Ms. Angelou could leave. There were five in all. The second eldest, a girl of fifteen, called Ms. Angelou by her first name when she greeted her. Ms. Angelou quickly corrected the girl and insisted on a more respectful title of Mrs. Angelou or Auntie, an informal title of respect. The child agreed quickly. Nana asked the eldest girl if she had anything to say, and she apologized for her sister, explaining that she was imitating the European children she went to school with. Nana dismissed the children then, as well as Ms. Angelou, suggesting that she get out her Curriculum vitae in order to prepare for her job interview. Suddenly Ms. Angelou was gripped with guilt for not explaining to Nana that she had no education above her high school diploma.

Word got around the American community that Julian had gotten a package of sausages from America. Ms. Angelou and her roommates were some of the first at his door to help him eat them. While sharing this feast, the Revolutionist Returnees discussed the fact that WEB Du Bois was ill, an idea that saddened them all, and the march on Washington that Martin Luther King was planning. Ms. Angelou, who had worked with Martin Luther King in the past, did not agree with his methods anymore. However, when it was suggested that they plan a march on the American Embassy in support of King, Ms. Angelou readily agreed.



The march on Washington was to begin at seven the morning of August 27. Since there was a seven-hour time difference from Washington to Ghana, the Returnees began their march at midnight. The crowd was larger than expected, and the group was filled with farmers, teachers, Peace Corps volunteers, college students and Americans in Ghana on vacation. Julian was late, something that surprised those who knew him. However, when he arrived, he told Ms. Angelou and his other supporters that Dr. Du Bois had died. Upon the spread of the news, the protestors broke out in song in honor of Dr. Du Bois. The group marched all night, growing tired toward morning when a rainstorm hit, sending the group running for cover. The protest continued, however. When two Marines came out of the Embassy to raise the American flag, the protestors heckled them, rattling one so badly that he nearly dropped the flag. The protestors were angry, not with the Marines, but with the idea that the symbol of that flag, the symbol of freedom, did not include them.

Early in the afternoon, a group of protestors that included Ms. Angelou and Julian took a written protest in to the first secretary of the Embassy, who accepted it on behalf of the absent ambassador. With that, the protest was over, and everyone went home. Afterward, Ms. Angelou felt empty and too exhausted to cry.

This section again marks a change in the tone of the book. Ms. Angelou, freshly estranged from her lover, finally finds the acceptance she has been waiting for from a group of strangers in a small village, Dunkwa. Although this acceptance comes because she neglects to tell her new acquaintances of her true heritage, it takes away some of the hurt and guilt Ms. Angelou has carried around since coming to Africa, faced with the reality of her ancestral past. Ms. Angelou continues her growth as well when she participates in a supportive march the same day as Martin Luther King's march on Washington. This march begins to open Ms. Angelou's eyes to her own need for acceptance and the conflicted emotions this need creates inside of her. Ms. Angelou wants to find a home in America and wants to be accepted by the country of her birth, and yet she also wants to be accepted in Africa as she cannot be in America. It is a conflict that exhausts her and leaves her unsatisfied.



Section 5 (pages 128-146)

Section 5 (pages 128-146) Summary and Analysis

Malcolm X came to Accra, and the Americans gathered in Julian's house to listen to him talk. Malcolm had just finished a pilgrimage to Mecca and was speaking of his time there. Malcolm announced that although he still disliked prejudiced whites in America, he had met some whites he could call his friends on his journeys, and he intended to share with his followers his change in opinion. Malcolm also spoke of his falling out with the followers of Elijah Muhammad and how his new opinions would anger them, but he believed he must always be honest with everyone.

When Malcolm was asked why he had come to Ghana, he explained that he was trying to gather the support of as many governments as possible so that when he went to the General Assembly of the United Nations and presented the case of black Americans, he would be successful. With this news, the group, which was very enthusiastic about the idea, immediately began arranging meetings between Malcolm and high officials within the Ghana government, including plans to find a way to get him in to see the president. In one week, the group was able to get Malcolm in to see Ghanaian Cabinet Ministers, African and European Diplomatic Corps and Cuban and Chinese ambassadors.

The Ghana Press Club threw a party in Malcolm's honor. However, Malcolm did not dance, explaining to the crowd that he could not celebrate when he knew his fellow black Americans were at home suffering under prejudice. Malcolm met Nana, and the two were very impressed with each other. Malcolm also spoke at the university, where a student asked how he could represent blacks when his own skin was so light. Malcolm laughed and said it was a very good question that no one else had ever dared to ask. Malcolm said he was a black man. He lived as a black man, and he would fight as a black man. Malcolm met many more people and spoke each night at Julian's. However, they were not able to arrange for Malcolm to meet with the president.

On Malcolm's last night in Ghana, he and Ms. Angelou attended a party at the Chinese Residency. There, Malcolm met Shirley Graham Du Bois, the widow of Dr. WEB Du Bois. After talking for just a few minutes, Shirley agreed to arrange a meeting between Malcolm and the president. Ms. Angelou was angered by this because she and her fellow Revolutionist Returnees had been attempting to arrange a meeting between Mrs. Du Bois and Malcolm all week, and she had consistently refused.

The next morning, Ms. Angelou and her housemates went to Malcolm's hotel to drive him to the airport after his meeting with President Nkrumah. While the group loaded the cars with Malcolm's luggage, the Nigerian High Commissioner came over and said that a few of them had come to accompany Malcolm to the airport, including the Chinese, Guinea, Yugoslav, Mali, Cuban, Algerian and Egyptian ambassadors. Everyone was excited by the symbolism of this act when Muhammad Ali came out of the hotel. Malcolm had been a friend of Ali's until he split from Elijah Muhammad. Ali turned his



back on Malcolm. Malcolm called to Ali and followed him through the parking lot. Malcolm followed Ali, telling him that he still loved him. Ali turned and said that Malcolm had left Elijah Muhammad and that that was a bad thing to do. Then Ali walked away. Malcolm was visibly saddened by this encounter.

Malcolm chose to ride to the airport with Ms. Angelou and Julian. In the car, Malcolm noticed that Ms. Angelou seemed upset and asked why. Ms. Angelou poured out her anger at Mrs. Du Bois for not seeing Malcolm and arranging the meeting between Malcolm and the president sooner. Malcolm chastised her for allowing her emotions to get the better of her and reminded her that Mrs. Du Bois had only been a widow for a short time. He said that Ms. Angelou should be more understanding of that fact. At the airport, Malcolm was whisked away, and Ms. Angelou and her friends were left feeling somewhat deflated.

Malcolm X was a strong and controversial leader within the Civil Rights Movement. Ms. Angelou finds her own opinions being tested by knowing Malcolm X. This section underlines one of the themes of the memoir, racism, and causes Ms. Angelou to explore her own feelings as related to the subject. Ms. Angelou is a strong, proactive person who finds anyone's refusal to aid in this righteous cause infuriating. However, Malcolm X reminds Ms. Angelou that there are two sides to every issue. Ms. Angelou sees Malcolm X's suffering, and she is touched by it even if it does not change her opinions. This section, better than any other within the memoir, shows Ms. Angelou's perspective in regards to the Civil Rights Movement.



Section 6 (pages 147-184)

Section 6 (pages 147-184) Summary and Analysis

Ms. Angelou missed out on the job in the diamond mine, though Nana continued to search for a more suitable job for her. Ms. Angelou went on with her life, making many friends, working at the university and participating in political discussions with her fellow Revolutionist Returnees. However, Ms. Angelou was beginning to feel as though she no longer belonged in Africa. Ms. Angelou needed to take a vacation away from Ghana for a while, to clear her head.

Ms. Angelou heard some disturbing news about her son, that he had a girlfriend older than herself who worked for the American Embassy. Worried that this news was true and that her son was in over his head, she called him so they could meet. When Ms. Angelou asked about the girlfriend, Guy told her that he was a man now and had the right to make his own choices. When Ms. Angelou became angry and tried to assert her maternal authority, Guy walked away. This reminded Ms. Angelou of a time when a school counselor suggested that Ms. Angelou's lifestyle of moving frequently for her job as a performer was not good for Guy. Ms. Angelou became angry and told the woman that all Guy needed was love. Ms. Angelou realized that she had to allow her son some space, although the idea saddened her.

Soon after, an offer arrived for Ms. Angelou to take a part in a play that would show in Germany and Venice. Excited by the idea of being able to stop in Egypt on the way home to see some old friends, Ms. Angelou agreed quickly. Ms. Angelou arrived in Germany excited to be acting again and to see some of her old friends. Among the actors in the play with her were Louis Gosset Jr., James Earl Jones, Cecily Tyson and an old friend, Roscoe Lee Browne. The play they were to do was called *The Blacks*, which translated to *Die Negers* in German. One of the actors said that if anyone came up to him and said he saw him in *de Niggers*, he would beat the heck out of him.

The first night of the play went well. Afterwards, Ms. Angelou was approached by a German man and his wife. They invited her to dinner, though she confessed to being too exhausted to go out that night. Ms. Angelou suggested perhaps breakfast at their home the next morning would be better. The German couple agreed and told Ms. Angelou that she could bring anyone she chose as her guest. After the German couple left, Ms. Angelou saw a black Jew sitting at the bar with his yarmulke on. Ms. Angelou went over and introduced herself. The man was Torvash, an Israeli actor on tour. After they spoke for a little while, Ms. Angelou told Torvash of the invitation from the German couple and asked him to join her. Though he knew why Ms. Angelou had extended the invitation, Torvash agreed.

Ms. Angelou and Torvash met in the lobby of the hotel the next morning, where the German gentleman picked them up. The German, Dieter, was a little surprised by Ms. Angelou's guest but made no comment. At their home, Ms. Angelou and Torvash were



escorted to the basement dining room where Dieter's wife waited. When Dieter and his wife went upstairs to get refreshments, Ms. Angelou asked Torvash what he thought of them. Torvash said Dieter was probably a Nazi, but he refused her offer to leave. A moment later, Dieter's mother came into the room and began to flirt with Torvash, a fact that embarrassed everyone.

Later, after breakfast had been served, Ms. Angelou suggested that everyone tell a funny story so they could get to know each other better. Ms. Angelou told a story about Brer Rabbit that only got a polite chuckle. Torvash went second and told a story about a German officer who told a Jewish prisoner that he had a glass eye and if the prisoner could tell which it was, he would be allowed to go free. The Jewish man picked the correct eye, because it was the only eye that looked human. Tension flared after the story was over, and Dieter left the room. Some neighbors who had come to meet Ms. Angelou explained that Dieter had a glass eye.

When Dieter returned, he told a story of how a man found a bird freezing in the snow. The man took the bird and placed it in a cow pie because he was late for work. When the bird recovered, it began to sing as it tried to work its way out of the cow pie. A hungry wolf heard the birds call and ate it. Dieter explained that the moral of this story is that the person who puts you in animal dung is not always your enemy, that the one who takes you out of animal dung is not always your friend and once you are in animal dung you should keep your mouth shut. Again the tension in the room rose, and Ms. Angelou became sick.

Ms. Angelou insisted on leaving shortly after this. Dieter told her that he had some African art he would like her to see and insisted they see some of it on the way out of the house. Ms. Angelou was not interested and simply wanted out of the situation she had created. In the car on the ride back to the hotel, Dieter asked Ms. Angelou if she would be interested in buying artwork for him in Ghana in order to save him the money he paid to his art dealer. Ms. Angelou refused.

The play ran the rest of its time in Germany quietly. The group moved on to Venice. Ms. Angelou was happy to be back there, Venice being the first European city she had ever visited. At the end of the play's run, Ms. Angelou said a tearful goodbye to her costars and moved on to Egypt, where she was excited to see many old friends.

Ms. Angelou had lived in Egypt before moving on to Ghana and had many friends there. Ms. Angelou stayed with the Williamsons. Joe was the Liberian Ambassador, and his wife Bahnti was very pregnant. There was to be a conference, and there were many Liberian visitors at the Williamson home. They were also expecting the Liberian president. While having tea and catching up, Bahnti asked Ms. Angelou if she would consider singing for the president. The president had heard Ms. Angelou liked to sing the old spirituals and wanted to sing "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," with her. Ms. Angelou's initial inclination was to refuse, but she agreed for the sake of her dear friend.

While in Cairo, Ms. Angelou went to visit with old friends. David Du Bois, Dr. Du Bois son, was among those she visited, as well as Julian, who was in town for the



conference. Ms. Angelou was nervous about her singing performance and wanted suggestions. However, Julian was concerned with the conference, and David wanted to know all about Malcolm X.

At the party, the Liberian president, William V.S. Tubman, made quite an entrance. Ms. Angelou believed that, despite his medals, he looked like an ordinary man. Still, Ms. Angelou was quite nervous about her performance. Ms. Angelou began with a traditional blues song while the president snapped his fingers in time with her slow tempo. Then the president insisted she sing "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." It was a touching moment as everyone at the party sang along, mixing the voices of black Americans, Liberians and dozens of different people from many of the tribes that populate Africa. Ms. Angelou was so touched that she could only bow her head in recognition of the applause offered her.

The theme of coming home is again explored in this section, though not quite like it has been before. Here, instead of the theme being used in the sense of finding a home where Ms. Angelou feels welcome, she instead discovers that the only home in which she has known unconditional safety, the home created by her and her son, no longer exists. Like most mothers, Ms. Angelou is forced to face the fact that her son is grown and ready to live his own life, separate from her. In response to this, Ms. Angelou runs away, still searching for that one place where she will always be welcome.

In Germany, Ms. Angelou tackles prejudices head on by inviting a Jewish man to breakfast at a suspected German Nazi's home. Even Ms. Angelou has no idea what to expect at this meeting. However, the emotional impact it has on her shifts her perception somewhat, though here her thesis is clear. Ms. Angelou wants to cure the entire world of racism or at least shine a light in the dark corners where racism hides. This section, however, has shown her that her task may be more enormous than she originally thought.



Section 7 (pages 184-208)

Section 7 (pages 184-208) Summary and Analysis

Guy picked Ms. Angelou up at the airport and took her back to her house, where he had a chicken dinner waiting for her. Ms. Angelou knew her son and knew he had something to tell her, so she prodded him into speaking. Finally, Guy told his mother that although he loved her very much and that she was a very good mother to him, he was a grown man and wanted to live his own life his own way. Ms. Angelou had reached the time when she must accept that her little boy was gone, and there was nothing she could do to change that fact.

Efua appeared at Ms. Angelou's door and announced that Africa was falling apart. A boy had died a few days before, and his body was not claimed. This rarely ever happened in Africa, and it greatly upset Efua. Ms. Angelou, used to this sort of thing in America, was confused by Efua's reaction until she had a chance to think it through. Everyone was relieved to read in the evening paper that the boy's family had finally come forward to collect his body.

The woman who did Ms. Angelou's hair, Comfort, had become ill. When Ms. Angelou suggested she go see a doctor, Comfort explained that it was not a physical illness but a curse. Comfort had been involved with a married man with the man's wife's full knowledge. However, the wife was angry and threatened Comfort, telling her she would lose everything. Comfort then became ill and lost a lot of weight, which caused her lover to leave her. Comfort had tried all she could, but nothing would make the illness go away. Finally, Comfort had heard about a woman in Sierra Leone who could cure her if she went to stay for two weeks. However, Comfort died before she had been in Sierra Leone for a week.

Malcolm often wrote letters to the Revolutionist Returnees about his struggles with the Civil Rights Movement, his family and news from home. In one of his letters, Malcolm said that he had had trouble finding someone who could organize an office of the OAAU properly. With her experience running Martin Luther King's Northern SCLC office, Ms. Angelou was a prime candidate for the job. Ms. Angelou agreed to go.

Before Ms. Angelou left, Nana, who was traveling to Lagos by car, suggested that Ms. Angelou go with him and his two eldest girls as far as the Togo border. They stopped in Aflao for the night and stayed in the home of a customs officer, Adadevo. Ms. Angelou passed a quiet night with Nana's girls and Adadevo. The next morning, after Nana had gone, Adadevo suggested they all take a ride to Keta, a small town about thirty miles away.

On the ride, the travelers came to a bridge that frightened Ms. Angelou for no clear reason. Ms. Angelou insisted on getting out of the car with the girls and walking across the bridge. Afterwards, Adadevo told her a story about how these bridges had once



been notorious for their poor workmanship and habit of falling at the slightest warning. Later in Keto, the group went to the market where Adadevo's sister worked. Ms. Angelou went ahead of the group up a narrow staircase that led to the rest of the market. On the stairs, she ran into a woman who spoke Ewe, a language that Ms. Angelou did not understand. The woman seemed quite upset, which upset Ms. Angelou.

When Ms. Angelou and her companions entered the market, the woman was joined by another who seemed equally upset by Ms. Angelou's appearance. Adadevo explained that the women were survivors of a time when slavers moved into the village and stole all the adults and most of the children, except a few who had escaped. These women believed Ms. Angelou looked like one of their ancestors who were stolen during that terrible time. The people in the market gave Ms. Angelou gifts of fruit and vegetables, many crying as they gazed on her. Ms. Angelou cried too because she believed she had finally found where she had come from.

Ms. Angelou left Ghana a few days later. Nana was among the well-wishers who saw her to her plane, along with Julian and Kwesi Brew, Guy and Grace Nuamah. Ms. Angelou left Ghana with the knowledge that she was leaving a piece of herself behind and that none of her ancestors had ever truly left Africa. A piece of Africa would be with all of them always.

Ms. Angelou's journey has come full circle in this final section of the memoir. Ms. Angelou has been forced to accept the loss of her child and the gain of a man. However, Ms. Angelou also gained a home with the experience she had in the small village of Keta. Ms. Angelou's purpose in writing this memoir was to share her journey from homeless to having found, if not a home, a peace inside of herself that filled the space left empty by her ancestors' past. It seems Ms. Angelou finally found that place in herself in her final days in Africa.



Objects/Places

Ghana

Ghana is a republic in West Africa.

Cairo, Egypt

Cairo, Egypt is where Ms. Angelou lived before moving to Ghana, where she suffered a divorce and where she visited old friends and sang for the president of Liberia.

Keta

Keta is the village that Ms. Angelou visited at the end of her time in Ghana, where she was mistaken as a relative of some of the villagers.

Ewe

Ewe is the dialect that was spoken by the villagers in Keta.

Fanti

Fanti is one of the many tribal languages spoken in Africa and one that Ms. Angelou learned to speak while living in Ghana.

Revolutionist Returnees

Revolutionist Returnees is a nickname Ms. Angelou gave to the group of Americans living in Ghana with whom she developed a friendship during her time in Ghana.

OAAU

OAAU, or Organization of Afro American Unity, is a group organized by Malcolm X in order to fight for civil rights in America. Ms. Angelou goes to run one of the OAAU offices when she leaves Ghana.

Washington March

The Washington March is the famous march that Martin Luther King, Jr. organized in Washington D.C., where he presented his speech, "I Have a Dream..." Ms. Angelou and

her Revolutionist Returnees friends organized a similar march in Ghana as a show of support for King.

University of Ghana

The University of Ghana is the university where Nana was once African vice chancellor, where Guy attended classes and where Ms. Angelou worked as an executive assistant.

The Blacks

The Blacks is the name of the play Ms. Angelou participated in while it played in Germany and Venice.



Themes

Coming Home/Acceptance

One of the central themes of *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* is the idea of coming home to a place where one can find unconditional acceptance. For Maya Angelou, this meant finding a place where people did not discriminate against her because of the color of her skin. Although she found herself living in Ghana under accidental circumstances, Ms. Angelou found a place where everyone looked the same and where there was little discrimination against her simply for her skin color. Although Ms. Angelou did run into discrimination on occasion, mostly stemming from the fact that she was American and the Ghanaians had varying degrees of prejudice against her nationality, overall Ms. Angelou felt accepted in Ghana.

In addition to finding a lack of discrimination in Ghana, Ms. Angelou also sought a deeper sense of coming home from her adopted country. Ms. Angelou knew that Ghana was a major port active during slavery and found herself imagining that her family had come from the very soil she now called home. However, Ms. Angelou was aware that many of the persons sold into slavery were sold by fellow tribal members and family members. Ms. Angelou was deeply afraid she would discover that her own family was betrayed by their relatives or neighbors. Therefore, for a short time Ms. Angelou refused to allow herself to dwell on the idea of slavery at all, afraid of finding out a truth she did not want to know. However, on a trip to a fishing village, she experienced an episode that convinced her she was home in this country and that her family was not betrayed by their loved ones. Ms. Angelou happened upon a group of villagers in the small village of Keta who recognized her as looking very much like one of their ancestors who was stolen from the village by slavers. This episode solidified for Ms. Angelou the feeling of coming home.

Racism

This memoir is set in the sixties, a time period that was extremely volatile in America in regards to the issues of civil rights and racism. To Ms. Angelou, a black American, this issue was especially personal. Ms. Angelou had grown up in a world of hate based on the color of her skin. Ms. Angelou had fought in the Civil Rights Movement along side Martin Luther King, Jr. and had experienced prejudice firsthand in numerous ways during her travels as a performer. Therefore, when she arrived in Ghana and found a place almost solely occupied by people who looked just like she did, it was a feeling of coming home.

In Ghana, Ms. Angelou also experienced racism in the form of prejudice by a receptionist based on the fact that she was an American rather than a black person. After the attempted assassination of the president of Ghana, there was also a rash of blame placed on black Americans that created an atmosphere of tension for Ms.



Angelou and her companions. Finally, there were the educated professors at the university where she worked who had varied ideas regarding the civil rights struggle in America that Ms. Angelou found offensive. At times it appeared that Ms. Angelou could go nowhere and find unconditional acceptance.

Racism also played a part in Ms. Angelou's life in regards to her role in the civil rights fight. Although living in Ghana, Ms. Angelou took an active role in the civil rights fight by assisting Malcolm X when he came to town to garner support for his fight. Ms. Angelou made it her priority to drive Malcolm X to his various meetings, to listen to his speeches and to look at the pictures of his children day and night. Ms. Angelou also took part in the many discussions held by the 'Revolutionary Returnees' at Julian's house and helped organize a march on the American embassy the same day of Martin Luther King's famous march on Washington. Racism was a large part of Ms. Angelou's life; therefore, it is a major theme of her memoir.

Slavery/Ancestry

Ms. Angelou, like most black Americans, knew that her ancestors were more than likely stolen from Africa before coming to America as slaves. This knowledge slid to the forefront of her thoughts more and more often as she lived in Ghana. Many of her fellow Americans visited the ports where the slaves were taken before the voyage to America in order to see the relics that still remained. Ms. Angelou never felt the need to do that and never thought she needed the physical reminder of this terrible part of her history. However, thoughts about slavery continuously haunted her. Ms. Angelou knew that slaves were often given to the slavers by family members, and she was terrified that her ancestors might belong to that terrible group.

While Ms. Angelou lived in Ghana, she visited many of the small villages in the countryside. In the first visit she describes, she was welcomed by a group of villagers who believed her to be a native of the country because of her command of the language. This welcome, despite the lie on which it was based, filled Ms. Angelou with a sense of acceptance. The second incident in which the villagers mistook her for their own ancestors further increased this sense of acceptance in Ms. Angelou and convinced her not only that she did have ancestral ties to this country, but that her ancestors were not sold by their own family members. This idea was extremely important to Ms. Angelou because she had never known a home in which she was truly accepted.

Style

Perspective

Ms. Angelou is a poet, writer, performer and playwright, as well as a civil rights activist. She wrote this book to share her experiences searching for a place to belong, a home, and her belief that she found that place in Ghana. Though Ms. Angelou settled in a Ghana because of her son's accident, within a short few months she felt as though she had found something closer to a home than anything she had had in the past. Here everyone looked the same, therefore they were all treated the same. However, it was not long before Ms. Angelou experienced discrimination based solely on the fact that she was American.

The impression the reader gets from this memoir is that Ms. Angelou wrote it for fans of her other literary works and for all black Americans who may be searching for the same answers she searched for. She wants to show them what can be done when one takes on the adventure of finding themselves. Ms. Angelou does not use her memoir to persuade all black Americans to move to Ghana. In fact, there are several places within her narrative when she warns acquaintances that they will not be welcomed with open arms in Africa, as they might have believed. Ms. Angelou also does not use her memoir to convince the whole world that white Americans are all racists, although discrimination is one of the prevailing themes of her memoir. Ms. Angelou primarily uses this memoir to explore her own experiences and to share them with her audience to take from it what they want.

Tone

The tone of this book is strongly suggestive. Ms. Angelou has very strong opinions about black America, about slavery and about bigotry. This book is a memoir of Ms. Angelou's self-discovery in these areas. She uses her time in Africa to find a place where she is not discriminated against because of her skin color as she was in America where her ancestors were held in slavery generations before. Ms. Angelou is searching for a place to call home throughout the book and believes that Africa is her home. Unfortunately, many Africans do not greet her the way she thought they might, and she is terribly disappointed by this fact. When Ms. Angelou finds discrimination among the Ghanaian people much like that she experienced in other countries, Ms. Angelou becomes disillusioned. This disillusion colors the tone of the book throughout Ms. Angelou's self-discovery.

Besides Ms. Angelou's opinions on race, which color a large part of the memoir, there are also other opinions the author holds that affect her writing of this book. One is her life as a single mother. Through the book, Ms. Angelou is first forced to face the fact of her son's terrible injuries and then the harder realization that her son has grown into a man. Ms. Angelou struggles with her son's maturation in several parts of the memoir,



while also struggling with her own level of maturity. Ms. Angelou's personal growth is another aspect of the memoir that affects the tone. Ms. Angelou struggles throughout the memoir with the idea that some slaves were sold into slavery because their own tribal members or family members sold them to the slavers. Ms. Angelou is very unhappy with this idea and afraid that she herself comes from such a situation. This idea and the emotions attached to it affect the tone, since Ms. Angelou cannot help but brood over the idea and allow it to color her words. In this same vein, when Ms. Angelou makes peace with this possibility, the acceptance also influences her word choice.

Structure

All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes is written as one long narrative, without the distraction of chapter breaks. Though this creates a flow to the story that might not be achieved with more than the few line breaks the author has provided, it also presents the reader with a lack of breaking points, encouraging the reader to sit and read the entire memoir in one sitting. The memoir is written in the first person point of view, through the eyes of the author, Maya Angelou. Ms. Angelou uses this point of view to invite the reader into her world, to see Ghana and the people around her as she herself saw it during her stay there. The book has the feel of a diary or an intimate conversation, as though the reader has been invited to share Ms. Angelou's most private feelings and opinions, even when Ms. Angelou found herself behaving or feeling emotions that proved to be highly inappropriate. This approach gives the book an extremely private feel which impacts the reader on an emotional level that any other point of view might not have achieved.

Ms. Angelou's narrative also flows in a choppy sort of wave, moving quickly from one episode in her life to another, hardly giving the reader time to catch up before being presented with another moment of intense insight on the author's behalf. Often Ms. Angelou will introduce a character in one section and then move on to another in the next only to come back to that earlier character at an unexpected point in the memoir. This style keeps the reader on his or her toes, though it can be confusing if one does not pay close attention. Ms. Angelou tells her story through a dramatic narrative that includes the same dialogue and exposition one might see in a fictional novel. Often the reader will be caught up in conversations between Ms. Angelou and Malcolm X or her friend Julian, and then Ms. Angelou will switch to a descriptive passage in which she tells the reader what has happened rather than showing. This technique brings the reader deeper into the story than straight exposition might have achieved while still keeping the feel of a memoir rather than a novel.

Quotes

"We were Black Americans in West Africa, where for the first time in our lives the color of our skin was accepted as correct and normal." Section 1 (pages 3-32), pg. 3

"Was it possible that I and all American Blacks had been wrong on other occasions? Could the cutting treatment we often experienced have been stimulated by something other than our features, our hair and color? Was the odor of old slavery so obvious that people were offended and lashed out at us automatically? Ha what we judged as racial prejudice less to do with race and more to do with our particular ancestors' bad luck at having been caught, sold and driven like beasts?" Section 2 (pages 32-58), pg. 35

"That they had missed our clearly made points boded well for them. They just might succeed in their search for the illusive Africa, which secreted itself when approached directly, like a rain forest on a moonless night. Africa might just deliver itself into their hands because they matched its obliqueness." Section 2 (pages 32-58), pg. 43

"Unbidden would come the painful reminder - Not all slaves were stolen, nor were all slave dealers European. Suppose my great-grandfather was enslaved in that colorful town by his brother. Imagine my great-grandmother traded by her sister in that marketplace." Section 2 (pages 32-58), pg. 47

"In that second I was wounded. My mind struck a truth as an elbow can strike a table edge. A poor, uneducated servant in Africa was so secure he could ignore established White rudeness. No black American I had ever known knew that security." Section 2 (pages 32-58), pg. 52

"Maybe it was the balance of maleness and manliness which intrigued me. I had long known that there were worlds of difference between males and men as there were between females and women. Genitalia indicated sex, but work, discipline, courage and love were needed for the creation of men and women." Section 3 (pages 58-93), pg. 67

"I doubted if I, or any Black from diaspora, could really return to Africa. We wore skeletons of old despair like necklaces, heralding our arrival, and we were branded with cynicism. In America we danced, laughed, procreated; we became lawyers, judges, legislators, teachers, doctors, and preachers, but as always, under our glorious costumes we carried the badge of a barbarous history sewn to our dark skins. It had often been said that Black people were childish, but in America we had matured without ever experiencing the true abandon of adolescence." Section 3 (pages 58-93), pg. 76

"After all, in Dunkwa, although I let a lie speak for me, I had proved that one of their descendants, at least one, could just briefly return to Africa, and that despite cruel betrayals, bitter ocean voyages and hurtful centuries, we were still recognizable." Section 4 (pages 93-128), pg. 105



"I shuddered to think that while we wanted that flag dragged into the mud and sullied beyond repair, we also wanted it pristine, its white stripes, summer cloud white. Watching it wave in the breeze of a distance made us nearly choke with emotion. It lifted us up with its promise and broke our hearts with its denial." Section 4 (pages 93-128), pg. 127

"I still found myself grinning when I came unexpectedly upon a clasp of confident Ghanaian children whispering in Ga or Fanti, their little legs shining and shimmering like oiled eels; my breath still crowded in my throat at the sight of African soldiers, chests thrust forward, stiffened legs and behinds high like peacocks' tails. There forests had lost none of their mystery and the bush villages were still enchanting. But Ghana was beginning to tug at me and make me uncomfortable, like an ill fitting coat." Section 6 (pages 147-184), pg. 147

"And that is the end of the third act, and the end of the story, except that there are three morals. One...' Dieter turns just a little face Torvash, 'Remember, he who puts you in the shit is not necessarily your enemy. And two, he who takes you out is not necessarily your friend.' Dieter stood from his chair and leaned his back against the wall. 'And the most important moral of all is...' He raised his voice into a shout, 'Once you find yourself in the shit, keep your big mouth shut.'" Section 6 (pages 147-184), pg. 170

"There was much to cry for, much to mourn, but in my heart I felt exalted knowing there was much to celebrate. Although separated from our languages, our families and customs, we had dared to continue to live. We had crossed the unknowable oceans in chains and had written its mystery into 'Deep River, my home is over Jordan.' Through the centuries of despair and dislocation, we had been creative, because we faced death by daring to hope." Section 7 (pages 184-208), pg. 207

Topics for Discussion

Discuss the theme of coming home. Home is defined in many different ways for many different people. How would you define home? How do you think Ms. Angelou would define home? Do you think Ms. Angelou ever found the home she was looking for?

Discuss the memoir on a whole. Why do you think Ms. Angelou wrote the book? Do you think Ms. Angelou was trying to teach a lesson, or was she simply reminiscing?

Discuss the tone of the book. Do you think Ms. Angelou presents her memoir in an objective or subjective way? What are the major emotions you associate with the book? What emotions did you feel as you read the book? Do you think those are the emotions Ms. Angelou intended for you to feel? Do you think someone of a different background would have felt the same emotions as you?

Discuss Ms. Angelou's decision to take a Jewish man to breakfast at a German man's home. What did Ms. Angelou hope to prove at this meeting? Did she prove it? What was the German's role in Ms. Angelou's drama? Was the German innocent or just as guilty of deception as Ms. Angelou?

Discuss discrimination. What is discrimination, and how would you define it? Is there a difference between racial discrimination and other types of discrimination? Discuss the episode Ms. Angelou describes between herself and the receptionist at the Ghana Broadcasting Company. Was the receptionist using racial discrimination against Ms. Angelou when she sent her away? Was the receptionist's attitude based solely on Ms. Angelou's nationality?

Discuss the difference between Malcolm X's approach to the Civil Rights Movements and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s. What are the differences in their response to discrimination? Is one better than the other? Do you agree with Ms. Angelou's perception of Martin Luther King's methods?

Discuss Malcolm X and how history has described him. How different is history's description of him from the description Ms. Angelou presents in her memoir? How similar are the two? How does Ms. Angelou's description change your perception of Malcolm X as a leader?