

# ***Vigorous Virtues Worksheet***

## Integrity 6

### **Break Free To Become Whole**

In 1969 poet and civil rights activist Maya Angelou published her first autobiographical work, "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings". A coming-of-age story that described the struggles of a young Maya with trauma and prejudice, the book was a sensation, nominated for a National Book Award; a fixture on The New York Times paperback bestseller list; a standard text for countless high schools and universities; and the subject of a made-for-TV movie of the same title that aired in 1979. The caged bird, a symbol for the chained slave, was thematically captured in the final stanza of Angelou's poem entitled "Caged Birds":

*The caged bird sings  
with a fearful trill  
of things unknown  
but longed for still  
and his tune is heard  
on the distant hill  
for the caged bird  
sings of freedom.*

In her "Caged Birds" book this motif gained expression as Angelou's character breaks free from being a victim of childhood rape and Southern racism to grow into a self-confident individual with the ability to respond to discrimination with dignity and pursue her dreams.

Ask yourself:

What are those things in my life from which I need to break free to become whole?

What steps can I take to break free from perceived failure, to transform my stumbling blocks into stepping stones on my way to greatness?