

## Caged Bird - Poetry in Motion

Original Poem: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48989/caged-bird>

Line of Poem	Movement Concepts & Instructions	Chant Instructions
Title: Caged Bird by Maya Angelou	Starting at the back of room standing up with head down.  Head comes up as the title is read, standing tall and straight.	Chant title in a clear voice ( <i>mf</i> dynamic) at a moderato tempo.
A free bird leaps	On the word “leaps”, leap forward slowly while bringing both arms up to create “bird wings”, as if leaping over something. Continue to move arms up and down lightly to create an image of bird wings flapping.	Chant with a slow steady beat (moderato) in a leggiero manner ( <i>mp</i> dynamic). Slightly accent > the word “free” to stress its importance.
on the back of the wind	On the word “back”, make a circle with the upper body. Continue to move bird wing arms, as if soaring through the sky in the wind.	Same moderato tempo ( <i>mp</i> dynamic) with no accents.
and floats downstream	Bring both hands up slowly and smoothly on “floats” and look up. Then move body all the way down to the ground in a rubato manner, while moving fingers to imitate the trickling of the water in the stream.  After, create water noises with breath.	Continue with moderato tempo ( <i>mp</i> dynamic). Do a glissando on the word “downstream”.
till the current ends	Roll to the left side and make a “stop sign” with left hand on word “ends”. Stop sign should be fast and sharp, and	Same, but this time an accent > on word “ends” to indicate its abruptness.

	hand should be flexed and angular.	
and dips his wing	Rise up onto knees, then gently touch fingertips on the ground on the word “dips”.	Much slower in tempo (largo) and even softer ( <i>p</i> ).
in the orange sun rays	Roll onto back in a free and open manner. Spread arms and legs as far apart as possible, remaining relaxed.  After chanting the line, take a deep inhalation and exhalation through mouth so that it is audible.	Continue with largo tempo and quietly ( <i>p</i> ).
and dares to claim the sky	Slowly stand up. Reach up as high as possible with arms and hands, as if reaching for the sky slowly.	Continue to slow the tempo down as line is chanted (rubato). Same dynamic ( <i>p</i> )
But a bird that stalks	Flap bird wings at a moderate tempo standing strong and proud.	Return to a moderato tempo - same as beginning but a bit louder ( <i>mf</i> dynamic).
down his narrow cage	Move your elbows back and forth sharply and suddenly as you zig-zag down to the ground. Become as small as possible by curling up in a tiny ball and lowering head.	Continue with moderato tempo ( <i>mf</i> dynamic).
can seldom see through	As slowly and controlled as possible, gently bring head up to look straight ahead with a firm, single focus.	Same, but with a more harsh tone.
his bars of rage	Stand up slowly, while maintaining that same focus, but this time eyes are filled with anger and rage. On the word “bars”, quickly bring arms parallel to face as if creating actual cage bars.	Becomes louder ( <i>f</i> ) and even more harsh in tone. Accent > on word “rage”.
his wings are clipped	Quickly move both arms	Increase to an allegro tempo

	behind back.	( <i>f</i> dynamic).
and his feet are tied	Suddenly sit down and lie down on back, feeling your weight pulling you to the ground. Arms remain behind back. On the word “feet”, quickly bring both legs up with feet together. Make this a strong and sudden movement.	Same quick tempo ( <i>f</i> ).
so he opens his throat to sing.	Roll onto knees, then stand up in a slow and controlled manner. On the word “sing”, stand up slowly but strongly, with proud intentions. Feet are still together and arms are still behind back for this entire line of the poem.	Return to moderato tempo and become a bit quieter ( <i>mf</i> dynamic).
The caged bird sings	On “caged bird” bring arms together in front of face and collapse body inward to create a bound, narrow feeling. On “sings” open entire body up as wide and big as possible, look up, and smile!	Same, but with an accent > on “caged” to stress its contrast from “free” at beginning.
with a fearful trill	Walk backward, gradually walking faster and faster. Give a short caesura (pause) after the word “trill”.	A slight accelerando (allegro) and crescendo (to <i>f</i> ).
of things unknown	Look all around, focusing on multiple things around the room. Move under, over and through the space around you, creating a sensation of being off balance.	Return to moderato tempo, but much quieter ( <i>pp</i> - whispering).
but longed for still	Come back to centre and find stillness standing tall, looking ahead.	Continue with moderato tempo, but a bit louder ( <i>mp</i> ). A bit of rubato on word “longed” - stretch it out.

and his tune is heard	Bring hands to ears, cupping them as if you are listening for something in the distance. Remain standing still, looking ahead.	Moderato tempo ( <i>mp</i> )
on the distant hill	Walk to the right and reach right arm out straight, as if reaching for the hill. Look toward your fingertips.	Same moderato tempo ( <i>mp</i> ).
for the caged bird	Bring arms together in front of face and collapse body inward to create a bound, narrow feeling (like before).	Continue with moderato tempo, but a bit louder ( <i>mf</i> ) and more intense.
sings of freedom.	On “sings” open body up as wide and big as possible once again. Take a slight pause here. Then on the word “freedom”, create a bird with entire body and fly around in a large circle, returning to your original position. Walk to a steady pulse or beat, in a largo manner with a bit of rubato.	Tone softens, remains at moderato tempo ( <i>mf</i> ). Ends strongly.
End of poem	End in a strong and tall stance with “bird wings” flapping.	