UNSEEN POEMS

"PHENOMENAL WOMAN" — MAYA ANGELOU (1928 –)

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies. 1

I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size

But when I start to tell them,

They think I'm telling lies.

I say,

It's in the reach of my arms,

The span of my hips,

The stride of my step,

The curl of my lips.

I'm a woman 10

Phenomenally.

Phenomenal woman,

That's me.

I walk into a room

Just as cool as you please, 15

And to a man,

The fellows stand or

Fall down on their knees.

Then they swarm around me,

A hive of honey bees. 20

I say,

It's the fire in my eyes,

And the flash of my teeth,

the swing in my waist,

And the joy in my feet. 25

I'm a woman

Phenomenally.

Phenomenal woman,

That's me.

Men themselves have wondered **30**

what they see in me.

They try so much

But they can't touch

My inner mystery.

When I try to show them, 35

They say they still can't see.

| say, | | |
|---|-------------|----|
| t's in the arch of my back, | | |
| The sun of my smile, | | |
| The ride of my breasts, | 40 | |
| The grace of my style. | | |
| 'm a woman | | |
| Phenomenally. | | |
| Phenomenal woman, | | |
| That's me. | 45 | |
| Now you understand | | |
| ust why my head's not bowed. | | |
| don't shout or jump about | | |
| Or have to talk real loud. | | |
| When you see me passing, | 50 | |
| t ought to make you proud. | | |
| say, | | |
| t's in the click of my heels, | | |
| The bend of my hair, | | |
| he palm of my hand, | 55 | |
| he need for my care. | | |
| Cause I'm a woman | | |
| Phenomenally. | | |
| Phenomenal woman, | | |
| Γhat's me. | 60 | |
| | 60 | |
| / OCEDITORIO | | |
| , QUESTIONS | | |
| Describe, in your own words, the intentions | of the noet | (3 |

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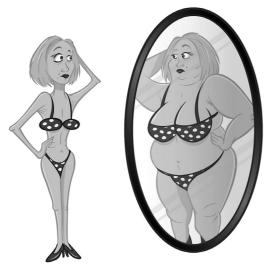
UNSEEN POETRY

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THE COMPLETE POETRY RESOURCE

| CONTENTS | 2. | Describe the rhyme scheme and comment on how it serves to emphasise the main themes of the poem. | (2) |
|---------------------------|----|--|-----|
| FOREWORD | | | |
| INTRODUCTION TO POETRY | 3. | How would you describe the rhythm of this poem? | (1) |
| THE RENAISSANCE | | | |
| THE | 4. | What is the effect of the repetition of the words 'I say' in each stanza? | (3) |
| THE VICTORIANS | | | |
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| POST- MODERNISM | 5. | Explain how Angelou makes use of the image of a feminine body in such a way that subverts the reader's expectations. | (2) |
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| ACKNOV ME | | | |

6. Consider the following image, and use it as a means of discussing Angelou's engagement with body issues and contemporary ideas of beauty. (4)



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