

Phenomenal Woman

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.
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
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

I walk into a room
Just as cool as you please,
And to a man,
The fellows stand or
Fall down on their knees.
Then they swarm around me,
A hive of honey bees.
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.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Men themselves have wondered
What they see in me.
They try so much
But they can't touch
My inner mystery.
When I try to show them,
They say they still can't see.
I say,
It's in the arch of my back,
The sun of my smile,
The ride of my breasts,
The grace of my style.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Now you understand
Just why my head's not bowed.
I don't shout or jump about
Or have to talk real loud.
When you see me passing,
It ought to make you proud.
I say,
It's in the click of my heels,
The bend of my hair,
The palm of my hand,
The need for my care.
'Cause I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

—*Maya Angelou*

Directions:

Cut this paper along the line and glue the poem into your composition book. Then read, annotate, and complete some sketchnotes on the poem. Re-Read the poem "Phenomenal Woman" and apply it to the novel TEWWG. Answer these questions on the following page of your composition book.

1. Look up the definition for the words "phenomenon" and "phenomenal." How do these definitions fit into the connotations presented in the poem?
2. The refrain of this poem presents a chiasmus: "I'm a woman/phenomenally./ Phenomenal woman,/That's me." Why does Angelou reverse the word order? How does it change the idea conveyed in each statement?
3. How does the theme of the poem relate to Janie's relationships in TEWWG?
4. Compare Janie to the speaker of the poem. In what ways is Janie a "Phenomenal Woman"?