

Differentiated Routine for Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise"

Grade Level: 15–17 (juvenile correctional facility)

Length: 40–45 minutes

Objective: Students will analyze the theme of resilience and voice in "*Still I Rise*", using structured talk to build comprehension and personal connection.

🌟 Overview of Strategies and Routines

"One Mic": A discussion agreement that reinforces turn-taking and respect. Only one person speaks at a time, and the class listens actively. This prevents interruptions and encourages thoughtful responses. A physical object (like a talking stick or ball) can signal who holds the "mic."

"Look and Listen": A routine where students are directed to observe closely and listen attentively during key instructional moments. For example, during a read-aloud or peer share, students are prompted to notice one powerful line or tone change. Teachers can guide reflection with simple prompts like, "What stood out to you and why?"

CARR Check: A formative reflection tool teachers use mid-lesson or post-lesson to adjust instruction. CARR stands for Comprehension, Accuracy, Rigor, and Relevance. For instance, if students are off-task, the teacher might evaluate whether the content is too hard (comprehension), too easy (rigor), or not connected to their lives (relevance).

SHOp: Short for Support and Help or Options. When differentiating, the teacher can either provide more *support* (sentence stems, modeling) or more *options* (choice in task, format of response) depending on the needs of the student.

Discussion Norms: Co-created or teacher-introduced ground rules for student talk. These can include "One mic," "Speak from the text," "Respect each other's ideas," and "Say why you agree or disagree." Posting these norms visually helps manage off-task talk and supports accountability.

🕒 Lesson Structure (ALL-ED-aligned)

Time	Activity	Purpose	Strategy/Routine
5 min	Do Now Warm-Up	Activates background knowledge	Quick write, then Pair-Share
10 min	Read Aloud + Guided Annotations	Builds fluency & comprehension	Look & Listen + Think-Turn-Talk
10 min	Circle Talk	Builds discussion skills and voice	"One Mic" + Discussion Norms
15 min	Team Challenge: Stand & Deliver	Deepens analysis & engagement	SHOp: Options for group work
5 min	Exit Slip / CARR Check	Reflection and assessment	Silent write or oral share

Step-by-Step Implementation

1. Do Now Warm-Up (5 min)

Prompt: *"What does it mean to rise above something? Describe a time someone got back up after being knocked down."*

- 2 min silent write
- 3 min Pair-Share, then whole group call-outs

This opens with relevance and allows even reluctant students to contribute. Pair-Share lets them rehearse ideas before speaking publicly.

2. Read Aloud + Guided Annotation (10 min)

You read the poem aloud expressively. Pause after every 2-3 stanzas. Students follow along, underlining powerful phrases.

- Prompt questions like: *"What do you notice about her tone here?"* or *"What might she mean by 'I rise'?"*
- Use Think-Turn-Talk after each question to let students discuss before whole-group feedback.

"Look and Listen" routines create purpose for listening, and the structured talk prevents off-task chatting.

3. Circle Talk (10 min)

Students form a circle or semi-circle.

- Review norms: "One mic," "Speak from text," "Respect difference"
- Use sentence stems:
 - "A line that stood out to me was..."
 - "This reminds me of..."
 - "I think Angelou is saying..."

Use a physical object for turn-taking. This builds student voice, reinforces norms, and creates an inclusive dialogue space.

4. Team Challenge: Stand & Deliver (15 min)

Students form 2–3 groups. Each chooses a prompt:

- What's the most powerful line in the poem and why?
- How does Angelou use repetition?
- How might this poem connect to your own mindset?

Groups prepare responses (write, draw, or perform). Then they share out. This routine leverages SHOp by allowing multiple formats and roles.

5. Exit Slip / CARR Check (5 min)

Prompt: *"How did Angelou show strength in her writing?"* or *"How did talking today help you understand the poem?"*

- Students write a 2-sentence reflection or share aloud.

This helps you quickly assess learning and relevance while students reflect on participation.

Optional Supports:

- Visual Norm Poster (One Mic, Use Text, Say Why)
- Sentence Stem Handouts
- Timer for group work
- Participation points tracker (privilege rewards, if used)

This 45-minute differentiated lesson maximizes student voice, minimizes disruptive talk, and builds personal connection to literature. It relies on classroom-tested routines that are flexible, repeatable, and engaging—ideal for your unique teaching context.