**Brief Chapter-by-Chapter Analysis of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings***

Chapter One:

Setting: Stamps, Arkansas

Major Event: After the divorce of their parents, Maya and Bailey are sent from California to Arkansas as

if parcel post. They Adjust to new way-of-life /routine.

Chapter Two:

Setting: Stamps, Arkansas

Major Event: Willie introduced and sympathized with as a cripple, which he tries to hide from visitors

who come to the store. Maya falls in love with reading

Chapter Three:

Setting: Stamps, Arkansas

Major Event: ‘Whites’ are looking for vengeance, because they think a black person has messed with a

white woman, Willie is hidden in a vegetable bin.

Chapter Four:

Setting: Stamps, Arkansas

Major Event: Bailey insults Maya’s bullies, who tease her about being ugly in school. Bailey becomes the

most important person in her life

Chapter Five:

Setting: Stamps, Arkansas:

Major Event: Maya sees poor white trash girls disrespecting Momma. Maya realizes Momma has won the

battle against them, though. She realizes that Momma radiates beauty as a result of this misfortunate experience.

Chapter Six:

Setting: Stamps, Arkansas

Major Event: Reverend Thomas stays with them, has come to visit. He is presented as a very greedy eater.

Chapter Seven:

Setting: Stamps, Arkansas

Major Event: Momma doesn’t speak harshly of ‘Whites’ under any circumstance, even though when she

testifies the calls her “Mrs”.

Chapter Eight:

Setting: Stamps, Arkansas

Major Event: Maya and Bailey are told on Christmas to go outside, and think they are to be punished.

They are given gifts from their parents instead, then think they don’t love them. Maya destroys the doll

given to her by her mother; a symbol that communicates she still thinks her parents are dead.

Chapter Nine:

Setting: Stamps, Arkansas and Saint Louis

Major Event: Big Bailey, their father and a stranger to Maya, comes to visit. They think he is taking them

to California, but are deceived when he takes them to Saint Louis to see Vivian, their mother.

Chapter 10:

Setting: St. Louis

Major Event: Adjusting to all the organized crime of the Baxter family. Maya learns that her real name is

Marguerite from her uncle.

Chapter 11:

Setting: St. Louis

Major Event: Maya is sexually molested by Mr. Freeman multiple times, but enjoys the physical contact

without understanding its intentions. Maya and Bailey grow apart. She reads lots of books.

Chapter 12:

Setting: St. Louis

Major Event: Maya is raped and threatened by Mr. Freeman who tells her that if she speaks out, he will

kill Bailey.

Chapter 13:

Setting: St. Louis

Major Event: Maya names Mr. Freeman as the rapist, and after the trial, is beaten to death by her

uncle. Maya thinks she is an evil person because she lied in court, and decides not to speak at all.

Chapter 14:

Setting: Stamps, Arkansas

Major Event: They return to Stamps and Maya is relieved. Bailey fantasizes about city life to his friends

and exaggerates city excitements.

Chapter 15:

Setting: Stamps, Arkansas

Major Event: Mrs. Flowers gets Maya to speak by memorizing and reciting a poem, and takes her under

her wing. Maya is beaten by Momma for saying “By the way”.

Chapter 16:

Setting: Stamps, Arkansas

Major Event: Maya begins working for Mrs. Cullinan, but cannot stand being called Mary. Maya breaks

Mrs. Cullinan’s china.

Chapter 17:

Setting: Stamps, Arkansas

Major Event: Bailey stays out to watch a movie starring an actress that resembles their mother. He thinks

that having seen the film is well worth the whipping it would cause him to watch twice.

Chapter 18:

Setting: Stamps, Arkansas

Major Event: Annual revival religious meeting occurs. Maya notes that the preacher is advocating for all

churches, not just his own.

Chapter 19:

Setting: Stamps, Arkansas

Major Event: People crowd into Momma’s store to hear the boxing match. Joe Louis represents all black

people, and they rejoice when he has won.

Chapter 20:

Setting: Stamps, Arkansas

Major Event: Maya receives a Valentine from Tommy and the annual Summer Fish Fry comes around.

Maya is upset by the token of ‘love’ because of her bad experiences before. She meets her first true female

friend, Louise, and rips up the Valentine card.

Chapter 21:

Setting: Stamps, Arkansas

Major Event: Bailey becomes sexually active, and loses his virginity to Joyce. Joyce runs away with

another man and leaves Bailey heartbroken.

Chapter 22:

Setting: Stamps, Arkansas

Major Event: Maya attends Florida’s funeral. She faces the finality of death for the first time. Mr. Taylor

dreamt about Mrs. Florida wanting children.

Chapter 23:

Setting: Stamps, Arkansas

Major Event: Maya graduates from the Eighth grade, but Mr. Donleavy mars the ceremony with his racist

speech.

Chapter 24:

Setting: Stamps, Arkansas

Major Event: Maya’s toothache provokes a visit to the dentist. Dr. Lincoln refuses to treat Maya as she is

black.

Chapter 25:

Setting: Stamps, Arkansas

Major Event: Bailey sees the corpse of a black man and is shocked at the pleasure it gives the white

man. Momma was going to arrange for them to go to California by train

Chapter 26:

Setting: Los Angeles to San Francisco

Major Event: The children begin to realize their mother’s imperfections. Maya recalls Vivian’s gambling

tendencies.

Chapter 27:

Setting: San Francisco

Major Event: Maya notes all the changes that occur due to WWII, and how no one talks about the

Japanese displacement and how black people have moved in to places where the Japanese once where and

profited from their misfortunes.

Chapter 28:

Setting: San Francisco

Major Event: Maya feels at home, and even is promoted a grade and put into a white school. She soon

receives a scholarship to the California Labor School, where she studied drama and dance. She became

very influenced by her teacher, Ms. Kirwin who treated her no differently to other white people

Chapter 29:

Setting: San Francisco

Major Event: Maya looks up to Daddy Clidell, even though he is a conman. She rationalizes that ethics

depend on necessity. She sees Daddy Clidell as a true father figure

Chapter 30:

Setting: San Francisco (partly Mexico)

Major Event: Big Bailey invites Maya to go to Mexico, but ends up too drunk to drive back. Maya drives

50 miles with only minor accidents, but is not appreciated for this achievement. Big Bailey cheats on his

girlfriend

Chapter 31:

Setting: Southern California somewhere

Major Event: Maya and Dolores get in a fight, and Maya is stabbed with scissors. She feels too hurt and

guilty to tell her mother, and so she runs away instead.

Chapter 32:

Setting: San Francisco (Junkyard)

Major Event: Maya goes to spend the night in a car in a junkyard. She awakens to a group of adolescents,

but they accept her into their group, with their rules. She feels a sense of equality in junkyard

society, Maya stays for a month before calling Vivian to go back to San Francisco.

Chapter 33:

Setting: San Francisco

Major Event: Bailey begins dating a white prostitute, and modeling himself after his mothers’ male

suitors. Vivian and Bailey have a brief falling out. Bailey moves out and his mother finds him a job at the

US army in the South Pacific

Chapter 34:

Setting: San Francisco

Major Event: Maya becomes the first black streetcar worker in San Francisco, after taking a semester off

from school. She begins to question her sexuality.

Chapter 35:

Setting: San Francisco

Major Event: Maya, in her worry of being a lesbian, ends up pregnant.

Chapter 36:

Setting: San Francisco

Major Event: Maya admits to Vivian that she is pregnant after graduation. She has a son soon after.