

= Even the Stars Look Lonesome =

Even the Stars Look Lonesome (1997) is African @-@ American writer and poet Maya Angelou 's second book of essays , published during the long period between her fifth and sixth autobiographies , All God 's Children Need Traveling Shoes (1986) and A Song Flung Up to Heaven (2002) . Stars , like her first book of essays , Wouldn 't Take Nothing for My Journey Now (1993) , has been called one of Angelou 's " wisdom books " . By the time it was published , Angelou was well @-@ respected and popular as a writer and poet . She discusses a wide range of topics in the book 's twenty short personal essays , including Africa , aging and the young 's misconceptions of it , sex and sensuality , self @-@ reflection , independence , and violence . Most of the essays are autobiographical and had previously appeared in other publications . One essay defends Angelou 's support of Supreme Court justice Clarence Thomas , and another one centers on her friend Oprah Winfrey .

Stars was an immediate bestseller , prompting Random House to increase their first printing of 350 @, @ 000 copies to 375 @, @ 000 , even before Angelou began her national book tour to promote it . Like her previous works , the book received generally positive reviews . An audio book , read by the author , was recorded in 2001 .

= = Background = =

Even the Stars Look Lonesome is Maya Angelou 's second book of essays . Stars , together with her first book of essays Wouldn 't Take Nothing for My Journey Now (1993) , is one of the volumes writer Hilton Als called Angelou 's " wisdom books " and " homilies strung together with autobiographical texts " , published during the long period between her fifth and sixth autobiographies , All God 's Children Need Traveling Shoes (1986) and A Song Flung Up to Heaven (2002) . She had published several volumes of poetry , including Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water ' fore I Diiie (1971) , which was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize . She had recited her poem On the Pulse of Morning at the inauguration of President Bill Clinton in 1993 , making her the first poet to make an inaugural recitation since Robert Frost at John F. Kennedy 's inauguration in 1961 . In 1997 , when Stars was published , The Heart of a Woman (1981) , Angelou 's fourth installment of her series of autobiographies , was chosen as an Oprah 's Book Club selection , helping it become a bestseller and increasing its total printing to over one million copies , 16 years after its publication . Also in 1997 , Angelou was in the middle of accomplishing her long @-@ standing goal : becoming the first African @-@ American woman to direct a major motion picture , Down in the Delta .

By the time Stars was published , Angelou had become recognized and highly respected as a spokesperson for Blacks and women . She was , as scholar Joanne Braxton has stated , " without a doubt ... America 's most visible black woman autobiographer " . She had also become , as reviewer Richard Long stated , " a major autobiographical voice of the time " . Angelou was one of the first African @-@ American female writers to publicly discuss her personal life , and one of the first to use herself as a central character in her books . Writer Julian Mayfield , who called her first autobiography I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings " a work of art that eludes description " , stated that Angelou 's series set a precedent not only for other Black women writers , but for the genre of autobiography as a whole .

= = Overview = =

Even the Stars Look Lonesome is a collection 20 short personal essays , most of which are autobiographical . All but one essay , " Those Who Really Know , Teach " , previously appeared in other publications . The book is dedicated to " the children who will come to maturity in the twenty @-@ first century " and lists more than 35 of them she knew , charging them to " make this a perfect world " .

Angelou discusses a wide range of topics in Stars , including Africa , aging and the young 's

misconceptions of it , sex and sensuality , self @-@ reflection , independence , and violence . She explores her early career as a nightclub performer . She writes about African art and " the importance of understanding both the historical truth of the African American experience and the art that truth inspired " . She salutes Black women , calling them " precious jewels all " , and profiles her friend Oprah Winfrey , who she compares to " the desperate traveler who teaches us the most profound lesson and affords us the most exquisite skills " . Angelou defends her controversial support of Clarence Thomas as a Supreme Court justice in one of her essays . In her final essay in the book , Angelou uses the story of the prodigal son to emphasize the value of solitude : " In the silence we listen to ourselves . Then we ask questions of ourselves . We describe ourselves to ourselves , and we may even hear the voice of God . "

= = Publication history and reviews = =

Even the *Stars Look Lonesome* was an immediate bestseller , prompting Random House to increase their first printing of 350 @,@ 000 copies to 375 @,@ 000 , even before Angelou began her national book tour to promote it . An audio book , read by the author , was also published in 2001 .

Like Angelou 's previous book of essays , *Wouldn 't Take Nothing for My Journey Now* , this book received mostly positive reviews . Ann Burns of *Library Journal* recommended the book and called its first essay , about the end of Angelou 's marriage to Paul du Feu , " a winner " . Burns also stated : " Her take on aging is downright amusing ; her tribute to sensuality , enlightening ; and her salute to black women , a treasure " . Megan Harlan of *Entertainment Weekly* noted Angelou 's " ease with both highbrow and middlebrow culture " , as evidenced in her discussion of poetry and of Winfrey , and praised how Angelou " balances lofty language with keenly self @-@ aware wit " , but found the first essay incomplete . The reviewers writing for *Publishers Weekly* found *Stars* " narrower in scope " than *Journey* , but thought that her racial pride in *Stars* stronger and more compelling . They also stated , " ... All of her opinions are deeply rooted and most are conveyed with a combination of humility , personal intelligence and wit " .