

# Unit Eleven: Peace and Conflict

## Lesson 1

### Situations of Conflict

A. Look at the pictures. What do they show?



B. Cruelties of conflict affect people in different ways. As it has economic impacts, it has psychological, sociological, or geographical impacts too. Read here two poems on the cruelties of conflict and do the activities that follow.

#### Poem 1

Alone by Maya Angelou

[Maya Angelou, an American poet, songwriter, playwright, film director and autobiographer was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on 4 April, 1928. She spent much of her childhood in Stamps, Arkansas, with her paternal grandmother. When she was eight, she became a victim of abuse by someone close to her mother. The experience left her traumatised, and for several years, she could not speak. In 1940, Angelou moved to San Francisco, and then to New York, where she began her literary career.

Maya Angelou had a remarkable range of interests and careers. She was a dancer, a singer and an editor. In addition, she also acted on stage and in the film. But writing was what she enjoyed most. She was a popular poet praised for the way she incorporated social and political themes in her poems without compromising their poetic and stylistic qualities. She wrote her poems in a language that is known as the Black vernacular, a language the Black People in America use in their everyday life. Her poems often deal with serious matters but they also use humour and give out hope. Angelou's experience of racial discrimination in her childhood and her involvement in civil right movement in the 1960s made her a committed campaigner for human rights, social justice and peace. She died on 28 May, 2014 at the age of 86.

Here is a poem Angelou wrote about human relationship, more particularly, togetherness, without which our lives become meaningless, no matter how wealthy or well-connected we are. Read the poem and try to find out why she stressed the words 'alone' and 'nobody'. You will see that she has used these words ironically to bring home the message that no one should be alone, that human society depends on healthy relationships among its members.]

Lying, thinking

Last night

How to find my soul a home

Where water is not thirsty

And bread loaf is not stone

I came up with one thing

And I don't believe I'm wrong

That nobody,

But nobody

Can make it out! here alone. [1to make out: to deal with a situation; make progress]

Alone, all alone

Nobody, but nobody

Can make it out here alone.



There are some millionaires  
 With money they can't use  
 Their wives run round like banshees<sup>2</sup>  
 Their children sing the blues<sup>3</sup>  
 They've got expensive doctors  
 To cure their hearts of stone<sup>4</sup>.  
 But nobody  
 No, nobody

Can make it out here alone.  
 Alone, all alone  
 Nobody, but nobody  
 Can make it out here alone.

Now if you listen closely  
 I'll tell you what I know  
 Storm clouds are gathering  
 The wind is gonna<sup>5</sup> blow  
 The race of man is suffering  
 And I can hear the moan,  
 'Cause nobody,  
 But nobody  
 Can make it out here alone.

Alone, all alone  
 Nobody, but nobody  
 Can make it out here alone.

[<sup>2</sup>banshee: In Irish legend, a female spirit who whose wails or shrieks herald the death of a family member]

[<sup>3</sup>sing the blues: feeling depressed or discouraged]

[<sup>4</sup>to have a heart of stone: to be unkind, uncaring or cruel]

[<sup>5</sup>gonna: informal use, means 'going to']

**C. Now briefly answer the following questions.**

- a. What does the word 'here' in line 10 mean?
- b. The poet believes that 'nobody can make it out here alone.' Why does she say she believes she is not wrong?
- c. What does the poet mean when she says 'The race of man is suffering'? Suffering from what?
- d. Expensive doctors, according to the poet, cannot cure hearts of stone. Why?
- e. Is the poem one of hope or despair?

**D. Find a synonym each of 'moan', 'cure' and 'expensive' and make sentences with them.****E. What type of conflict do you find in this poem? Justify your statement.****F. Read the first stanza of another poem on conflict and write a paragraph (about 100 words) on how war 'darkens' the lands where it rages.****From 'September 1, 1939' by W. H. Auden**

I sit on one of the dives  
 On Fifty-second Street  
 Uncertain and afraid  
 As the clever hopes expire.  
 Of a low dishonest decade:  
 Waves of anger and fear  
 Circulate over the bright  
 And darkened lands of the earth,  
 Obsessing our private lives;  
 The unmentionable odour of death  
 Offends the September night.

