

# An Analysis of the Lexical and Contextual Meaning of the Poem Phenomenal Woman by Maya Angelou

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**Keywords:**

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**Abstract:** Semantics is the study of meaning. So many kinds of meaning, among other lexical and contextual meanings. The lexical meaning is the meaning according to the dictionary or a direct specific of a word, and the contextual meaning is the meaning according to the context. The objectives of the research are to explain the lexical and contextual meaning of words in the lines of the poem Phenomenal Woman by Maya Angelou. This research used a descriptive qualitative because the researcher would analyze and interpret the research object of the lines in the poem Phenomenal Woman by Maya Angelou. The first step in obtaining the data is by collecting the source of the data from the Book. The next step was conducted, collecting the data and analyzing it with the table, and concluding. The researcher showed that the meaning of the term used in lines of the poem Phenomenal Woman by Maya Angelou from the lexicon or general dictionary was fairly different from the meaning in the context. Contextual meaning is the term that explained the actual meaning according to the situation in which they were used. In this discussion, interesting events are unique to learn to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpreting.

**Kata Kunci:**

Makna Lexical;

Makna Kontekstual;

Puisi;

Wanita Phenomenal.

**Abstrak:** Semantik adalah studi tentang makna. Begitu banyak jenis makna, di antara makna leksikal dan kontekstual lainnya. Makna leksikal adalah makna menurut kamus atau spesifik langsung dari suatu kata, dan makna kontekstual adalah makna sesuai dengan konteksnya. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menjelaskan makna leksikal dan kontekstual dari kata-kata dalam baris puisi Fenomenal Woman karya Maya Angelou. Penelitian ini menggunakan deskriptif kualitatif karena peneliti akan menganalisis dan menginterpretasikan objek penelitian dari baris-baris dalam puisi Fenomenal Woman karya Maya Angelou. Langkah pertama dalam memperoleh data adalah dengan mengumpulkan sumber data dari Buku. Langkah selanjutnya dilakukan, mengumpulkan data dan menganalisisnya dengan tabel, dan menyimpulkan. Peneliti menunjukkan bahwa makna istilah yang digunakan dalam baris puisi Fenomenal Woman oleh Maya Angelou dari leksikon atau kamus umum cukup berbeda dengan makna dalam konteksnya. Makna kontekstual adalah istilah yang menjelaskan makna sebenarnya sesuai dengan situasi di mana mereka digunakan. Dalam diskusi ini, peristiwa menarik.

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## A. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Language is never separated from human life. Language is a system of sound signs that members of particular social groups have decided to use for interaction, communication, and self-identification (Rahmawati & Nurhamidah, 2018). As a system, one of its components is

semantics. One of the key subfields of linguistics is semantics, which examines how words, sentences, and symbols are understood (Sucihati, 2021).

Semantic is considered an aspect of meaning in language. According to Riemer, (2010), the study of meaning is called semantics. Semantics is the study of the organization and expression of meaning in language. One sort of meaning studied in semantics is lexical and contextual meaning.

The definition of lexical meaning is the meaning of lexemes with the meaning of the sentences in which they occur. It happens as a result of lexical meaning's (external meaning's) focus on the connection between words and meanings (Yulia Syahfitri, 2021). Lexical meaning is the meaning of the word that will be free from its context and usage (Pateda, 2001). Thus, the word's lexical meaning is every definition in the dictionary. While contextual means of a lexeme or authentic phrase or in keeping with the context. Meaning can change according to its users. The context in semantics can be influenced by the structure of words or sentences and their constituents (Khasanah & Nursalim, 2020)

Meaning is everywhere, for example, in literary works, scientific works, songs, etc. With the many types of meanings proposed by linguists, the authors are interested in analyzing the lexical meanings and contextual meanings of individualized organizations in a poem. Knowing the lexical and contextual meaning of the individualized organization customized structure in the poem will make it easier to understand the overall meaning of the poem (Hasanah & Habibullah, 2020). Understanding the intended individualized structure and the entire text will be clear and provide the necessary information. These lexical and contextual meanings are used to understand the meaning of the text in depth and correctly. Jabar & Mansor, (2021) also claims that understanding the meaning of the word can also remain achieved using the contextual clue found in a text. Educators should also emphasize the contextual feature in understanding the meaning of vocabulary.

There are a number of studies that have been conducted in the areas of lexical and contextual meaning of a poem (Hasanah & Habibullah, 2020; Safaah et al., 2020; Sucihati, 2021; Yulia Syahfitri, 2021). For example, (Hasanah & Habibullah, 2020) who analyze one word to explain the content of the term in "Raef's Song" lyrics, there are many terms that have different meanings lexically and contextually. The research found that 65 words existed in the song that contains contextual meaning such as miracle, strong, tear, darkness, blinding, touch, strength, eyes, weakness, etc. The context of that tune with regards to the circumstance, and the context of the speaker's state of mind which is seen from the video cut.

From the previous studies above, the researcher obtained the difference which is presented in this study. This study takes a poem entitled "Phenomenal Woman" written by Maya Angelou which applied lexical and contextual meanings as the object of the study. Moreover, this poem as the object of study is unique in concerning others and has at any point been examined in past exploration.

In this study, a poem turns into an object of the review. A poem is one of the scholarly works which once in a while applies significance to it. According to Duki, (2017); Rosmaidar & Wijayanti, (2012) poem is any sort of verbal or composed language that is organized musically to recount a story, or express any sort of feeling, thought, or heart condition. The actual sonnet is organized in lines and the sonnet is likewise portrayed in different sorts of spoken and composed structures, styles, designs, and different sorts of subjects. Anindita et al., (2017) stated that a poem is a roundabout articulation, implying that it portrays something utilizing

demonstrative significance. Then indirect expression is caused by displacing meaning, distorting meaning, and creating meaning.

From the argument above, it is clear that the analysis of meaning is necessary for the study of poems. This is understandable because meaning is the purpose of the poem. A poem as one of the scholarly assortments can be contemplated from different viewpoints, as stated by Pradopo, (2009), "First, a poem can study its structure and elements because a poem is a structure composed of various elements and facilities satisfaction. Second, a poem can be studied based on the types considering there are many types of poems. Third, a poem can be studied from the historical element of remembering throughout its history, from time to time poem is always written and read by a human." Moreover, the discussion of a poem is very important.

Numerous popular poems are from one side of the planet to the other. But Maya Angelou is one of the lady essayists who utilize the women's activist methodology in her work and her verse is an excruciating course of reviewing and recollecting a previous that is broken into parts. Maya Angelou is a person of color residing in America where Whites are the larger part of the public eye there. Maya Angelou is a commended writer, memoirist, writer, instructor, screenwriter, maker, entertainer, vocalist, student of history, movie producer, and social liberties, extremist. She encountered the mercilessness of racial separation however she likewise retained the unfaltering confidence and upsides of the customary African-American family, local area, and culture (Jayageetha & Rani, 2018).

Based on the description above, the researcher chooses Maya Angelou's works to be analyzed. The reason for choosing this Maya Angelou's poem is because this poem is about woman's discrimination toward the black woman in her era and also the main reason why this poem has lexical meaning and contextual meaning is to know the meaning of the poem itself (Permatasari, 2016).

In this research, the researcher is focusing on the lexical and contextual meaning of Maya Angelou's poem entitled Phenomenal Woman (1978). The researcher is interested in analyzing Maya Angelou's poems expressing struggles in her life. Due to the reason above, this research is very significant and interesting to be conducted.

## **B. METHOD**

This research used the descriptive qualitative method. The researcher believed that the descriptive qualitative method was appropriate for this research. Subjective strategies exhibit an alternate way to deal with insightful requests than techniques for quantitative exploration. According to Creswell & Creswell, (2018) qualitative research is an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Qualitative methods rely on text and image data, have unique steps in data analysis, and draw on diverse designs. The justification behind picking this technique is following the focal point of this review, which is to break down texts, as the poem. It means to depict the lexical and contextual meaning of the poem Phenomenal Woman by Maya Angelou.

The main data source in this research is Maya Angelou's poem taken from her book entitled "The complete collected poems of Maya Angelou were published in 1994". In this research, the researcher chose one of the most famous poems as a data source namely Phenomenal Woman (1978) the poem written by Maya Angelou based on her life experience became interesting to analyze. The main instrument of data in this research is a document including words, phrases, and sentences in Maya Angelou's poem. The research collects, compiles, and analyzed the data individually. According to (Creswell, 2018), there are several characteristics of qualitative

research, including the researcher as a key instrument: qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants.

In the analysing data, three phases data analysis consisting of Data Reduction, Data Displays, and Conclusion Drawing is adopted. Finally, the result of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing process was elaborated in the form of words, phrases, and sentences through a descriptive qualitative. The qualitative descriptive method will be used to present analysis along with citations of the sources and a part of analysis interpretation.

**C. FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

This section discusses finding from the study site that have been supported with related review on analyzing poems. The result of analyzing the lexical and contextual meaning of the poem “Phenomenal Woman” can be seen in the table below.

**1. Lexical Meaning of Poem “Phenomenal Woman” by Maya Angelou**

**Table 1.** Contextual meaning of Poem “Phenomenal Woman”

<b>Line</b>	<b>Stanza</b>	<b>Part of Speech</b>	<b>Lexical Meaning</b>
1	Pretty women wonder where my <b>secret</b> lies.	Adjective	Kept from the knowledge or view of others, quiet and unknown
2	I’m not cute or built to suit a <b>fashion</b> model’s size	Noun	The well-known style of garments, hair, and so on at a specific time and a famous approach to acting, or following through with something
6	It’s in the <b>reach</b> of my arms,	Verb	Arrive at a place, achieve an aim
7	The <b>span</b> of my hips,	Noun	The time that something lasts or is able to continue
8	The <b>stride</b> of my step,	Verb	Significant progress in walking with long steps
9	The <b>curl</b> of my lips.	Noun	Something that forms a curved or round shape, especially a small bunch of hair
15	Just as <b>cool</b> as you please,	Adjective	Not hot or cold, fairly cold, calm, not excited
20	A <b>hive</b> of honey bees.	Noun	Box for bees to live in
22	It’s the <b>fire</b> in my eyes,	Noun	Burning that produces light and heat
23	And the <b>flash</b> of my teeth,	Noun	A sudden bright burst of light
24	The <b>swing</b> in my waist,	Verb	Moving backward or forward while hanging from a fixed point
25	And the <b>joy</b> in my feet.	Noun	Great happiness
28	<b>Phenomenal</b> woman,	Adjective	Very great or impressive
33	But they can’t <b>touch</b>	Verb	Put your hands or fingers onto somebody or something
34	My <b>inner mystery</b> .	Adjective and Noun	Inside, near to the middle, and something that cannot be understood or explained
38	It’s in the <b>arch</b> of my back,	Noun	The curved structure
39	The <b>sun</b> of my smile,	Noun	Star round which the earth moves and which gives it heat and light
40	The <b>ride</b> of my breasts,	Verb	Exactly; direct all the way, completely

41	The <b>grace</b> of my style.	Noun	Simple beauty, especially in the movement
53	It's in the <b>click</b> of my heels,	Verb	Make a short sharp sound
54	The <b>bend</b> of my hair,	Verb	Make something that was straight into a curved shape
55	The <b>palm</b> of my hand,	Noun	An inner surface of the hand
56	The <b>need</b> for my care.	Noun	A situation when something is necessary or must be done

From the table 01 above, it can be seen a possible explanation lexically meaning of '**Fire**' in "It's the **fire** of my eyes," in line 22 is (Bull, 2008) the word "**fire**" is a noun that burning that produces light and heat, burning that causes destruction, a pile of burning fuel for heating, cooking, etc, apparatus for heating a room, and shots from guns.

The **fire** above which has numerous different options in implications since they are acquired through lexical importance which comprises word reference meaning. When the word '**fire**' stands alone, it will have meanings such as heat and light coming from something that burns, burning that produces destruction, and apparatus for heating a room. Those implications are the importance of the genuine word itself. Individuals who will mean the words lexically will in any case convey those implications since words could have a few implications in lexical importance when they remain solitary with practically no unique situation. For instance: near the place where the **fire** appeared several people (**Fire** means burning that produces light and heat), and **fire** hazards are common in large cities (**fire** means something burning that causes destruction). This finding agrees with Suprihatin's (2021) findings which showed that the word **fire** means fire produces flames and heat while consuming a material such as coal or wood.

Furthermore, lexically, the word **secret** in "Pretty women wonder where my **secret** lies" is in line 1. The word **secret** is an adjective. The meaning of **secret** based on the dictionary is kept from the knowledge or view of others, quiet and unknown. This word confirms that **secret** is associated with Suprihatin (2021) which showed that the word **secret** means something that is known by only a few people. The next data is **fashion** in "I'm not cute or built to suit a **fashion** model's size" in line 2. The word **fashion** is a noun. The meaning of **fashion** is the famous style of garments, hair, and so forth at a specific time and a well-known approach to acting or following through with something. This result matches those observed in earlier studies by Ahmad et al, (2022), that the word **fashion** is a model, yet she can be sure, extreme, and fearless.

In addition, The word **span** in "The **span** of my lips" in line 7. The word **span** is a noun. The meaning of **span** is the time that something lasts or is able to continue. The data is a **stride** in "The **stride** of my step" in line 8. The word **stride** is a verb. The meaning of **stride** is significant progress of walking with long steps. The last data in the first stanza is **curl** in "The **curl** of my lips" in line 9. The word **curl** is a noun. The meaning **curl** is something that forms a curved or round shape, especially a small bunch of hair. This finding agrees with Prajnya (2012) who showed that the word **span** is utilized to suggest the speaker's somewhat wide hips. The word stride is a long step. And the word **curl** is to form into coils or ringlets.

The next lines conducted four data that contain specific meanings. They are; **flash**, **swing**, and **joy**. The word is **flash** in "And the **flash** of my teeth" in line 23. The word **flash** is a noun. Lexically means a sudden bright burst of light. The third word is a **swing** in "The **swing** in my waist" in line 24. The word **swing** is a verb. Lexically means moving backward or forwards while hanging from a fixed point. The last word is **joy** in "And the **Joy** in my feet" in line 25. The word **joy** is a noun. Lexically means great happiness. This finding also agrees with Hendy (2010) who

showed that the words **flash** meant the magnificence lies in a grin since somebody's white teeth are as though it is streak when somebody is grinning. The **swing** meant certainty and looks pretty swings abdomen. And the word **joy** meant an optimistic woman; will always be happy.

The next word is the **sun** in "The **sun** of my smile," in line 39. The word **sun** is a noun. Lexically means star round where the earth moves and gives it heat and light. The fifth word is a **ride** in "The **ride** of my breasts," in line 40. The word **ride** is a verb. Lexically means exactly; directly all the way, completely. The last word is **glace** in "The **grace** of my style." In line 41. The word **grace** is a noun. Lexically means simple beauty, especially in movement. This word confirms that the **sun** is associated with Hendy (2021) who showed that the word **sun** represents satisfaction, confidence, or a positive way. The word ride is to travel in or on a conveyance. The **grace** of style that looks rich, depicts certainty.

**2. Contextual Meaning of poem "Phenomenal Woman" by Maya Angelou**

**Table 2.** Contextual meaning of Poem "Phenomenal Woman"

Line	Stanza	Part of Speech	Contextual Meaning
1	Pretty women wonder where my <b>Secret</b> lies.	Adjective	Not of society's typical ideal of beauty that conventionally attractive women may wonder about or struggle to understand
2	I'm not cute or built to suit a <b>fashion</b> model's size	Noun	Doesn't look like the models glorified by the fashion industry
7	The <b>span</b> of my hips,	Noun	Ignoring her courage
8	The <b>stride</b> of my step,	Verb	The movement/step of parts of a woman's body
9	The <b>curl</b> of my lips.	Noun	Angled/dry
22	It's the <b>fire</b> in my eyes,	Noun	Passionate and powerful
23	And the <b>flash</b> of my teeth,	Noun	Beauty and beautiful
24	The <b>swing</b> in my waist,	Verb	Confident and looks pretty
25	And the <b>joy</b> in my feet.	Noun	Optimistic and be happy
28	<b>Phenomenal</b> woman,	Adjective	Extraordinary and impressive
34	My <b>inner mystery</b> .	Adjective and Noun	The power comes from the inside and it is not just that can be contacted or seen
38	It's in the <b>arch</b> of my back,	Noun	Upright posture and confidence
39	The <b>sun</b> of my smile,	Noun	Happiness, optimism, energy as well as self-sufficiency
40	The <b>ride</b> of my breasts,	Verb	Huge in size
41	The <b>grace</b> of my style.	Noun	Rich with the style it depicts certainty
53	It's in the <b>click</b> of my heels,	Verb	The shortness and sharpness of her heels sound
54	The <b>bend</b> of my hair,	Verb	Make women seem delicate and superficial
55	The <b>palm</b> of my hand,	Noun	Grips of hand
56	The <b>need</b> for my care.	Noun	The necessity of something important

Table 02 shows that contextually the meaning of '**Fire**' in "It's the **fire** of my eyes," in line 22 based on this context is not preferred to something burning that produces light and heat in Maya

Angelou's eyes but it means she is a passionate and powerful woman. The researcher sets those meaning because the word 'my' refers to Maya Angelou and based on KBBI, the word '**fire**' can mean spirit. For the final discussion of the contextual meaning of "It's the **fire** of my eyes," Maya Angelou is a passionate and powerful spirit woman who saw in her eyes. These findings further support the idea of the word **fire** which is stated by Eka Permatasari (2016) that Angelou depicts the picture of a certain lady. She is showing herself off, and how ladies can depict themselves as evident people. It additionally shows how they ought to can pick what they believe they should do because they are strong, certain, and free.

Furthermore, contextually, the first line begins, "Pretty women wonder where my **secret** lies. I'm not cute or built to suit a **fashion** model's size" in lines 1 and 2. The meaning of these lines based on the context is Angelou sets up to demonstrate that she is not of society's run-of-the-mill ideal of magnificence that conventionally attractive women may wonder or struggle to understand that she doesn't look like the models glorified by the fashion industry. These findings further support the idea of the line which is stated by Eka Permatasari (2016) that in those lines, the meaning of the word **secret** and **fashion** based on context is Maya Angelou explained that although her appearance was not what was considered ideal, she was still confident and not ashamed of her body. This includes liberal feminism because that line shows confidence in her appearance as a black woman.

For "The **span** of my hips, The **stride** of my step" lines 7-8. The meaning of these lines is the development of parts of a lady's body to turn female generalization on its head. While a ladies' hips, walk, and lips may generally be sexualized and introduced as the determinants of a lady's worth in mainstream society. These findings further support the idea of the word in line which is stated by Prajnya (2012) that "The **span** of my hips" outlines the state of the speaker's body. "The **stride** of my step" depicts the speaker's way of strolling.

In addition, in the next data finding the meaning of the word **flash**, she needs to say that her magnificence lies in her grin since we can see somebody with white teeth as though it is lovely when somebody is grinning. The word is a **swing** in "The **swing** in my waist" in line 24. The word **swing** is a verb. While contextually means she is sure and looks pretty. The next word is **joy** in "And the **joy** in my feet" in line 25. The word **joy** is a noun. While contextually means that Angelou is a hopeful lady any place she strolls, she will constantly be cheerful. These findings further support the idea of the word in line which is stated by Prajnya (2012) that "the flash of my teeth" is an articulation alluding to the speaker's grin. "The **swing** of my waist" Yet again depicts the speaker's motion in the manner she strolls. Aside from her long advances, the speaker additionally strolls with her midsection swinging. This way of the walk is normally thought to be appealing to men since it underscores the bends of a lady's body. And the word **joy** is defined in Hendy (2010) as that Angelou is a hopeful lady, any place she strolls, she will constantly be cheerful.

The word **Phenomenal** in "**Phenomenal** woman" in line 28 is an adjective. Contextually means she is delighting in being an exceptional and great lady. The word **inner** and **mystery** is in "My **inner mystery**" in line 34. The word **inner** is an adjective and the word **mystery** is a noun. Contextually means that the force of ladies comes from the inside, it isn't just their actual magnificence and not something that can be genuinely contacted or seen. These findings further support the idea of the word in line which is stated by Ahmad et al, (2022) who showed the word **phenomenal** is characterized as exceptional and noteworthy, and Angelou was celebrating being a shocking and great lady. The words **inner mystery** as stated by Eka Permatasari (2016) mean Angelou needs to show that the magnificence of a lady isn't just from

her appearance. The "inner mystery" implied her internal magnificence that should be visible to men who thought the excellence of a lady was exclusively from her appearance. This internal magnificence can be addressed as the power, certainty, and strength of a lady.

Overall, the word **arch** in "It's in the **arch** of my back" in line 38 is a noun. While contextually means her upright posture and confidence. The word is the **sun** in "The **sun** of my smile," in line 39. The word **sun** is a noun. While contextually based on the context it means happiness, optimism, energy, and self-sufficiency, her smile is an energetic and happy woman. The fifth word is a **ride** in "The **ride** of my breasts," in line 40. The word **ride** is a verb. Contextually, her breasts are huge, making her confident and look sexier. The last word is **glace** in "The **glace** of my style." in line 41. The word **grace** is a noun. Contextually means that she looks exquisite with her style and it depicts her certainty. These findings further support the idea of the word in line which is stated by Prajnya (2012) that "The **curve** of my back" firmly shows the speaker's quality as a lady the bend of her body. A lady's body is carefully bent. The picture of a lady's bent back offers hotness as well as delicate quality. "The **sun** of my smile" depicts the speaker's grin. The following line, "The **ride** of my breasts" depicts a sort of excursion made on the speaker's bosoms. The last line, "the **grace** of my style" expresses that Angelou looks exquisite with her style. It depicts her certainty.

Getting back to the inquiry presented toward the start of this review, it is currently conceivable to express that the lexical and contextual meaning of the poem Phenomenal Woman by Maya Angelou is regularly novel to decide the significance of the word in her poem. This investigation has discovered that for the most part, the lexical significance in this poem is more prevailing than the contextual meaning.

#### **D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

The lexical meaning here is the significance utilized in the poem Phenomenal Woman by Maya Angelou depict in the vocabulary or word reference. The analyst made sense of those as suitable as were written in the overall word reference. From the perspective linguistically most lexical implications distinguished from the information are like things, action words, and descriptors. The specialist needs to show that the significance of the poem Phenomenal Woman by Maya Angelou from the vocabulary or general word reference is fairly unique concerning the importance in the context.

Analyzing contextually is not quite the same as the lexical meaning. It is more troublesome than lexically because the significance given the context is not generally clear, it is certain and we need to decipher its meaning. The contextual meaning is the terms that made sense of the genuine significance as per the circumstance where they were utilized. For this situation, the circumstance implied the above terms in the poem, Phenomenal Woman, by Maya Angelou. Along these lines, this conversation is an intriguing occasion novel to be figured out how to abstain from misconception and confounding.

Overall, this research would have liked to be valuable for all readers, particularly the people who are intense in a similar field, the study of meaning. From the clarification above it tends to be summed up that the lexical and contextual meaning is vital to make a difference to be aware and learn, even though it is not difficult to learn without advancing by heart. In this section the author details the conclusions of the results of the discussion and data analysis and is advised to submit further research to the next researcher.



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