

## Before You Read

### New Directions

#### Connect to the Biography

Think about a time when you changed something in your life—at home, at school, or somewhere else. What happened when you tried a new direction?

**Quickwrite** Freewrite for a few minutes about the change you made. Why did you make the change? What does your decision say about you?

#### Build Background

"New Directions" is a biographical narrative about Maya Angelou's grandmother, Annie Johnson, and the changes Annie made at a specific time and place in her life.

- This biographical narrative is set in Stamps, Arkansas, in the early 1900s. During that time, African Americans did not yet have equal rights in many areas of the United States.
- Women's rights were also limited at that time. For example, women in the United States did not gain the right to vote until 1920.
- Although Maya Angelou spent some of her childhood with her mother in large cities, she was raised mainly by her grandmother in Stamps.

#### Vocabulary

**disastrous** (dī zas' trəs) *adj.* awful, terrible (p. 650). *The party for my five-year-old niece was disastrous—half of the young guests cried the entire time.*

**conceded** (kən sēd' ed) *v.* admitted as true (p. 650). *Angela conceded that Mary was the better tennis player after Mary beat her three games in a row.*

**balmy** (bä' mē) *adj.* mild; soothing (p. 653). *Balmy spring days are his favorite time to work outdoors.*

#### Meet Maya Angelou



*"There is a kind of strength in black women. It's as if a steel rod runs right through the head down to the feet."*

—Maya Angelou

#### A Person of Many Talents

Author, poet, playwright, editor, educator, professional stage and screen performer, and singer—each of these words describes Maya Angelou. Angelou's extraordinary career has taken her to many places around the world, including Egypt and Ghana. She read her poem "On the Pulse of Morning," commissioned by President Bill Clinton, at Clinton's 1993 inauguration. Angelou is the author of many books, including *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.

Maya Angelou was born in 1928.



Literature Online

**Author Search** For more about Maya Angelou, go to [glencoe.com](http://glencoe.com) and enter QuickPass code GL29763u5.

## Set Purposes for Reading

### **BQ** BIG Question

At the beginning of this biographical narrative, Annie Johnson sets out on a new path. As you read, ask yourself, what obstacles does Annie face? In what ways do her positive actions help her achieve her goals?

### **Literary Element** Setting

**Setting** is the time and place where the action occurs. "New Directions" has one general setting—Arkansas in the early 1900s. Within that larger setting, the story takes place in various specific places, such as the lumber mill.

It is important to pay attention to the setting. Details about the setting can help you visualize and better understand the time and place of the story. And sometimes the setting plays an important role in the story itself. As you read, ask yourself, how does the setting both set limitations and provide opportunities for Annie?

### **Reading Strategy** Make Predictions About Plot

When you **make predictions about plot**, you guess what will happen next. To predict, think about what has happened so far and what you already know about the people or characters in a selection. Then guess what will happen next. As you read, check to see if your predictions were correct.

Predicting helps you look forward to events in the plot and pay attention to important details. When you predict, you get involved in what you read. To make predictions in "New Directions":

- Pay attention to the details in the narrative. What the author tells you about Annie might provide clues as to what she will do next.
- Remember that plot is organized around conflict. When Annie faces a problem, think about how she might solve it.

Use these clues to make predictions about plot. Use a graphic organizer like the one below.

| What is Happening | My Prediction | What Actually Happens Next |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------------------|
|                   |               |                            |

### Learning Objectives

For pages 648–654

In studying this text, you will focus on the following objectives:

**Literary Element:** Analyzing setting.

**Reading Strategy:** Making predictions about plot.

### TRY IT

**Make Predictions** You're getting ready to ride your bike to your friend's house, and you notice that your bike has a flat tire. Make a prediction about how the flat tire will affect the time at which you arrive at your friend's house. If you can't call to tell your friend what has happened, how do you predict your friend will react when you arrive?





# New Directions

Maya Angelou

In 1903 the late Mrs. Annie Johnson of Arkansas found herself with two toddling sons, very little money, a slight ability to read and add simple numbers. To this picture add a **disastrous** marriage and the burdensome<sup>1</sup> fact that Mrs. Johnson was a Negro.

When she told her husband, Mr. William Johnson, of her dissatisfaction with their marriage, he **conceded** that he too found it to be less than he expected, and had been secretly hoping to leave and study religion. He added that he thought God was calling him not only to preach but to do so in Enid, Oklahoma. He did not tell her that he knew a minister in Enid with whom he could study and who

#1

**Setting** What do you know about the time and place in which Annie Johnson lived?

<sup>1</sup> Something **burdensome** is hard to bear or troublesome.

## Vocabulary

**disastrous** (di zas' trəs) *adj.* awful, terrible

**conceded** (kən sēd' ed) *v.* admitted as true



had a friendly, unmarried daughter. They parted amicably,<sup>2</sup> Annie keeping the one-room house and William taking most of the cash to carry himself to Oklahoma.

Annie, over six feet tall, big-boned, decided that she would not go to work as a domestic<sup>3</sup> and leave her "precious babes" to anyone else's care. There was no possibility of being hired at the town's cotton gin or lumber mill, but maybe there was a way to make the two factories work for her. In her words, "I looked up the road I was going and back the way I come, and since I wasn't satisfied, I decided to step off the road and cut me a new path." She told herself that she wasn't a fancy cook but that she could "mix groceries well enough to scare hungry away and from starving a man."

She made her plans meticulously<sup>4</sup> and in secret. One early evening to see if she was ready, she placed stones in two five-gallon pails and carried them three miles to the cotton gin. She rested a little, and then, discarding some rocks, she walked in the darkness to the saw mill five miles farther along the dirt road. On her way back to her little house and her babies, she dumped the remaining rocks along the path.

That same night she worked into the early hours boiling chicken and frying ham. She made dough and filled the rolled-out pastry with meat. At last she went to sleep.

2 When Annie and William **parted amicably**, they went their separate ways without feelings of anger or unfriendliness.

3 A **domestic** is a household servant.

4 When you perform a task **meticulously**, you do it very carefully.



+ 2

#### Make Predictions About

**Plot** Think about what options Annie has. What "new path" do you think she will take?

People picking cotton in Phillips County, Arkansas, in September 1938



The next morning she left her house carrying the meat pies, lard, an iron brazier,<sup>5</sup> and coals for a fire. Just before lunch she appeared in an empty lot behind the cotton gin. As the dinner noon bell rang, she dropped the savors<sup>6</sup> into boiling fat and the aroma rose and floated over to the workers who spilled out of the gin, covered with white lint, looking like specters.<sup>7</sup>

Most workers had brought their lunches of pinto beans and biscuits or crackers, onions and cans of sardines, but

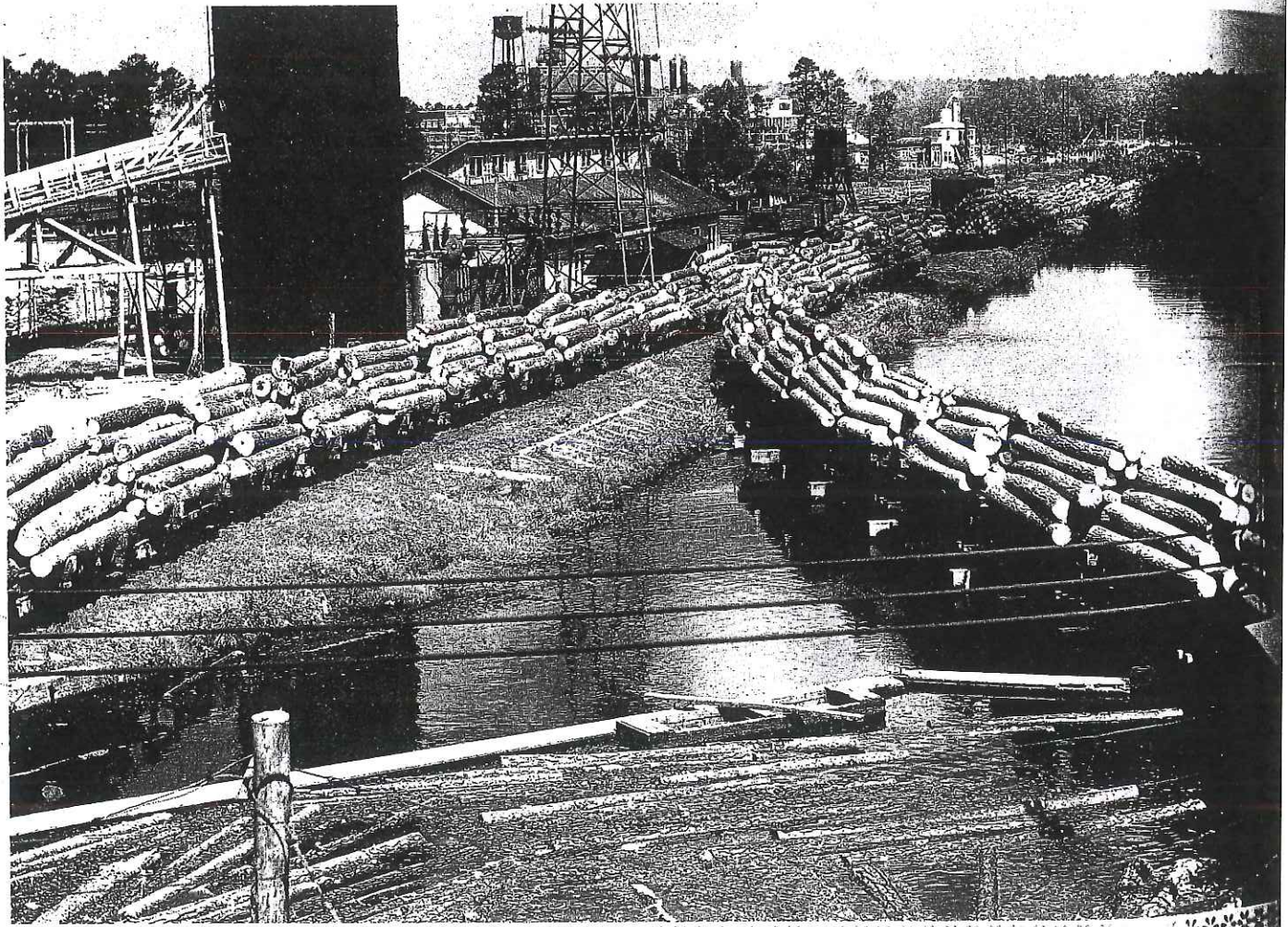
5 A **brazier** is a metal container that holds burning coals for cooking food.

6 **Savors** are items that have a distinct taste, smell, or quality.

7 Another name for a ghost is a **specter**.

The Crossett saw mill in Arkansas in the early twentieth century

View the Photograph Study the photo to see how the area developed around the mill. How might a setting like this have affected Annie Johnson's business?



43

**Setting** Why are the time and place at which Annie sells her meat pies important to the success of her business?



time  
the  
ss of

they were tempted by the hot meat pies which Annie ladled out of the fat. She wrapped them in newspapers, which soaked up the grease, and offered them for sale at a nickel each. Although business was slow, those first days Annie was determined. She balanced her appearances between the two hours of activity.

So, on Monday if she offered hot fresh pies at the cotton gin and sold the remaining cooled-down pies at the lumber mill for three cents, then on Tuesday she went first to the lumber mill presenting fresh, just-cooked pies as the lumbermen covered in sawdust emerged from the mill.

For the next few years, on **balmy** spring days, blistering summer noons, and cold, wet, and wintry middays, Annie never disappointed her customers, who could count on seeing the tall, brown-skin woman bent over her brazier, carefully turning the meat pies. When she felt certain that the workers had become dependent on her, she built a stall between the two hives of industry and let the men run to her for their lunchtime provisions.

She had indeed stepped from the road which seemed to have been chosen for her and cut herself a brand-new path. In years that stall became a store where customers could buy cheese, meal, syrup, cookies, candy, writing tablets, pickles, canned goods, fresh fruit, soft drinks, coal, oil, and leather soles for worn-out shoes.

Each of us has the right and the responsibility to assess<sup>8</sup> the roads which lie ahead, and those over which we have traveled, and if the future road looms ominous<sup>9</sup> or unpromising, and the roads back uninviting, then we need to gather our resolve and, carrying only the necessary baggage, step off that road into another direction. If the new choice is also unpalatable,<sup>10</sup> without embarrassment, we must be ready to change that as well. ✎

8 To **assess** something is to determine its meaning or importance.

9 Something **ominous** threatens harm or evil.

10 **Unpalatable** means *disagreeable* or *unacceptable*.

#### Vocabulary

**balmy** (bă' mē) *adj.* mild; soothing

#### #4 Make Predictions About

**Plot** Think about what Annie has done so far. What do you predict will happen to her business?

#### #5 BQ BIG Question

How do Annie's actions help her become the person she wants to be?

## After You Read

### Respond and Think Critically

1. Think about the traits that led Annie Johnson to success. What other traits do successful people you know have in common with Annie? **[Connect]**
2. What does the author mean by the statement, "Each of us has the right and the responsibility to assess the roads which lie ahead"? **[Interpret]**
3. Why does Annie carry pails of stones to the cotton gin and the saw mill? **[Infer]**
4. **Literary Element Setting** How does the setting affect the plot of this biographical narrative? Use details to support your answer. **[Analyze]**
5. **Reading Strategy Make Predictions About Plot** Refer to the predictions you made on the graphic organizer as you read. Were your predictions accurate? Explain. **[Evaluate]**
6. **BQ BIG Question** Do you agree with the author that "if the future road looms ominous," a person should "step off that road into another direction" by taking positive actions? Explain. **[Conclude]**

#### Vocabulary Practice

Identify whether the paired words in each set have a similar or different meaning. Then write a sentence using each vocabulary word, or draw or find a picture that represents the word.

disastrous and fortunate

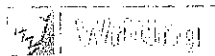
conceded and denied

balmy and chilly

#### Example:

conceded and denied = opposite meaning

**Sentence:** The candidate conceded defeat after it became obvious that his opponent had won the election.



**Write a Summary** Think about Annie Johnson's journey from an unhappy person with little money and little education to a successful store owner. Use your own words to retell the main events in Annie's story in the order in which they occurred.

### TIP

#### Inferring

To answer question 3, use your own knowledge to figure out what the author does not state directly. Here are tips to help you infer.

- Look in the narrative for specific details about what Annie does after she returns from carrying the stones.
- Think about what Annie does at the cotton gin and the saw mill.
- Consider what carrying the stones would help Annie do.



Keep track of your ideas about the **BIG Question** in your unit Foldable.



Online

#### Selection Resources

For Selection Quizzes, eFlashcards, and Reading-Writing Connection activities, go to [glencoe.com](http://glencoe.com) and enter QuickPass code GL29763u5.

