

***The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros** (Published by Vintage Contemporaries)

Approved for use in Communication Arts I, Honors Communication Arts I

Summary

Sandra Cisneros records a series of impressions and significant moments in the life of a young girl who is slowly becoming a poet. This novel covers a year in her life, a year in which her family moves into a rented house on Mango Street. The house, while in poor condition, provides the family with more space and more autonomy than they have ever had. The rented house allows them to dream of someday having a house of their own, a safe and luxurious haven for the family. This dream is particularly important to Esperanza, the oldest child, who longs for a space in which to develop her own habits and opinions, and for a security that she has never known. The novel follows her and a group of her friends and neighbors as they confront issues common to young people coming of age. Despite her struggle with personal circumstances, Esperanza begins to write poetry. She sees her friends marry, move away, suffer abuse, and have children. Her family sees deaths and struggles with poverty. In the end Esperanza realizes that, while she may leave Mango Street someday, she will always be obligated to come back to help those who aren't able to leave. Although at this stage in her life she is still ashamed to admit it, Mango Street is an important part of her.

Connection to the Curriculum

This book follows a young girl as she struggles to grow up and to find her poetic voice. Like many growing female writers, Esperanza feels that she can only be successful if she has a safe place from which to write. Living in a patriarchal society, she feels the need for a place where women can be free from violence, both literal and psychological. She also understands how one's home can communicate something about oneself to the outside world, and she longs to have a home that accurately represents her. Poor and Hispanic, she is subjected to ridicule as a result of the places she lives. Esperanza belongs to a tradition of protagonists who are artists-in-development. She is sensitive, perceptive, and linguistically gifted. Yet unlike them, she also faces the additional challenge of being female. At times she is forced to choose between her burgeoning feminism and the patriarchal traditions of her ethnic group. Her experiences often stir her to poetry as she observes the world around her. As she gets older, her sense of irony and of structure develops, and her reflections grow more sophisticated and more complex, allowing the reader to experience the diction, imagery, detail, language, and syntax that are the author's trademark. While minimal in plot, *The House on Mango Street* offers the exceptional opportunity to examine the challenges and craft of writing.

Standards

Course Objectives (Benchmarks)

Reading: 1.4- The students comprehend a variety of texts.

Literature: 2.1-The students use literary concepts to interpret and respond to text. 2.2- The students understand the significance of literature and its contributions to various cultures.

Writing: 3.9- The students use a variety of modes of writing for different purposes and audiences.

Possible Skills Taught (Indicators)

Reading:

1.4.10- The student generates and responds logically to literal, inferential, evaluative, and critical thinking questions before, during, and after reading the text.

Literature:

2.1.2- The student analyzes the historical, social and cultural contextual aspects of the setting and their influence on characters and events in the story of a literary text.

2.1.4- The student analyzes themes, tone and the author's point of view across a variety of works and genres using textual evidence and considering audience and purpose.

2.1.5- The student identifies, analyzes, and evaluates the use of literary devices in a text.

2.2.6- The student recognizes ways in which literature from different cultures presents similar themes differently across genres.

Writing:

3.9.34- The student produces narrative pieces.

A Note on the Text: (The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)
Esperanza's struggles involve poverty, references to violence, and sad relationships. These are associated with the conflicts the character must resolve and are revealed as a result of the honesty of the narrator. Cisneros' style is brief and poetic, so negative images are limited. However, this poetic style provides students with another type of narrative from a reputable author.

AP Connections

This novel provides reinforcement of close critical reading of a text in order to apply knowledge of syntax, tone, diction, and figurative language. In addition, students can reinforce their own writing strategies to create advanced diction, imagery, detail, language, and syntax.

Additional Unit Design Connections

Coming soon:

To be completed during future curriculum development activities