

Senior Summer Reading Assignment  
The House on Mango Street, by Sandra Cisneros

*This book may be purchased at the Mater Dei Bookstore. **Your responses to the following must be typed and will be submitted to turnitin.com during the first week of school.** This assignment is intended to help you understand the book and prepare for a test which will be given the second day of school, as well as serve as a resource for you during class discussions and writing assignments.*

When you first look at The House on Mango Street, you will probably notice that it is a relatively short work of literature (110 pages), and it seems to be broken up into many (44 to be exact) short “chapters.” **A work of fiction that is longer than a short story but shorter than most novels is called a novella.** We expect a story to flow from chapter to chapter, but this book is more like a bunch of short scenes, sometimes about characters, sometimes about places, sometimes about ideas. These short pieces are called vignettes; they are linked not by plot but how the writer attempts to reveal the life of the daughter of Mexican immigrants, growing up in the inner city of Chicago. **By the end of the book, these verbal “snapshots” will fit together to create a larger picture of the narrator, her culture, and her identity.**

*As you read, notice the following characters and their connections to each other and to the narrator.*

Esperanza	Elinita	Carlos and Kiki
Nenny	Edna’s Ruthie	Meme Ortiz
Lucy and Rachel	Lois	Louie’s cousin
Cathy	Mamacita	Darius
Marin	Rafaela	“Oriental” man
Rosa Vargas	Sally	Geraldo
Alicia	Minerva	The Earl of Tennessee
Aunt Lupe	The three sisters	Sire

**“The House on Mango Street” through “Marin” (pages 3 – 27)**

1. Compare Esperanza’s ideal house to the one on Mango Street. Why is she upset?
2. Describe her family. How are the expectations different for boys and girls?
3. How does Esperanza feel about her name? Why?
4. Cathy, Lucy, and Rachel are girls from the neighborhood. What do we learn about them?
5. What is so fascinating about the music box?
6. What happens to the yellow Cadillac? To Louie’s cousin?
7. What is Marin’s advice? What is she waiting for?

Continued...

**“Those Who Don’t” through “Chanclas” (pages 28-48)**

1. Who are the outsiders and why are they afraid?
2. What is the problem with the Vargas kids?
3. What are Alicia’s dreams? What is she afraid of?
4. How is Darius in contrast to the clouds he describes?
5. What is the appeal of the dress up shoes to the girls? How do the men react?
6. Why does Esperanza want to eat in the school lunch room? How does it work out for her?
7. How does Uncle Nacho help Esperanza at the cousin’s party?

**“Hips” through “Edna’s Ruthie” (pages 49-69)**

1. What do you learn about the girls’ image of themselves as they jump rope? How is Nenny different?
2. What happens at Esperanza’s job?
3. Why does her papa cry?
4. How has Aunt Lupe’s illness affected the family? Why does Esperanza feel guilty?
5. What does the witch Elenita see for Esperanza? How does she react?
6. What happened to Geraldo?
7. What is Ruthie’s story? Why is she so strange?

**“The Earl of Tennessee” through “Minerva Writes Poems” (pages 70-85)**

1. What kind of “wife” does Earl have?
2. Why does Esperanza have mixed feelings about Sire and his girlfriend Lois?
3. How are the four skinny trees like Esperanza?
4. What is wrong with Mamacita? Why does she sit all day by the window?
5. Why is Rafaela stuck in her apartment?
6. What are the two sides of Sally?
7. What are the dangers in Minerva’s life?

**“Bums in the Attic” through “Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes” pages 86-110)**

1. Why would Esperanza have “bums in the attic”?
2. What is Esperanza’s developing opinion of men?
3. How is Esperanza different from her mother?
4. How do Sally and Esperanza change? What is Sally’s fate?
5. How does Sally betray Esperanza?
6. Where does Esperanza meet the three sisters? What is their message to her?
7. Why does Esperanza want a house of her own? How does she describe what she wants?

**IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION**

*When you have finished you should be able to explain the title of each vignette.*

*What do you learn about Esperanza? What does she learn about herself?*

*What would the author predict for Esperanza’s future?*