



 Prestwick House

# Activity Pack

## THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET

BY SANDRA CISNEROS



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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Pre-Reading

### Understanding the Author

**Objective:** Reading to infer the author's interests and possible themes

#### Activity

Read the following quotations from and about Sandra Cisneros. Based on this information, what themes or motifs do you think she might address in this novel?

"As a person growing up in a society where the class norm was superimposed on a television screen, I couldn't understand why our home wasn't all green lawns and white wood like the ones in 'Leave It to Beaver' and 'Father Knows Best.'"

"The meaning of literary success," she [Cisneros] declares, "is that I could change the way someone thinks about my community, or my gender, or my class."

"I was guided by my ancestors. I was writing for my community, my father... everyone. I feel this was what I was meant to do, to serve whatever my community is. I can take these stories and put them out there and then they become universal and magical."

"Cisneros's brothers sought to control and mold her according to this dominating, male-oriented ideology so much so that she later professed that she felt as if she had 'seven fathers' instead of one. Consequently, she confesses in a 1990 interview: 'to this day when any man tells me to do something in a certain way, the hair on the back of my neck just stands up.'"

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**The House on Mango Street – Hairs****Literary Terms****Objective:** Understanding anaphora, simile, personification, metaphor

Rather than simply telling a reader what happens, when, why, where, and how it happens in a novel, an author invents a narrator. The narrator, then, can use his or her own way of detailing information. For example, Huckleberry Finn, the narrator of Twain's book, is uneducated, superstitious, adventurous, young, but has a wise person's understanding of the world. He tells his story quite differently than Huck's aunt or father would have told it.

Cisneros's narrator, a young girl, frequently explains things and gives the reader information in a colorful way, using various literary terms. Look up the definitions for the three terms—anaphora, simile, and personification—either in the Appendix, the Internet, or a research book. Use those definitions to locate examples of them in the first two chapters and write them down on the chart. In the second column, explain what idea is suggested by the language or how it makes you feel. After you have done that, in the third column, rewrite the metaphor, personification, and simile in your own words, keeping the ideas the same. It is not necessary to rewrite any anaphora.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Cathy Queen of Cats****Theme**

**Objective:** Recognizing themes that involve ethnic prejudice

**Activity**

Cathy seems indifferent to Esperanza's feelings and does not recognize that her (Cathy's) comments are offensive. As Esperanza, write a letter to Cathy explaining why her comments are bigoted and how you felt during the conversation.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Louie, His Cousin & His Other Cousin****Journalistic Style****Objective:** Relating details in the manner of a newspaper**Activity**

Write a headline based on the events in Chapter 10 that may have appeared in the next day's issue of *The Chicago Tribune*. Draw or find an appropriate picture for this story. Write a caption for the picture.

**Example: Cadillac Caper Solved**

Write a short news story based on the events in the chapter. Remember to include the what, when, where, who, why, and how, if this information is available in the chapter. Do not invent anything; a newspaper story should strive to be factual.

**Example:** Today, a juvenile from Mango Street stole a yellow Cadillac. He spent the afternoon driving his little sisters and cousins around the neighborhood. When the young man heard the police sirens, he stopped the car so the children could get out. Then, he sped away, attempting to outrun the police. Unable to navigate a corner, the driver smashed the Cadillac into a lamppost, damaging the front of the vehicle. The suspect received superficial wounds in the crash. He was handcuffed and arrested on the scene. His little sisters and cousins waved at him as he was taken away in the police cruiser.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**And Some More****Style****Objective:** Recognizing the author's style of writing**Activity**

Cisneros does not use quotation marks when she writes dialogue. Rewrite one page of this chapter using quotation marks and traditional punctuation. Compare your work with the original chapter. Try to vary the verbs you use. We have included a rewritten sample to get you started.

"The Eskimos got thirty different names for snow," said Esperanza. "I read it in a book."

"I got a cousin," interrupted Rachel. "She got three different names."

"There ain't thirty different kinds of snow," Lucy declared proudly. "There are two kinds. The clean kind and the dirty kind, clean and dirty. Only two."

The traditional and most common ways a novelist writes dialogue is by using a noun or pronoun and a verb: "He said,"; "said Joanne,"; "Billy screamed," etc. Cisneros, however, chose not to follow in this style.

List some reasons why Cisneros chose to use the style she does in *The House on Mango Street*. Which technique do you prefer?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Geraldo No Name****Creative Writing****Objective:** Understanding a character**Activity**

Marin meets a young man at a dance, dances with him, and that is all. He was ordinary, but had come north, probably from Central or South America, looking for a job. After the dance, though, he is the victim of a hit and run accident. Marin is deeply moved, even though she had no feelings for him. She was, however, the last person to see him alive.

Write an entry for an Internet site like livejournal.com for Marin, explaining her feelings about the incident; include as much detail from this chapter as you can, but use your own words. The main object is for you to try to get inside Marin's head to understand her emotions about this incident.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Sally****Inference**

**Objective:**     Obtaining meaning from unstated plot elements

**Activity**

In 'Sally' Cisneros says what happens, but she does not explain much. Answer the following questions about this chapter in a sentence or two.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Sally; What Sally Said; Red Clowns; Linoleum Roses****Characterization****Objective:** Understanding the purpose of a foil in literature**Activity**

Identify the character traits you think Esperanza possesses.

- |                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| _____ independent   | _____ lonely        |
| _____ beautiful     | _____ hopeful       |
| _____ intelligent   | _____ persecuted    |
| _____ unloved       | _____ afraid        |
| _____ understanding | _____ creative      |
| _____ unconquerable | _____ sad           |
| _____ trustworthy   | _____ compassionate |
| _____ deluded       | _____ self-reliant  |
| _____ naïve         | _____ popular       |
| _____ thoughtful    | _____ reliable      |

Identify the character traits you think Sally possesses.

- |                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| _____ independent   | _____ lonely        |
| _____ beautiful     | _____ hopeful       |
| _____ intelligent   | _____ persecuted    |
| _____ unloved       | _____ afraid        |
| _____ understanding | _____ creative      |
| _____ unconquerable | _____ sad           |
| _____ trustworthy   | _____ compassionate |
| _____ deluded       | _____ self-reliant  |
| _____ naïve         | _____ popular       |
| _____ thoughtful    | _____ reliable      |

Which character traits do they share? Why do you think Esperanza includes Sally in these four chapters?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Wrap-Up****Writing a Review**

**Objective:** Considering the strengths and weaknesses of a book, as well as your likes and dislikes

**Activity**

One of the pre-reading activities was to go to [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and read the reviews other students have written about this book. Write your own review. Include what you liked or disliked about the story. What did it teach you? Would you recommend it to a friend or teacher?