

**Reflections:**

*A Student Response Journal for...*

# *The House on Mango Street*

*by Sandra Cisneros*

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*The House on Mango Street*

**The House on Mango Street**

1. Ownership, especially of houses, is a significant aspect of American society. Often people's identity and status are associated with the area in which they live, the kind of house they live in, and if they own or rent. The narrator of this story remembers pointing to her apartment and being asked, "You live there?" The way she said it made me feel like nothing.... I knew I had to have a house. A real house."

Describe your home. What does the area and house tell about your identity and social status?

**Hairs**

2. The narrator shares intimate details of her family. To know the feel and smell of someone's hair and skin is to be close, in a loving way, to that person. Record your memories of the hair and skin of your family members, or the people with whom you are close.
3. Reading this description, I get the impression the narrator feels a sense of security. The association I make for the phrase "the warm smell of bread" is of being provided with something essential and filling, "the bread of life." What impressions and associations do you make with this short sketch?

## **Boys & Girls**

4. Do you agree with the narrator's statement, "The boys and the girls live in separate worlds"? Using your own experience as a reference point, what evidence do you see of separateness or lack of separateness?
5. When the separateness exists, what, in your opinion, causes it? Specifically, are there inborn differences between males and females in terms of the way they communicate, approach things, think; or are any differences the result of social training and expectations?
6. How would you define a best friend? Use a best friend you have or had to illustrate your point.
7. Tell about a time you felt you were "a balloon tied to an anchor." This could be any time you wanted to be free, but felt held down by a responsibility or restraint.

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**My Name**

8. What associations do you make with your name? Are you named for anyone? If so, how do you feel about it? If not, why did your parents give you the name they did?
9. Esperanza makes the following comments about women:

“the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don’t like their women strong.”  
“She looked out the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow.”

Based on your experience, list some factors that cause a person to be passive and sad or to lead a life of unrealized dreams and potential. These factors can include gender bias for men as well as women. What conclusions can you come to about ending up, not experiencing life, but only watching it by the window, as Esperanza puts it?

**Cathy Queen of Cats**

10. Often, people reveal their attitudes and values by the way they interpret things around them. Cathy says a lot to Esperanza about the neighborhood and the people in it. What is your opinion of Cathy? Does Cathy remind you of anyone?
11. What do you find amusing about the title of this sketch?

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*Response Journal*

**Our Good Day**

12. Tell about a time you had a good day sharing something with friends.

**Laughter**

13. What characteristics or understandings do members of your family share?
14. Esperanza describes laughter figuratively: “the shy ice cream bells’ giggle” Think of a person that you know who has distinctive laughter. Describe the laughter in terms of something familiar.

**Gil’s Furniture Bought & Sold**

15. Write a short human interest story for the local newspaper of Gil’s town. Tell about Gil, his store, and his hidden treasures.

**Meme Ortiz**

16. What do you find comical in this sketch?
17. What does the image of the huge tree suggest to you?

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**Louie, His Cousin & His Other Cousin**

18. Imagine that you are Marin and write a letter to a close friend in Puerto Rico telling about your life on Mango Street, your feelings about living there, and the incident with the yellow Cadillac. Try to use the way of speaking of a girl Marin's age.
19. What do you find comical in this sketch?

**Marin**

20. Make up a dialogue between Marin and a feminist woman. What would they say to each other about goals in life, how to achieve them, and men in general?
21. Describe what you imagine Marin's future will be like.
22. Tell about a person you know (or knew) who is a bit older and more experienced than you, but willing to talk to you about life's secrets, the things that most people won't talk about.

**Those Who Don't**

23. What does this sketch tell you about fear and prejudice?