

House on Mango Street Study Guide

Chapter One: "The House on Mango Street"

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Where did the narrator live before she moved to The House on Mango Street?
2. How were her previous homes different?
3. In what kind of house would she like to live?

Themes Journal: In the first chapter a major theme of the novel is introduced. Discuss what the narrator's view of a home is. What makes a house a home? Is the narrator satisfied with her house? Does she feel that she belongs there? Explain.

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator's world.

1. What words does the narrator use to describe her mother's hair? What food words are used to describe her mother's hair? What images do these words create?
2. How do these words create a vivid visual of her mother?
3. How does the description of snuggling with her mother at night provide a sense of a loving and supportive family?
4. What lines in this chapter create the sense of security and familial love that the narrator feels?
5. The last paragraph in this chapter is a run-on sentence. It is missing several verbs. How does the overall image created in the paragraph develop? How does the unusual grammar help with this development?

Chapter Two: "Hairs"

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Who are the members of the narrator's family? How is the hair of each member different?

2. What makes her mother's hair special? What are the narrator's feelings for her mother?

Themes Journal: In the first chapter a major theme of the novel was introduced. This very short chapter reinforces part of that theme. Discuss how the narrator's view of her family is part of her idea of what makes a home.

Chapter Three: "Boys & Girls"

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What does the narrator say about the relationship between boys and girls? What evidence does she provide to support this idea?
2. What does the narrator say about her sister? How does this impact their relationship?
3. About what does the narrator dream? What does this say about her?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. The boys and the girls live in separate worlds.
2. Carlos and Kiki are each other's best friend. . . not ours.
3. Someday I will have a best friend all my own. One I can tell secrets to. One who will understand my jokes without my having to explain them.
4. Until then I am a red balloon, a balloon tied to an anchor.

Themes Journal: Another major theme of the novel is introduced in this chapter. What do you think that theme is? Why? What textual proof is there to support your idea?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator's world.

1. What words does the narrator use to describe the relationship between her brothers? Between the brothers and the sisters? Between the two sisters?
2. How do these words create a sense of the responsibility the narrator feels towards her sister?
3. How does the description of the dream best friend contrast with the description her sister?
4. What lines in this chapter create the sense of separation that the narrator feels? What metaphor is used to reinforce this idea?

Chapter Four: "My Name"

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What does her name mean?
2. After whom was she named? Why does she connect her name with the records her father plays on Sunday morning?
3. What point does Esperanza make about both the Chinese and the Mexicans? Does she seem to resent this?
4. How did her grandmother get married?
5. What does what happened to Esperanza's grandmother tell you about women's roles in Mexican society?
6. Why does she want to baptize herself with a new name?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. It was my great-grandmother's name and now it is mine. She was a horse woman, too, born like me in the Chinese year of the horse—which is supposed to be bad luck if you're born female—but I think it this is a Chinese lie because the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don't like their women strong.
2. I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window.
3. I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees.

Themes Journal: The theme of women as second-class citizens is reinforced in this chapter. What lines from the text support this theme? How does Esperanza rebel against this idea of women as inferior? Another theme introduced in this chapter is the idea of a woman waiting. Who waits? Where does she wait? For what is she waiting? How does Esperanza feel about this?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose to create a picture of Esperanza's world.

1. Esperanza explains the various meanings of her name in a series of metaphors and similes. What do the metaphors and similes mean on a literal level? On a figurative level? How does this description add to the overall explanation of her name?
2. What words does the narrator use to describe Esperanza's name?
3. How do these words create a sense of the whole of Esperanza? How does the description provide a sense of both the meaning of her name and her personality?
4. What does Esperanza feel is her legacy? What connects her to the past? What images does the author use to create this connection?

Chapter Five “Cathy Queen of Cats”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. To whom does Cathy claim to be related? Is this true?
2. How long will Cathy be Esperanza’s friend?
3. Why does Cathy say her family has to move?
4. How does Esperanza feel about Cathy’s family’s reason for leaving?

Themes Journal: Another major theme of the novel is introduced in this chapter. What do you think that theme is? Why? What textual proof is there to support your idea? How does the new theme connect with the conversation with the nun in chapter one?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator’s world.

1. What words does the narrator use to describe Cathy and her cats?
2. How does the use of repetition create a sense of childlike excitement?
3. How does the description of the cats contrast with the explanation of why the family has to move?
4. What lines in this chapter create the sense of shame about poverty?

Chapter Six “Our Good Day”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Why do the girls want five dollars? What are they willing to give Esperanza in exchange for the money? Why does Esperanza feel that five dollars is cheap?
2. How does Cathy react to the sisters?
3. How are Lucy and Rachel better friends than Cathy?
4. Why doesn't Esperanza tell them about Nenny immediately?
5. How do they divide up the bike? How do they ride the bike the first day?

Themes Journal: Another major theme of the novel is introduced in this chapter. What do you think that theme is? Why? What textual proof is there to support your idea? This idea is mentioned in “Boys & Girls” and “Cathy Queen of Cats.” The idea of poverty and shame is brought up again in this chapter. Cathy looks down on the two sisters for the same reason that Esperanza identifies with them. What lines support this idea? In spite of the poverty on Mango Street, Esperanza finds happiness and beauty. What lines or events show Esperanza's ability to find happiness in every day activities?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator's world.

1. What words does the narrator use to describe Lucy and Rachel? How does her reaction to Lucy and Rachel differ from Cathy's?
2. What words and images show how much Esperanza wants friendship?
3. What images describe the bike ride? What do you learn about the world of Mango Street from these images?
4. What lines in this chapter create the sense of happiness that the narrator feels? What metaphor is used to reinforce this idea?

Chapter Seven “Laughter”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. How are Nenny and Esperanza alike? How are Rachel and Lucy alike?
2. What did the houses represent to Esperanza? Did she know exactly why they represented this? Why or why not?
3. Who agreed with her? What does this show?

Themes Journal: A major theme of the novel is continued in this chapter. Esperanza and Nenny both see a house as “like Mexico.” What does this show about Esperanza’s idea of a home? Is her idea limited to a physical structure? Why or why not?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator’s world. 1. What words does the narrator use to describe the houses that look like Mexico? How does this create a sense of connection to her heritage? 2. How does is the laughter of the two sets of sisters described? How does this contribute to the family between the sisters? 3. What lines in this chapter create the sense of family unity that the narrator feels?

Chapter Eight “Gil’s Furniture Bought and Sold”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. How does the personality difference between the two sisters show up in the store?
2. Why does Esperanza pretend she doesn’t care about the music box?
3. What literary devices are used to describe the music from the music box?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator’s world. 1. What words does the narrator use to describe the music and the effect of the music? 2. How do these words create a sense of the music? 3. How does Esperanza describe her embarrassment?

Chapter Nine “Meme Ortiz”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Who is Meme?
2. How are Meme and the dog alike?
3. What happened to Meme in the First Annual Tarzan Jumping Contest?

Themes Journal: Because homes are important to her, Esperanza creates a vivid picture of Meme’s home. What words and phrases does she use to describe his home? How does she describe her home? This chapter also deals with the theme of a neighborhood as an extended family. The children play together; the houses are near each other. What words help create a sense of unity?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator’s world. 1. What words does the narrator use to describe the Meme’s house? How does the description of his house compare to the description of her house in chapter one? 2. What words does Esperanza use to describe Meme? How do these words create a word picture of Meme? 3. How does the idea that Meme broke his arm in the First Annual Tarzan Jumping Contest differ from the idea that Meme fell from a tree and broke his arm?

Chapter Ten “Louie, His Cousin & His Other Cousin”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Where does Louie live?
2. Who are his cousins?
3. Why were people so interested in the yellow Cadillac?
4. Where does Louie’s cousin get the Cadillac?
5. What happened to Louie’s cousin?

Themes Journal: A major theme of the novel is continued in this chapter. The idea that people can find happiness in their day or in their difficult existence is shown in the major event in this chapter. What event? What does this show about the people of Mango Street? 2. Why doesn't Esperanza focus on the theft as she tells the story? Why does she focus more on the car and the ride than on the fact that the cousin committed a crime?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator's world. 1. What words does the narrator use to describe the cousins? How do these words create a vivid picture of the cousins? 2. How did Esperanza describe the car? 3. What lines in this chapter create the sense of joy that the narrator feels?

Chapter Eleven "Marin"

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Who is Marin?
2. Why is she unable to leave her house?
3. How does she plan to change her situation?
4. Why do Esperanza and her friends admire her?
5. Where is Marin going in a year? Why?

Themes Journal: How is Marin like Esperanza's grandmother? How is she similar to other women in the story? How is she different from other women in the story?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator's world. 1. What words does the narrator use to give you a sense that Marin is not in control of her life?

Chapter Twelve “Those Who Don’t”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. How do outsiders view Esperanza’s neighborhood?
2. How do the people who live in Esperanza’s neighborhood view it?
3. How does Esperanza feel when she drives “into a neighborhood of another color?”

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. All brown all around, we are safe.
2. But watch us drive into a neighborhood of another color and our knees go shakity-shake and our car windows get rolled up tight and our eyes look straight. Yeah. That is how it goes and goes.

Themes Journal: This chapter is a type of social commentary. Esperanza points out several things that reinforce prejudices and segregation. What does she point out? What does she say will make the fear go away?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator’s world. 1. What words does the narrator use to describe the trip into another neighborhood? How does this imagery reinforce the idea of segregation? 2. Esperanza points out both sides of the social separation issue. What words does she use to show both sides? 3. What lines in this chapter create the sense of separation that the narrator feels? Does she believe that this will change?

Chapter Thirteen “There Was An Old Woman She Had So Many Children She Didn’t Know What to Do”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Who is Rosa Vargas? Why does she cry?
2. What happened to the children’s father?
3. What does Esperanza say the Vargas children are lacking?
4. How do other people in the neighborhood feel about the Vargas children? Why?
5. The title of this chapter is a reference to a nursery rhyme. How did the Old Woman in the shoe handle her children? How does Rosa handle hers?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. They are without respect for all things living, including themselves.
2. But after a while you get tired of being worried about kids who aren’t even yours.

Themes Journal: This is another chapter providing social commentary. Esperanza describes a family of children with no “respect for anything living, including themselves.” What does she say is the danger that comes from giving up on children? 2. This chapter ends with the death of a child. Does anyone other than Esperanza seem to care? Why or why not? What does this say about society? 3. How does what is happening to the Vargas children apply to the larger picture of society?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator’s world. 1. What imagery does Esperanza use to describe Angel Vargas and the plunge to earth? What picture does this create?

Chapter Fourteen “Alicia Who Sees Mice”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What did Alicia inherit from her mother?
2. Of what is Alicia afraid?
3. How does Alicia’s father treat her? What does he say about a woman’s place?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. Alicia, whose mama died, is sorry there is no one older to rise and make the lunchbox tortillas.
2. Alicia, who inherited her mama’s rolling pin and sleepiness, is young and smart and studies for the first time at the university.

Themes: Alicia’s father represents the stereotypical male who believes that a woman’s place is in the home. Alicia, like Esperanza, wants to be something different from the traditional female. Unlike Marin who is a woman waiting for her dream, Alicia is a woman working toward her dream. Esperanza finds much to admire in Alicia. What lines show Esperanza’s admiration?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator’s world. 1. What words does the narrator use to describe the relationship between Alicia and her father? What words describe Alicia’s fear? 2. What images create the traditional idea of womanhood? What images show that Alicia wants something more than what that role can offer her? 3. Cisneros leaves words out of sentences in this chapter. What does this do for the chapter? How does it help create a vivid picture of Alicia?

Chapter Fifteen “Darius & the Clouds”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Esperanza says that you can never have too much sky. Why does the sky symbolize for her?
2. What is there a shortage of on Mango Street?
3. What wise thing did Darius say? Why is it wise?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quote.

1. You can never have too much sky. You can fall asleep and wake up drunk on sky, and sky can keep you safe when you are sad.

Themes Journal: This chapter once again brings up the idea of making the best of what you have. What lines reinforce this idea? Style Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator’s world. 1. What words and phrases describe the sky and the clouds? 2. How does Esperanza describe Darius? How does her word choice create a complete picture of the boy Darius is? 3. Explain the last line of the chapter. How does Darius make it simple?

Chapter Sixteen “And Some More”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Why do the girls argue about the names of things?
2. Why does the argument disintegrate into name calling? Are the girls actually fighting or are they exercising their wit?

Themes and Symbols Journal: Clouds have spiritual implications and meanings for Esperanza. How do the changing clouds represent the girls and their behavior? Clouds are mentioned in several chapters. Find the other references to clouds and determine what clouds represent to Esperanza.

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator’s world. 1. Cisneros does not use quotation marks in the dialogue between the four girls. What other technique does she use to create the sense of an active, give and take conversation between the girls? 2. How does the dialogue create a sense of the friendship between the girls?

Chapter Seventeen “The Family of Little Feet”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What happens to Esperanza when she and her friends are given some second-hand high heel shoes?
2. Why does the man say the shoes are dangerous?
3. How do the shoes change the girls?
4. How do the men in the neighborhood behave when they see the girls in those shoes?

Themes Journal: In this chapter, the girls learn quite a bit about the way women are perceived. What are the perceptions of women that they face?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator’s world. 1. The girls refer to themselves as Cinderella and Christmas. What does this type of imagery show about them? 2. What lines in this chapter create the sense of impending violence and potential violation that the narrator feels?

Chapter Eighteen “A Rice Sandwich”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Why does Esperanza want to eat in the canteen?
2. How does Esperanza convince her mother to allow her to eat in the canteen?
3. Why did Esperanza say that the house was hers when it wasn’t?
4. What did Esperanza experience in the canteen?

Themes Journal: Once again Esperanza endures a humiliating experience. How is the experience with the nun in this chapter similar to the experience in chapter one? Why does Esperanza lie about her home? 2. What did she learn from this experience?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator’s world. 1. What words does the narrator use to describe her reaction to the nun’s questioning? What does this show about Esperanza? 2. Why is this chapter titled “The Rice Sandwich?” Would another title be more appropriate?

Chapter Nineteen "Chanclas"

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What did Esperanza's mother forget? How does Esperanza feel about this?
2. Why does Esperanza turn down the boy who asks her to dance?
3. How does she feel at the beginning of her dance with her uncle?
4. How have her feelings changed by the end of the dance?
5. What does Esperanza notice about the boy who asks her to dance?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. ...until I forget that I am wearing only ordinary shoes, brown and white, the kind my mother buys each year for school. And all I hear is the clapping when the music stops. My uncle and me bow and he walks me back to my mother who is proud to be my mother. All night the boy who is a man watches me dance. He watched me dance.

Themes Journal: Feet are an important metaphor in this chapter. What could the feet symbolize for Esperanza in this chapter? Another theme is introduced in this chapter. Esperanza is losing the awkwardness of being a young girl; she is beginning to develop the grace of a woman. What lines let you know that Esperanza is becoming aware of her own womanhood?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator's world. 1. What words does the narrator use to describe Esperanza's feet? 2. How do these words create a sense of the shame and awkwardness the narrator feels? 3. How does the dance help free Esperanza of her shyness? 4. What lines in this chapter create the sense of family that Esperanza feels?

Chapter Twenty “Hips”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What are the girls doing while they talk about hips?
2. What do they say hips are good for? What ideas does Nenny have that are probably wrong?
3. What does the comments made about hips tell you about the girls’ ages?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. One day you wake up and they are there. Ready and waiting like a new Buick with keys in the ignition. Ready to take you where? She is too many light-years away. She is in a world we don’t belong to anymore.

Themes Journal: The roles of women are discussed in this chapter. What roles do the girls mention in their rhymes? What do the comments about what hips are for show about the girls and their ideas about women and women’s roles?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator’s world. 1. What words does Esperanza use to describe hips? What metaphor does she use? 2. How do these words create a sense of the inevitability of growing up that the narrator feels? 3. Why doesn’t Nenny join in the language game that the other girls are playing? How do the rhymes that the girls create show something about their personalities?

Chapter Twenty-One “The First Job”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Why did Esperanza need a job?
2. What job did Esperanza get?
3. What happened to her on her first day of work?

Themes Journal: The exploitation of women is a major theme of this novel. How is this theme developed in this chapter?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator's world. 1. What words does Esperanza use to describe her first day of work? 2. How do these words create a sense of Esperanza's naiveté?

Chapter Twenty-Two "Papa Who Wakes Up Tired in the Dark"

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What does Esperanza's father tell her? Why does he cry?
2. How does Esperanza react to her father's statement?
3. How does his crying make her feel?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. My Papa, his thick hands and thick shoes, who wakes up tired in the dark, who combs his hair with water, drinks his coffee, and is gone before we wake, today is sitting on my bed. And I think if my own Papa died what would I do. I hold my Papa in my arms. I hold and hold and hold him. Themes The strength of and ties to family are shown in this chapter. What lines let you know that Esperanza is aware of her need for her family?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator's world. 1. Why does Cisneros choose to intersperse Spanish with English in this chapter? 2. How do these words create the sense of loss her father feels? 3. How does the responsibility of telling her brothers and sister make Esperanza feel? 4. What metaphors and similes are used in this chapter?

Chapter Twenty-Three “Born Bad”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What happened to Aunt Lupe?
2. Why does Esperanza believe she was born bad?
3. What is the relationship between Esperanza and her aunt?
4. What advice does her aunt give Esperanza?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. You must keep writing. It will keep you free, and I said yes, but at that time I didn't know what she meant. Themes Esperanza's literary aspirations are reinforced in this chapter. What lines show this?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator's world. 1. What words does Esperanza use to describe her aunt and her illness? 2. How do these words create a sense of the responsibility the narrator feels towards her aunt's death? 3. How does the description of her aunt's body wasting away show Esperanza's awareness of her aunt's suffering? What similes and metaphors are used to describe it? 4. What lines in this chapter create the sense of guilt that the narrator feels? 5. Light is used as a metaphor in this chapter. What does it represent? 6. What cultural myths and values are presented in this chapter?

Chapter Twenty-Four “Elenita, Cards, Palm, Water”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Who is Elenita?
2. What does Elenita tell Esperanza?
3. What does Esperanza want to hear?
4. What three things does Elenita consult?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. My whole life on that kitchen table: past, present, future. Ah, yes, a home in the heart. I see a home in the heart. A new house, a house made of heart.

Themes Journal: Esperanza is again searching for a home. What does she learn in this chapter? What could a “home in the heart” symbolize? What is the difference between Esperanza’s question and Elenita’s answer?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator’s world. 1. How does Esperanza describe Elenita’s home? 2. What role does mysticism play in the lives of people on Mango Street? What words let you know this?

Chapter Twenty-Five “Geraldo No Last Name”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Where did Marin meet Geraldo?
2. Why doesn’t Geraldo have a last name?
3. Why does Geraldo die? What clues let you believe that his death did not have to happen?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. Only Marin can’t explain why it mattered, the hours and hours, for somebody she didn’t even know. His name was Geraldo. And his home was in another country. The ones he left behind are far away, will wonder, shrug, remember.

Themes Journal: This chapter is another social criticism. The repetition of the questions reinforces the idea that Geraldo didn’t matter to the society in which he lived. What were the questions? How did the questioning of the police imply that Geraldo brought the accident on himself? What actions and lines support Marin’s belief that Geraldo could have been saved? Why does Esperanza talk about Geraldo’s home?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator's world. 1. What role does the repetition in this chapter play in the development of the theme? 2. How does Esperanza's talk about Geraldo's home connect the theme of home that carries throughout the novel?

Chapter Twenty-Six "Edna's Ruthie"

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Who is Ruthie? Who is Edna?
2. What does Esperanza say about Ruthie? What doesn't she understand about Ruthie?
3. How are Ruthie and Esperanza alike?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. There were many things Ruthie could have been if she wanted to. Themes Ruthie could have been successful. How is what happened to her a warning against wasting potential? Ruthie had a house of her own. Why does she leave it? What lesson should Esperanza learn about life from Ruthie's choices?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator's world. 1. How does Esperanza describe Ruthie? 2. Ruthie finds joy in daily life. What words show this? Personal Response Is it important to find joy in your daily life? Is it important to dream about the future? Which is more important?

Chapter Twenty-Seven "The Earl of Tennessee"

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Who is Earl? Where does he live?
2. What is Earl's job?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator's world. 1. What words does Esperanza use to describe Earl? 2. How do these words help compare Earl to a cockroach? 3. How does Earl's lifestyle compare to the family lifestyle of Mango Street? 4. What is the role of setting in this chapter? How is Earl like his setting?

Chapter Twenty-Eight “Sire”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Why is Esperanza afraid of Sire? What do her parents say about him?
2. Who is Sire’s girlfriend? Why is Esperanza curious about what she does with Sire?
3. Why does her curiosity about Sire make her feel as if “everything is holding its breath inside me?”

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. Everything is holding its breath inside me. Everything is waiting to explode like Christmas. I want to be all new and shiny. I want to sit out bad at night, a boy around my neck and the wind under my skirt. Not this way, every evening talking to the trees, leaning out my window, imagining what I can’t see.

Themes Journal: A major theme of the novel is continued in this chapter. What do you think that theme is? Why? What textual proof is there to support your idea?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator’s world. 1. This chapter discusses Esperanza’s heightened sexual curiosity. What images and words support this idea? 2. Several types of girls are mentioned in this chapter. What types? What words express the feelings of the community about the types of girls?

Chapter Twenty-Nine “Four Skinny Trees”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. In what ways does Esperanza identify with the four skinny trees?
2. What does Esperanza learn from the trees?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes. Four raggedy excuses planted by the city. Their strength is secret. They send ferocious roots beneath the ground. They grow up and grow down and grab the earth between their hairy toes and bite the sky with violent teeth and never quit their anger. This is how they keep. Let one forget his reason for being, they’d all droop like tulips in a glass, each with their arms around the other. When I am too sad and too skinny to keep keeping, when I am a tiny thing against so many bricks, then it is I look at trees. Four who reach and do not forget to reach. Four whose only reason is to be and be.

Themes Journal: The theme of finding beauty in everyday things is continued in this chapter. What beauty does Esperanza find in the trees? What do the trees teach her? What is the irony in what the trees teach her?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator's world. 1. How does the description of the trees correspond with Esperanza's description of herself? 2. How do these words used to describe the trees create the sense of tenacity that is an essential part of Esperanza's life?

Chapter Thirty "No Speak English"

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What English phrases does Mamacita know?
2. Why doesn't Mamacita leave the apartment?
3. Where is home to Mamacita?
4. What broke Mamacita's heart?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. Home is a house in a photograph, a pink house, pink as hollyhocks with lots of startled light. We are home. This is home. Here I am and here I stay. Speak English. No speak English, she says to the child who is singing in the language that sounds like tin.

Themes Journal: This chapter continues the theme of home. Mamacita seems to be physically tied to her home in Mexico. She is not happy in the apartment in America. How is the opposite of the American Dream? How is this chapter also a continuation of the theme of masculine and feminine roles?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator's world. 1. What words are used to describe Mamacita? 2. What words are used to describe her house in Mexico? What words are similar?

Chapter Thirty-One “Rafaela Who Drinks Coconut & Papaya Juice on Tuesdays”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Why is Rafaela growing old?
2. Why does her husband lock her in the apartment?
3. Who is Rapunzel? Why would Rafaela wish that she had hair like Rapunzel?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes. And always there is someone offering sweeter drinks, someone promising to keep them on a silver string.

Themes Journal: A major theme of the novel is continued in this chapter. What do you think that theme is? Why? What textual proof is there to support your idea?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator’s world. 1. What words does Esperanza use to describe Rafaela? What is significant about her description? 2. What fairy tale words and allusions are used in this chapter? What effect do fairy tales seem to have on women?

Chapter Thirty-Two “Sally”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Who is Sally?
2. What is Sally’s relationship with her father?
3. How does Sally change when it is time to go home?
4. According to Esperanza, what does Sally want?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. Her father says to be this beautiful is trouble. ...without the whole world waiting for you to make a mistake when all you wanted, all you wanted, Sally, was to love and to love and to love and to love, and no one could call that crazy.

Themes Journal: Again the theme of the abuse and exploitation of women is continued in this novel. Describe society's perception of Sally. Describe the reality of Sally's life. What similarity does Esperanza see in Sally?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator's world. 1. What words are used to describe Sally? How is her relationship with her father described? 2. What lesson does Esperanza learn from Sally?

Chapter Thirty-Three "Minerva Writes Poems"

Questions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Why is Minerva always sad?
2. Describe the relationship between Minerva and her husband.
3. Why does Esperanza say "There is nothing I can do."

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes. She is always sad like a house on fire—always something wrong. There is nothing I can do. Also, the theme of the abuse of women is continued. What lines contribute to this theme?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator's world. 1. What words does Esperanza use to describe Minerva's poems? What value is placed on Minerva's poems? 2. How does Esperanza feel about Minerva's situation? What words and lines let you know this? 3. What are the similes and metaphors in this chapter?

Chapter Thirty-Four "Bums in the Attic"

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What is Esperanza's father's job?
2. Why doesn't Esperanza go with her family on their Sunday outings?
3. What does Esperanza dream of?
4. What will she keep in her attic? Why?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. I am tired of looking at what we can't have. People who live on hills sleep so close to the stars they forget those of us who live too much on the earth. One day I'll own my own house, but I won't forget who I am or where I came from. Bums, I'll say, and I'll be happy.

Themes Journal: This chapter is a social commentary on class separation. What metaphor is used to represent the separation between the rich and the poor?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator's world. 1. What words does Esperanza use to describe her world? To describe the world of the rich? 2. What does the idea that she will have bums in her attic show about Esperanza? How do you think that people will react to this?

Chapter Thirty-Five "Beautiful & Cruel"

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. How does Esperanza describe herself?
2. Esperanza says she began "my own quiet war." With what is she at war?
3. What does Esperanza decide about growing up?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. I am an ugly daughter. I am the one nobody comes for. My mother says when I get older my dusty hair will settle and my blouse will learn to stay clean, but I have decided not to grow up tame like the others who lay their neck on the threshold waiting for the ball and chain. She is the one who drives the men crazy and laughs them all away. Her power is her own. She will not give it away. I have begun my own quiet war.

Themes Journal: This chapter discusses the themes of power and challenging society's expectations. What textual support is there to support these two themes?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator's world. 1. What words does Esperanza use to describe the relationship between men and women? 2. How do these words create the sense of resolve that Esperanza feels about her future? 3. What is the significance of the last paragraph of this chapter?

Chapter Thirty-Six “A Smart Cookie”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What does Esperanza’s mother say about her life?
2. What skills does Esperanza’s mother have? What does she lack?
3. Why did her mother quit school?
4. Does she still believe she was a “smart cookie?”

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes. Shame is a bad thing, you know. It keeps you down. I was a smart cookie then.

Themes Journal: Mama tells Esperanza to stay in school so that she never has to depend on a man. How does this chapter continue the themes of the novel? What lines support the themes?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator’s world. 1. What words does Esperanza use to describe her mother’s talents? 2. How do these words create a sense of the range of her mother’s talents? 3. How does the description of shame contrast with the description of her mother’s talents? 4. What simile is used in this chapter?

Chapter Thirty-Seven “What Sally Said”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What does Sally say about her father? Does anyone believe it?
2. What does her father fear?
3. Did the situation ever change?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes. He never hits me hard. But Sally doesn’t tell about that time he hit her with his hands just like a dog, she said, like if I was an animal. Just because I am a daughter, and then she doesn’t say. You’re not my daughter, you’re not my daughter. And then he broke into his hands.

Themes Journal: A major theme is continued in this disturbing chapter. The abuser in this chapter is Sally's father rather than her husband but she behaves the same way that the other abused women have. Discuss the irony of father's behavior in this chapter. An additional theme is present – Sally is punished harshly for talking to boys. What is a double standard? How does it relate to the roles of women in this novel? How does it relate to Sally's life?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator's world. 1. What words Esperanza does use to describe Sally's relationship with her father? 2. How are the last two paragraphs ironic? 3. What lines let you know that boys are considered to be more powerful?

Chapter Thirty-Eight "The Monkey Garden"

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. How does the Monkey Garden change?
2. What does Sally do that makes Esperanza angry?
3. How did Esperanza try to help Sally? What happened when Esperanza tried to help her?
4. Why does Esperanza feel that the garden is no longer a good place to play?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. Things had a way of disappearing in the garden, as if the garden itself ate them, or, as if with its old-man memory, it put them away and forgot them. It was a joke I didn't get. They all looked at me as if I was the one that was crazy and made me feel ashamed. I looked at my feet in their white socks and ugly round shoes. They seemed far away. They didn't seem to be my feet anymore. And the garden that had been such a good place to play didn't seem mine either.

Themes Journal: A major theme of the novel is continued in this chapter. What do you think that theme is? Why? What textual proof is there to support your idea?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator's world. 1. Describe the garden in this chapter. To what other garden in literature could this garden be compared? 2. What lines in this chapter create the sense of embarrassment that Esperanza feels? What images are used to reinforce this idea?

Chapter Thirty-Nine “Red Clowns”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What does Esperanza say that Sally lied about?

2. What happened to Esperanza at the Carnival?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. Why did you leave me all alone? I waited my whole life. You’re a liar. They all lied. All the books and magazines, everything that told it wrong. The moon that watched. The red clowns laughing their thick-tongue laugh. Themes A theme of this chapter is male domination of women. What lines support this theme? How is racial prejudice part of this chapter?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator’s world. 1. How does the repetition in this chapter create the tone of panic and fear? 2. What illusions of Esperanza’s were shattered in this chapter? From where did she get these illusions?

Chapter Forty “Linoleum Roses”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Why did Sally say she got married? How old was she when she married?

2. Why does Esperanza believe that Sally got married?

3. How does her husband treat her?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. She says she is in love, but I think she did it to escape. She sits at home because she is afraid to go outside without his permission. She likes looking at the walls, at how neatly their corners meet, the linoleum roses on the floor, the ceiling smooth as a wedding cake.

Themes Journal: How is Sally an example of a “woman waiting by the window?” How does this chapter continue that theme?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator’s world. 1. Discuss the irony of Sally’s marriage. 2. How is her apartment like a prison? What elements of girlhood are present in this chapter? What is ironic about the girlhood dreams?

Chapter Forty-One “The Three Sisters”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. When did Esperanza meet the three sisters?
2. How are the three sisters described?
3. What future do the three sisters predict for Esperanza?
4. What do they say that Esperanza must do to complete the circle?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. They had the power and could sense what was what. When you leave, you must remember to come back for the others. A circle, understand? You will always be Esperanza. You will always be Mango Street. You can't erase what you know. You can't forget who you are. You must remember to come back. For the ones who cannot leave as easily as you.

Themes Journal: In this chapter, several elements of superstition and cultural mysticism are present. What are the elements? How do these elements tie into the themes of the novel? Again, Esperanza wishes for a house of her own. While she learns that her dream will come true, she is also given a new responsibility. What is this responsibility? How does this tie into the themes of the novel?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator's world. 1. What omens foreshadow the death of the baby? How are they significant? 2. What words are used to describe the sisters? What words contribute to the sense of their power?

Chapter Forty-Two “Alicia & I Talking on Edna’s Steps”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Why does Esperanza like Alicia?
2. Why isn’t 4006 Mango Street Esperanza’s house?
3. What will make Mango Street better? Who will make it better?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. No, this isn’t my house I say and shake my head as if shaking could undo the year I’ve lived here. I don’t belong. I don’t ever want to come from here. Like it or not you are Mango Street, and one day you’ll come back.

Themes Journal: In this chapter, Esperanza learns that she cannot deny her heritage. She also is reminded that she will be coming back to Mango Street. How do these ideas tie into the themes of belonging, heritage, and home?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator’s world. 1. Alicia says something very similar to what the three sisters said. What does she say? What did the sisters say? How does Esperanza respond to both of them?

Chapter Forty-Three “A House of My Own”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. How does Esperanza describe her house? What does this say about her?

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. Only a house quiet as snow, a space for myself to go, clean as paper before the poem.

Themes Journal: A major theme of the novel is expanded in this chapter. What do you think that theme is? Why? What textual proof is there to support your idea? Much of what Esperanza expresses as her dream of a house is a reaction to what she sees as unfairness in the gender roles. What lines support that statement? How is this a part of the “quiet war” Esperanza is fighting?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator’s world. 1. What words does Esperanza use to describe her house? What significance is it that she begins by describing what it will not be? 2. What lines in this chapter read like poetry? What does this contribute to the chapter?

Chapter Forty-Four “Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes”

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What does Esperanza do to help her cope?
2. What are her plans?
3. How does the ending of the novel complete a circle?
4. What does she mean when she says, “I’ve gone away to come back?”

Quotes: Explain the significance of the following quotes.

1. I like to tell stories. I am going to tell you a story about a girl who didn’t want to belong. Where did she go with all those books and paper? Why did she march so far away? They will not know I have gone away to come back. For the ones I left behind. For the ones who cannot out.

Themes Journal: What is the most significant theme in this novel? Why?

Style: Cisneros has a poetic style. She incorporates both vivid imagery and spare prose. She uses both to create a picture of the narrator’s world. 1. What words does the narrator use to describe the relationship between her brothers? Between the brothers and the sisters? Between the two sisters? 2. How do these words create a sense of the responsibility the narrator feels towards her sister? 3. How does the description of the dream best friend contrast with the description her sister? 4. What lines in this chapter create the sense of separation that the narrator feels? What metaphor is used to reinforce this idea?