

House on Mango Street Comparative Films: Empowering Latina Representations

While stories can help readers better understand specific perspectives, one story should never be viewed as representative of an entire culture. And, when examining Latinx stories and themes, multiple perspectives become even more important, because Latinx is a term that homogenizes many different, distinctive Latin American cultures. In *The House on Mango Street*, the audience is given access to one specific understanding of an impoverished Latina (Mexican American) who wants to better her life – be independent and self-sufficient. Over the next couple of days, you will be exposed to two more representations of Latina culture that examine different social and cultural issues. These stories defy some of the stereotypes of Latinas that *The House on Mango Street* fails to challenge and in some ways even perpetuates. The Netflix show *One Day at a Time* examines generational issues of a Cuban American family and CW's show *Jane the Virgin* uses the structure and tropes of a telenovela to follow three Venezuelan American women.

One Day at a Time: "This is It"

Directions: Today you will watch the season premiere of the Latinx NetFlix series *One Day at a Time*. The show follows a Cuban American family and examines some of the social and cultural issues of different generations. After watching the show, answer the following questions.

1. What is the mother's profession? Why is this profession empowering? How does her profession challenge stereotypes of Latinas?
2. How does the show represent differences of Cuban American women's beliefs and cultural ties?
Hint: think about what is important to them and how they respond differently to the same topic.

Elena Alvarez (daughter)

Penelope Alvarez (mother)

Lydia Riera (grandmother)

3. How does the show represent a unique merging of Cuban and American cultures in the episode?

One Day at a Time: "The Turn"

Directions: Today you will watch the first episode of the second season of *One Day at Time* – this episode deals with racial and cultural issues that impact Alex and Elena (the brother and sister) differently. After watching the show, answer the following questions.

4. American kids are often embarrassed by parents and guardians. How does this episode examine one of the complications of family embarrassment for a Cuban American kid? Provide specific examples to support your claims.

5. After returning from her brother's baseball game, Alex tries to express pride for her Cuban heritage by joining in on her family's chant. Identify 2 examples of how society and her family treat her differently than the rest of the Alvarez family.

6. How does the show examine prejudice against the Latinx community? Provide at least 3 examples of racism that Latinx characters experience or talk about.

7. The grandmother reveals that she has been called a slur. How does the episode show how the power and meanings of words change over time?

8. How are the characters impacted by hate words? Be specific and provide examples from the show to support your claim.

9. Even though this show doesn't explicitly or even predominately flout women empowerment, how does the show depict empowered Latinas?

Jane the Virgin: "Chapter 1"

Directions: Today you will watch the premiere of the Latinx CW series *Jane the Virgin*. The show follows a Venezuelan American family and challenges the stereotypically beautiful, heavily sexualized, damsel in distress female characters of many telenovelas. After watching the show, answer the following questions.

10. How does the show celebrate Latinx culture? Provide at least 2-3 examples from the episode to support your claim.

11. How does Jane Villanueva challenge stereotypes of Latina women?

12. Describe the personalities and actions of 3 Villanueva women – how does the show celebrate different types of Latina women? Hint: think about the differences of these women and how each woman is depicted positively.

Character	Actions/Personality Traits	How the show celebrates them
Jane Villanueva (daughter)		
Xiomara Villanueva (mother)		
Alba Villanueva (grandmother)		

13. How does the show emphasize the importance of women supporting women? Provide at least 2 examples from the show to support your claim.