

**Olentangy Local School District
Literature Selection Review**

Teacher: Teri Shoemaker
School: Olentangy High School
Book Title: *The House on Mango Street*
Genre: Fiction; Coming-of-Age
Author: Sandra Cisneros
Publisher: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, Inc.

Book Summary and Summary Citation: (suggested resources include book flap summaries, review summaries from publisher, book vendors, etc.)

1. (from Amazon: the back flap of the book)

<https://www.amazon.com/House-Mango-Street-Sandra-Cisneros/dp/0679734775>

Told in a series of vignettes stunning for their eloquence, *The House on Mango Street* is Sandra Cisneros's greatly admired novel of a young girl growing up in the Latino section of Chicago. Acclaimed by critics, beloved by children, their parents and grandparents, taught everywhere from inner-city grade schools to universities across the country, and translated all over the world, it has entered the canon of coming-of-age classics.

Sometimes heartbreaking, sometimes deeply joyous, *The House on Mango Street* tells the story of Esperanza Cordero, whose neighborhood is one of harsh realities and harsh beauty. Esperanza doesn't want to belong--not to her rundown neighborhood, and not to the low expectations the world has for her. Esperanza's story is that of a young girl coming into her power, and inventing for herself what she will become.

2.

<https://www.commonsemmedia.org/book-reviews/the-house-on-mango-street>

In lyrical language, a young girl discusses growing up in a lower-income Latino neighborhood. She tells her story in short vignettes, describing her friends, her family, and her neighbors, and her dream to have a "house all my own... Only a house quiet as snow, a space for myself to go, clean as paper before the poem."

In these short, poetic installments, Sandra Cisneros captures the sadness and desperation Esperanza sees among her neighbors, especially the women. Esperanza writes about her house on Mango Street with "windows so small you'd think they were

holding their breath"; her mother, who quit school and pushes her to continue her education; and her friend Sally, who gets married too young to escape her house, only to end up trapped by her husband, who doesn't allow her to see friends or leave the house. There's also the confusion that comes with growing up, and the beauty in small moments, like riding a bike with friends.

Provide an instructional rationale for the use of this title, including specific reference to the OLSD curriculum blueprints and/or State standards.

- This book exposes students to the economic and cultural diversity of a poverty stricken area of Chicago.
- Students can consider facets of other people's complicated lives to stimulate their own empathy for people in general.
- Since the novella is written as a series of vignettes, it exposes students to a unique style of writing and enhances their understanding of imagery, syntax, juxtaposition and other literary elements.
- As they move through both tender and funny episodes as well as frightening and darker moments, they will be able to interpret the vignettes and ponder their implied meaning through class discussion.
- Students can create theme statements from the conflicts in the book, many of which involve overcoming adversity.
- The book gives students an excellent model for writing narrative vignettes of their own, ultimately giving students a chance to share their writing in class as a final culminating speaking opportunity.
- Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to recognize and value this simplistic, yet emotionally charged style of writing.

Specific District and Common Core Standards include (please include a link to the ELA Standards document and list the specific standards):

<https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/English-Language-Art/English-Language-Arts-Standards/ELA-Learning-Standards-2017-Section-508.pdf.aspx>

RL.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL.9-10.2 Analyze literary text development. a. Determine a theme of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details. b. Provide an objective summary of the text that includes the theme and relevant story elements.

RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

RL.9-10.6 Analyze how a point of view, perspective, or cultural experience is reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

W.9-10.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

a. Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

c. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.

d. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

SL.9-10.5 Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

Include two professional reviews of this title: (links to the reviews are fine; Common Sense Media should be used, if available)

1.

<https://patricktreardon.com/book-review-the-house-on-mango-street-by-sandra-cisneros>

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There is a universal quality to Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* and also something very specific.

This is the story of Esperanza Cordero, and, at its heart, it is the story of every child who has gone through the very difficult transformation into becoming a

teenager with all its excitement, fear, challenge and risk. No wonder it's read in so many high school classes.

At the same time, the book's strength as literature is that it tells the story of a unique girl in a unique place — a Mexican-American girl in the neighborhoods of Chicago whose life is focused not only on the changes in her body but also on her need to figure out how to maneuver in the broader world.

Esperanza lives in a community that is made up of newly arrived immigrants from Mexico and first-generation Americans, but also includes black and white people from such places as Texas, Kentucky, Tennessee and Puerto Rico. (Review continues)

(Refer to link above for more in depth information from Reardon on this novel.)

2.

<https://www.amazon.com/House-Mango-Street-Sandra-Cisneros/dp/0679734775>

"A classic. . . . This little book has made a great space for itself on the shelf of American literature." —Julia Alvarez

"*Afortunado!* Lucky! Lucky the generation who grew up with Esperanza and *The House on Mango Street*. And lucky future readers. This funny, beautiful book will always be with us." —Maxine Hong Kingston

"Cisneros draws on her rich [Latino] heritage . . . and seduces with precise, spare prose, creat[ing] unforgettable characters we want to lift off the page. She is not only a gifted writer, but an absolutely essential one." —Bebe Moore Campbell, *The New York Times Book Review*

"Marvelous . . . spare yet luminous. The subtle power of Cisneros's storytelling is evident. She communicates all the rapture and rage of growing up in a modern world." —*San Francisco Chronicle*

"A deeply moving novel...delightful and poignant. . . . Like the best of poetry, it opens the windows of the heart without a wasted word." —*Miami Herald*

"Sandra Cisneros is one of the most brilliant of today's young writers. Her work is sensitive, alert, nuanced . . . rich with music and pictures." —Gwendolyn Books

What alternate text(s) could also fulfill the instructional requirements? (alternates should be previously reviewed texts or a new text needs a new review form)

I am not your Mexican Daughter by Erika L. Sanchez

Ashes of Roses by J.J. Auch

Document any potentially controversial content (clear, descriptive, accurate, and examples of a page number or two):

<https://www.commonsemmedia.org/book-reviews/the-house-on-mango-street>

Parents need to know that Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* is a coming-of-age novel originally published in 1984 about a girl named Esperanza growing up in a lower income Latino neighborhood in Chicago. The book begins when she's 12 and ends when she turns 14. It features gritty material including child abuse, men who treat their wives like captives, and a scene where a group of boys sexually assault a girl. It's not graphically described, but it's implied that she was raped. Esperanza is a smart, gifted narrator who's determined to say goodbye to her neighborhood and forge a better life and a home of her own. This book is often used in the classroom setting, and parents and teachers can use it to open up a variety of discussions, including about the importance of consent. One mother smokes a cigarette, and there are references to drinking.

The parents' guide to what's in this book: Stands out for diverse representations, positive messages, and positive role models.

Educational Value Often assigned in school. Random House provides a list of questions for parents or teachers who want to dive into specific vignettes.

Positive Messages It's important to strive for a better life and keep a promise to come back for "the ones I left behind."

Positive Role Models Readers will root for the smart, gifted narrator who displays grit and agency in changing the challenging circumstances in which she grew up, which includes just one room for the whole family to sleep in. She's on a quest for a better life.

Diverse Representations Main character is Chicana, and most characters are Latino (Mexican, Puerto Rican). Sexism and socioeconomic inequality are major themes.

Violence On a trip to a carnival, a group of boys attack Esperanza. Esperanza's account of what happened is disjointed and not graphically detailed: She was with Sally but Sally goes off with an older boy, and while Esperanza waits for her, she's assaulted. One boy forces her to kiss him, repeatedly saying "I love you, Spanish girl"; it's implied that she was raped. Esperanza grows up in an environment where men and boys prey on young girls and force girls to kiss them. Husbands and fathers abuse their children.

Sex A man hires a woman for sex. Esperanza talks about her awakening sexuality.

Language Not Present

Consumerism Not Present

Drinking, Drugs & Smoking One mother smokes a cigarette, references to drinking.

EXAMPLE OF LACK OF CONSENT: From page 54 of the vignette "The First Job"

I guess it was the time for the night shift or middle shift to arrive because a few people came in and punched the time clock, and an older Oriental man said hello and we talked for a while about my just starting, and he said we could be friends and next time to go in the lunchroom and sit with him and I felt better. He had nice eyes and I didn't feel so nervous anymore. Then he asked if I knew what day it was, and when I said I didn't, he said it was his birthday and would I please give him a birthday kiss. I thought I would because he was so old and just as I was about to put my lips on his cheek, he grabs my face with both hands and kisses me hard on the mouth and doesn't let go. (End of vignette)

EXAMPLE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE: "Red Clowns" pages 99-100 (the entire vignette)

Sally, you lied. It wasn't what you said at all. What he did. Where he touched me. I didn't want it, Sally. The way they said it, the way it's supposed to be, all the storybooks and movies, why did you lie to me?

I was waiting by the red clowns. I was standing by the tilt-a-whirl where you said. And anyway I don't like carnivals. I went to be with you because you laugh on the tilt-a-whirl, you throw your head back and laugh. I hold your change, wave, count how many times you go by. Those boys that look at you because you're pretty. I like to be with you, Sally. You're my friend. But that big boy, where did he take you? I waited such a long time. I waited by the red clowns, just like you said, but you never came, you never came for me.

Sally Sally a hundred times. Why didn't you hear me when I called? Why didn't you tell them to leave me alone? The one who grabbed me by the arm, he wouldn't let me go. He said I love you, Spanish girl, I love you, and pressed his sour mouth to mine.

Sally, make him stop. I couldn't make them go away. I couldn't do anything but cry. I don't remember. It was dark. I don't remember. I don't remember. Please don't make me tell it all.

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. Only his dirty fingernails against my skin, only his sour smell again. The moon that watched. The tilt-a-whirl. The red clowns laughing their thick-tongue laugh.

Then the colors began to whirl. Sky tipped. Their high black gym shoes ran. Sally, you lied, you lied. He wouldn't let me go. He said I love you, I love you, Spanish girl.

Keeping in mind the age, academic level, and maturity of the intended reader, what is the suggested classroom use: (check all that apply)

Gifted/Accelerated

Regular

At-Risk

GRADE LEVEL(S): (indicate the grade band or the grade level):

Recommended by publisher for ages 12-17; 9th-10th graders

Reading Level of this Title (lexile level)

<https://shop.scholastic.com/teachers-ecommerce/teacher/books/the-house-on-mango-street-9780679734772.html>

Lexile Level: 870L

Suggested Professional Literacy Review Sources:

School Library Journal

Horn Book

Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates)

Library Journal

Book Links

Publisher's Weekly

Booklist

Kirkus Review

Wilson Library Catalog

English Journal (and other resources of the National Council of Teachers of English)

The Reading Teacher (International Reading Association)

Literature for Today's Young Adults

Signatures:

Teacher: Teri Shoemaker

Date: January, 2022

Department Head: Erin C...

Date: 1/2/22

Building Administrator: [Signature]

Date: 1/25/22

Curriculum Supervisor: [Signature]

Date: 1/27/22