

Explanation of Assignment: *The House on Mango Street* Literary Analysis Essay.

Students were lead through Sandra Cisneros's novella, *The House on Mango Street*, during a three-week period. During the reading process, both in class and as assigned homework, students completed a variety of assignments from taking notes, reading and annotating additional related written works (poems and articles), and completing tests and quizzes on the assigned chapters. Upon completion of the novel, students were assigned a process essay that required them to write a thematic essay on the novel. This process began by examining the difference between topics and themes and identifying themes found in *House on Mango Street*. Using a "shaping sheet" to address all of the components needed for the essay, students were led by their instructors to complete a rough draft that included a process of editing and reviewing. This process, from start to finish, takes roughly two weeks. Emphasis is placed on the completion of the steps of the process in order to have students produce their best work in a final draft that is error free in its content, organization, and conventions (spelling and grammar).

## English I

### *The House on Mango Street* - Essay

Sandra Cisneros' novella *The House on Mango Street* addresses many themes that revolve around a multitude of topics, such as roles of women, family, prejudice, community, identity, dreams, and growing up, to name a few. **In a four paragraph essay (introduction, two body paragraphs, conclusion), determine and analyze the novel's theme about one of these topics.** You will use your book, essay writing notes, and notes from our class discussions and activities to help put together a cohesive, full-length essay that meets the following criteria:

Opening paragraph that contains clear thesis at end of paragraph

Body paragraphs that follow LAP criteria

Concluding paragraph that summarizes argument of essay

Strong, appropriate textual evidence and analysis that clarifies how evidence supports argument

Citations for textual evidence

Free from spelling and grammar errors



## Loss, Change, and *The House on Mango Street*

As if by some primal way, hidden in the subconscious of the human mind, the best stories always seem to have several things in common. Sometimes clear, such as an admirable protagonist or compelling conflict, while others are less obvious, such as loss. The latter does something special; it can affect characters not only physically, but emotionally. The novella *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros contains a lot of loss. Characters lose their homes, their freedoms, and even each other. It can be found that a recurring theme in her work is the ways in which loss can lead to a change of perspective.

“My Name”, one of the first few chapters, shows a loss which defines most of who Esperanza is. One of her main ideals can be derived from her great-grandmother’s loss. In discussing the origins of her name, she brings up how her great-grandparents met. Esperanza says, “my great-grandfather threw a sack over [my great-grandmother’s] head and carried her off... And the story goes she never forgave him. I have inherited her name, but I don’t want to inherit her place by the window”(Cisneros 11). Her great-grandma’s loss of freedom is what gives Esperanza a desire for independence. Even though it didn’t happen to her, the example in her lineage is enough to give her a negative look towards men. This causes her to wish to remain unwed, which can be interpreted when she described her mother’s grandmother earlier. She declares, “It was my great-grandmother’s name and now it is mine. She was a horse woman too,

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born like me, in the Chinese year of the horse... I would've liked to know her, a wild horse of a woman, so wild she wouldn't marry"(Cisneros 10-11). The tone and manner in which she refers to her passed elder shows admiration and respect. She aspires to be what her namesake could not. So, with another's loss of freedom, Esperanza gained a goal and a new regard to the world.

In the book's second half Esperanza experiences a loss which changes her view on others in the chapter "Born Bad". After a relative dies, she begins to rethink the way she acts. At the end of the section Esperanza summarizes what happens to her aunt and how she and her friends reacted. The author writes, "And then she died... and then we began to dream the dreams"(Cisneros 61). The use of 'began' signifies that the death was a catalyst for the group's new form of thinking. As an addendum Esperanza does an, by her normal standards, outlandish thing. Before hearing of her passing, the group played a game that imitated, and to an extent mocked, the late family member. Esperanza rants, "That day we played the game, we didn't know she was going to die. We pretended with our heads thrown back our arms, limp and useless, dangling like the dead... Lucy laughed. Rachel laughed. We all took turns being her... We didn't know. She'd been dying for such a long time, we forgot"(Cisneros 61). Esperanza speaks out of regret, feeling bad for what she did and how she forgot about the illness. A few chapters later, she makes friends with an older person, something absent since the beginning of the book, which may show that she feels the need to show more respect to people, especially those who aren't in their prime. Her aunt's death lead to Esperanza thinking about things in a new, considerative way.

Cisneros' novel shows how loss can change a person's outlook on life. Esperanza's great-grandmother lost her husband, which made her name bearer aspire to stay free in life. Her

aunt's death made Esperanza more considerate of her actions and spend more time with the elderly. The world can be rough, to say the least, throwing punch after punch. In the end of all, the scars define who a person is, what they want to be, and how they view others.

Rationale for *The House on Mango Street* Essay: 9th grade 1st Semester 1st Quarter

High

This essay received an overall score of 4 out of 4 using the district rubric. The essay has all of the trademarks of excellent work. The essay has an introductory paragraph with an interesting hook that moves the reader through the introduction, elaborating on beginning details in a natural and logical fashion, ending the introductory paragraph with a thesis statement that addresses the essay prompt. Body paragraphs are formatted properly with topic sentences, elaborative detail, textual evidence that is cited properly using Modern Language Association standards, and insightful commentary that remains focused on answering the essay prompt. The final paragraph complements the previous body paragraphs and introduction by providing the reader with some final thoughts that effectively conclude the essay and agree with their thesis statement. Attention to fine detail is clear in the construction of the essay through the minimal number of grammatical, spelling, citation, and format errors.

*House on Mango Street theme*  
*9th grade*      *1st semester*

**Common Core All-Subject Writing Rubric**

Writing Type(circle one):    Argumentative    Informative/Explanatory    Narrative (ELA only)

<b>CONTENT</b> <b>X4</b>	The writing has a sharp focus and clarity of purpose. The ideas are developed with examples and specific details including textual evidence and are thoroughly elaborated. All elements of the prompt are addressed.	The writing has a clear central idea and a clear focus. Ideas are developed with textual evidence, even though the development may be uneven. Information is relevant. Most elements of the prompt are addressed.	The writing has a vague central idea; there are shifts in focus or digressions. Ideas are listed, information may be incomplete or irrelevant, textual evidence may be lacking, and there is little development. Some elements of the prompt are <u>not</u> addressed.	The writing has unclear or confusing ideas. The ideas are missing relevant information, there is not enough information, or there is little or no development, and little textual evidence. Significant elements of the prompt are <u>not</u> addressed.	<b>X4</b>
<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	There is a beginning, middle, and end in the writing with strong transitions between ideas. Ideas are presented in a logical order and there is a sense of completion about the writing.	There is a beginning, middle, and end in the writing with simple transitions between ideas. Ideas are presented in a logical order and the writing may have a weak ending.	There is a weak beginning, middle, and end with gaps in ideas. Ideas are presented in random order, there may be significant repetition, and the writing may have no ending.	There is no beginning or end with severe gaps in ideas. Ideas are presented in a random or repetitive order. There may be too little information to demonstrate organization.	
<b>SPELLING &amp; GRAMMAR (Conventions)</b>	The writing exhibits superior control over grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. If there are errors present, they do not appear to be part of a pattern of errors.	The writing exhibits proper control over grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. If there are errors present, they do not appear to be a part of a pattern of errors.	The writing exhibits weak control over grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. The errors minimally affect the meaning of the writing.	The writing exhibits little to no control over grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. The errors greatly affect the meaning of the writing.	
Teacher Feedback:				{(Student Reflection on Back)}	
				<b>Total Points Earned</b>	
				<b>Score</b>	<b>4</b>