

READ! IMAGINE! CREATE!! 2021/2022

Full Study Guide

The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros

Literary Devices

Sandra Cisneros uses many Literary Devices throughout the text. Exploring and understanding these devices will help you gain deeper appreciation and enjoyment of the text. It may even inspire a project idea!

Imagery – Descriptive language used to appeal to a reader's senses: touch, taste, smell, sound, and sight. Or, creating a picture or an experience with words.

Find examples of imagery from three different chapters.

Make a quick sketch of each example.

Below each sketch, write down a short list of words or phrases that describe how the passage makes you feel.

EXAMPLE: “It’s small and red with tight steps in front and windows so small you’d think they were holding their breath. (4)”

Sketch:

Can’t breath

Cramped

Flushed and hot

Uncomfortable

Just want to get out!

How does the use of imagery impact your experience reading the text?

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Simile – Comparing two things that are seemingly unrelated using “like” or “as.”

Find examples of similes from three different chapters.

Write down the two things Cisneros is comparing.

Brainstorm how the simile relates these two things. Are there any similarities? Are there stark differences?

EXAMPLE: “Our laughter for example...like a pile of dishes breaking (17).”

The sound of laughter and the sound of dishes breaking.

The sound of both laughter and dishes breaking is loud and can be sudden and unexpected. Laughter is usually positive, fun. Dishes breaking is usually an accident, destructive, something you might get in

trouble for. You might also get in trouble for laughing too loud or at an inappropriate time. Dishes breaking is chaotic and out of control. Laughter can also feel that way.

How does the use of simile impact your experience of reading the text?

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Metaphor – Comparing two things that are seemingly unrelated without using “like” or “as.” A metaphor often states something IS the thing it is being compared to, rather than SIMILAR TO it.

Find examples of metaphors from three different chapters.

Write down the two things Cisneros is comparing.

Brainstorm how the metaphor relates these two things. Are there any similarities? Are there stark differences?

EXAMPLE: “My aunt, a little oyster, a little piece of meat on an open shell for us to look at (60).”

Esperanza’s aunt and an oyster on a plate.

Both an oyster and her aunt are alive. An oyster is tiny and limp and cold, and Esperanza’s aunt is sick and unable to care for herself. An oyster has a hard, brown, wrinkled outside shell which may look like Esperanza’s aunt’s skin. An oyster doesn’t move and neither can Esperanza’s aunt.

How does the use of metaphor impact your experience of reading the text?

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Personification – Giving human qualities, attributes, or traits to non-human objects, animals, or plants.

Find examples of personification from three different chapters.

EXAMPLE: “But what you remember most is this tree, huge, with fat arms... (22)”

How does the use of personification affect your understanding of the object, animal, plant being described?

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Synesthesia – Blending or using human senses (physical sensation/touch, sight, sound, taste, smell) to describe an object or experience.

Find examples of synesthesia from three different chapters.

Which senses are being applied to what object?

EXAMPLE: “You can fall asleep and wake up drunk on sky... (33).”

Physical sensation and sight: The physical sensation of being off-balance or intoxicated. Sometimes being drunk can make your vision blurry.

How does the use of synesthesia impact your experience of reading the text?

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Ungrammatical Phrasing – Purposefully using “wrong” or “bad” grammar in writing.

Find examples of ungrammatical phrasing from three different chapters.

Write down the ungrammatical phrase or sentence, and identify where the “errors” are.

Write it out using correct grammar.

How are the two similar? How are they different?

Compare how the ungrammatical phrase makes you feel compared to the grammatically corrected phrase.

EXAMPLE: “And I think if my own Pap died what would I do (57).”

Errors: missing punctuation – commas, quotation marks, question mark, possibly the order of the clauses:

Corrected: And I think, “If my own Papa died, what would I do?” OR And I think “What would I do if my own Papa died?”

Why do you think Sandra Cisneros chose to include ungrammatical phrasing and punctuation?

What does this tell you about the narrator, Esperanza?

What effect does this have on you as a reader?

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Themes and Ideas

There are many recurring themes in *The House on Mango Street*. Here are a few. Of course, there are many more, and more than one theme appears in each story!

Home and Belonging

21	Meme Ortiz
76	No Speak English
103	The Three Sisters
106	Alicia & I Talking on Edna’s Steps
109	Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes

What does it mean to be “home”?

What does it mean to “belong”?

How do the characters in these chapters feel? Why? Give specific examples from the text to support your answers.

How does the idea of “home” and “belonging” shift or change within each of these chapters?

The American Dream

3	The House on Mango Street
16	Our Good Day
31	Alicia Who Sees Mice
56	Papa Who Wakes Up Tired in the Dark
62	Elenita, Cards, Palm, Water
65	Geraldo No Last Name

67	Edna's Ruthie
86	Bums in the Attic
90	A Smart Cookie
108	A House of My Own

What is "The American Dream"?

Do the characters in these chapter achieve it? Do they achieve parts of it? Are they on their way to achieving it? Why or how? Give specific examples from the text to support your answers.

Do you think The American Dream is achievable? Why or why not?

Family

6	Hairs
18	Laughter
29	There Was an Old Woman She Had So Many Children She Didn't Know What to Do*
35	And Some More
46	Chanclas
58	Born Bad

Brainstorm five thoughts, ideas, or feelings that come to mind when you hear the word "Family."

Family and family members can feel like your best friends and your worst enemies at the same time.

Where do you see examples of both of these in the chapters? When does family provide support for the characters? When do the characters want to escape their families? Provide specific examples.

How does the idea of "family" shift or change in each of the chapters?

Growing Up

23	Louie, His Cousin & His Other Cousin*
26	Marin*
39	The Family of Little Feet*
49	Hips*
53	The First Job*
72	Sire*
81	Sally*
88	Beautiful & Cruel
94	The Monkey Garden

What does it mean to you to "grow up"?

"Growing Up" implies that a person is changing. Where do you find examples of that change occurring in these chapters? Site specific examples.

Based on the perspective in these chapters, is growing up easy or difficult? Fun or scary? Why? Site specific examples.

Think of a time when you experienced "growing up." Write down the experience. How did you feel about it then? How do you feel about it now? Has your perspective of the moment changed over time?

In Groups & Out Groups

8	Boys and Girls
10	My Name*

12	Cathy Queen of Cats*
28	Those Who Don't
43	A Rice Sandwich
79	Rafaela Who Drinks Coconut & Papaya Juice on Tuesdays

What does the term “In Group and Out Group” make you think of? What does it mean? Is it good/bad/both? Why or how?

Being “in” a group implies that one is “out” of another. What groups are these characters “in” or “out” of? How do the characters in these chapters identify themselves? Site specific examples. How does being “in” or “out” of a group make the characters feel? Site specific examples. Have you ever been “in” or “out” of a group? Describe the experience. How did you feel?

Find Your Own Theme Challenge!

Read these chapters:

20	Gil's Furniture Bought & Sold
33	Darius and the Clouds
74	Four Skinny Trees

What common theme (or multiple themes!) do you see in these chapters? Site specific examples. How does reading these chapters in context of each other deepen or change your understanding or experience of each as an individual chapter?

Based on the theme or themes you've identified in these chapters, come up with three questions for others to respond to.

IDEAS & SUGGESTIONS FOR PROJECTS

Literary Project Suggestions

- Write an original short biography of your own, inspired by one of the chapters from the book.
- Use one of the chapters as a prompt or jumping-off-point to create a longer story that incorporates the images, subjects, characters, and ideas of the chapter.
Example: What is life like for Rachel and Lucy? Find clues in the chapters in which they are mentioned and write a short story, or perhaps a series of diary entries, from the point of view of one or both of these sisters. Use the facts you learn about them in the book and use your creativity and imagination to fill in the gaps.

Performance Project Suggestions

- Memorize and recite one of the chapters as a monologue.
- Put one of, or part of, the chapters to music, or to a beat, and perform as a song or rap.

- Use the images, subjects, and ideas of one of the chapters to create a movement or dance piece.

Example: How might Esperanza's movement express how she feels through the various stages of the chapter "Chanclas?"

- Compose a piece of music inspired by one of the poems.

Example: What does the music box sound like in the chapter "Gil's Furniture Bought and Sold?" How might Esperanza's experience of the music sound?

Visual Art Project Suggestions

- Paint, draw, collage an image based on the images in one of the chapters.

- Create a sculpture or diorama of one of the scenes in one of the chapters.

Example: What do the clouds look like in the chapter "Darius & the Clouds?"

- Draw or create a 3-D map of Mango Street based on the information you find in the various chapters. Where is each character's home? Each business or building?

- Decorate an item with personal meaning to you with images from the book, or with images from your own life that the book inspires.

Media Project Suggestions

- Create an animation (Computer Generated, Stop Motion, or Hand-Drawn) that incorporates the images, subjects, and themes of the book.

Example: Animate the trees in the chapter "Four Skinny Trees."

- Build a video game or puzzle game that incorporates the images, subjects, and themes of the book.

- Create a live action film with a chapter recited as the background or "soundtrack," or use one or more of the chapters to create your own short film.