

The House on Mango Street—Pre-readings

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Overview:** For the next few weeks we will be reading, studying and analyzing Sandra Cisneros' short novel, The House on Mango Street. The novel is made up of 44 short character sketches, or stories, called vignettes. Esperanza, a Mexican-American young woman who just moved with her family to Mango Street, narrates them. Since the stories don't really follow each other chronologically, we are going to read the novel in the thematic sections outlined for you below. We will be addressing different subjects and literary devices for each set of stories. Before we discuss each section you will do a pre-reading assignment. **Pre-readings should be about 1 page.**

**Section One: Self Definition and Identity**

**Pre-reading question:** What is the personal significance of your given name (first, middle and last)? Does your name mean different things to you, your family, and your friends? What are your nicknames? What do your nicknames mean to you and those who call you those names?

**Read pp. 3-11** *The House on Mango Street; Hairs; Boys and Girls; My Name*

**Section Two: Friendship, Neighborhood, Home**

**Pre-reading question:** Is living in a house your family owns different from living in a house or apartment your family rents? How? Are renters, owners and homeless people all considered equal citizens in America? Why or why not?

**Read pp. 12-25** *Cathy Queen of Cats; Our Good Day; Laughter; Gil's Furniture Bought and Sold; Meme Ortiz; Louie, His Cousin and His Other Cousin*

**Section Three: Freedom and Entrapment**

**Pre-reading question:** In what areas of your life are you most free to do what you like? In what areas of your life do you have the least freedom? Consider the roles gender, race, religion, education, class, age, and upbringing play in limiting an individual's personal freedom.

**Read pp. 26-38** *Marin; Those Who Don't; There Was an Old Woman...; Alicia Who Sees Mice; Darius and the Clouds; And Some More*

#### **Section Four: Growth and Maturity, Sexuality**

**Pre-reading question:** How is growing into a teenage body (physically, mentally and emotionally) like moving into a new house/apartment? Compare the experiences of moving into a new house/apartment to the experiences of being a teenager.

**Read pp. 39-55:** *The Family of Little Feet; A Rice Sandwich; Chanclas; Hips; The First Job*

#### **Section Five: Gender Roles and Expectations**

**Pre-reading question:** Should parents/guardians raise their teenage girls in the same way that they raise their teenage boys? Why or why not? What rules should be the same for girls and boys? What should be different? Do you have brothers, sisters, cousins, etc. who are treated differently from you because of gender? Explain.

**Read pp. 56-73:** *Papa Who Wakes Up Tired in the Dark; Born Bad; Elenita, Cards, Palm, Water; Geraldo No Last Name; Edna's Ruthie; The Earl of Tennessee; Sire*

#### **Section Six: Fitting in**

**Pre-reading question:** Describe a situation where you once felt really out of place or uncomfortable. Why did you feel this way? What does the word "outcast" mean? What kinds of attributes make people into outcasts? Why must society have outcasts?

**Read pp. 74-87:** *Four Skinny Trees; No Speak English; Rafaela Who Drinks Coconut and Pineapple Juice on Tuesdays; Sally; Minerva Writes Poems; Bums in the Attic*

#### **Section Seven:**

**Pre-reading question:** What parts of your life would you most like to escape? Can you escape these elements at some point in your life? If so, how? If not, why not?

**Read pp. 88-102:** *Beautiful and Cruel; A Smart Cookie; What Sally Said; The Monkey Garden; Red Clowns; Linoleum Roses*

## **Section Eight: Finding One's "Home"**

**Pre-reading question:** What inspires you most in life? What do you see your future holding for you? What obstacles might stand in your way? In what ways will you attempt to overcome them and achieve your future desires?

**Read pp. 103-110:** *The Three Sisters; Alicia and I Talking on Edna's Steps; A House of My Own; Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes*