

Reading Questions for The House on Mango Street, Part 1

"The House on Mango Street"

Dreams, expectations, hopes, desires, poverty, disappointment, ownership, relationship between ownership and identity. What other topics are covered in this vignette?

"Hairs"

What is this vignette about? Answer this and don't mention the topic hair. When you have done so, you will have mentioned theme.

Exercise: Re-write this vignette and break it into lines as if it were a poem. What are some of the most poetic images?

"Boys and Girls"

This vignette is important! What do you learn about the narrator's culture from the way the children are thought of and the way the children behave? What does this vignette tell about the relationship between males and females?

"Until then I am like a red balloon, a balloon tied to an anchor." (9) What is the anchor? What is the thing in her life that is holding her in place? What will free her?

"My Name"

This is another prose poem. Find some of the important images that refer to how the narrator thinks of herself. What has caused her to think negatively about her name?

What do you learn about Esperanza's Mexican culture that was foreshadowed in "Boys and Girls"?

"Cathy Queen of Cats"

What do you learn about bigotry from Cathy? What do you learn about Alicia? Why do you think Alicia stopped being friendly with Cathy? What do you learn about Esperanza from the way she accepts the stories from Cathy?

"Our Good Day"

Rachel and Lucy: Who were they in "Cathy Queen of Cats"? What choice does Esperanza make in this vignette? What does it mean?

"Laughter"

Here is another vignette that is about more than the facts it presents. What is the theme of the vignette?

"Gil's Furniture Bought and Sold"

What does the astute reader learn about Esperanza from this vignette?

"Meme Ortiz"

What must it be like to go through life with two multiple names and titles depending upon which language you are using. Which language is Esperanza's? Are you sure?

"Louie, His Cousin & His Other Cousin"

What is Marin's role in the family? Fill in the missing pieces and explain why Louie's cousin was arrested.

"Marin"

What does this vignette tell us about the role some women are asked to play in society? What does Marin feel will save her?

"Those Who Don't"

Does anything that is mentioned in this chapter ring true for you?

"There Was an Old Woman She Had So Many Children She Didn't Know What to Do"

What is Rosa Vargas' life like? What is the solution? Is there fault?

"Alicia Who Sees Mice"

Alicia from "Cathy Queen of Cats" is the subject of this vignette. What are some of the obstacles she must overcome to continue to improve herself? How does the culture of her family hold her back?

"Darius & the Clouds"

What is the theme of this prose poem?

"And Some More"

Who is the speaker of each line? Can you attach a name to each? What is the destructive element involved in this scene?

"The Family of Little Feet"

What is happening in this vignette that is so powerful that the girls want to forget that it happened? Where does the power lie?

There are many things that are dangerous that are described here. Mr. Benny from the corner grocery notices one danger. Are there others? Think back to "Marin" and "Alicia Who Sees Mice" or look forward in the book follow the character of Sally. What are the dangers are there in Esperanza's world?

"A Rice Sandwich"

Esperanza tries to be part of something she sees as special. What was the reality of the canteen? Describe Esperanza's shame.

"Chanclas"

What is the significance of the last two lines of this vignette?

Consider the events in "The Family of Little Feet." What is the ambivalence the character has about her growing sexuality?

"Hips"

This is another story in a series about the burgeoning sexuality of the girls. Why does the author contrast the talk of developing bodies with the songs of the jump rope? What is the purpose of the juxtaposition of these two topics?

How has Nenny separated herself from the group?

"The First Job"

Which quality of Esperanza's personality shows up while she is at her first job? What information do you have from previous stories about Esperanza and other women in the book that would account for Esperanza's shyness and reticence?

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