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 **Prestwick House**
Activity Pack
Literature Made Fun!



The House on Mango Street

BY SANDRA CISNEROS



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All references come from the Vintage Contemporaries edition of *The House on Mango Street*, copyright 1984.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading

Review

Objective: Establishing a purpose for reading the story

Activity

Read the following student reviews for *The House on Mango Street*. Based on these reviews, complete the chart on the next page.

Review #1: “When I read this book in my seventh grade English class, I was instantly in love! This book tells the story of Esperanza, a young girl living in the Latino section of a poor city, through a series of vignettes. It talks about the joys and hardships of being a young girl and having to live with what is around her, even something as simple as wanting her name to be something more like ‘...Zeze the X. Yes, something like Zeze the X will do.’ Cisneros’s distinct style of writing captured my mind and got me lost in these vignettes. It’s a very unique style; this one is like no other. My class wrote a book based on the style of writing and the storyline Cisneros displays in *The House on Mango Street* because of how much we love it! This book is one you will read and will not be disappointed with!”

Review #2: “Well, I think it’s now safe to say that Sandra Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street* is a classic. Not just a “Chicano/a Classic,” but a book that rightfully is included in school curricula throughout the United States. This heartbreaking coming of age novella is presented in short but powerful chapters. Esperanza Cordero (note: “Esperanza” means “hope”; “Cordero” means “lamb”) is a young girl in a poor Latino neighborhood who tells us her story in vignettes. One of the most moving chapters is “Red Clowns” where Esperanza tells her friend Sally about being raped at the carnival: ‘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.’ This short chapter displays the beauty and potency of Cisneros’s prose: she uses simple language, that of a young girl, and juxtaposes the child-like world of the carnival with the adult ugliness of rape. This is a moving, well-crafted book that should be on your list of ‘must reads.’”

Review #3: “This book is directed towards females so that might be why I didn’t like it. It never got my attention. Maybe it was the way it was written or maybe the contents of the book. There were very few parts of this book that I enjoyed. One part I enjoyed was when Louie’s cousin stole a car and all of the kids asked where he got it from and he said, ‘get in.’ Another part I liked was when she got her first kiss and it wasn’t all she thought it was supposed to be. Esperanza said, ‘I waited my whole life. You’re a liar.’ Reading this book was like reading French, another language because it was a girl book. I would recommend this book to a girl, but not to a guy. ‘One day you wake up and they are there,’ says Esperanza. She was talking about hips and growing up from a girl to a young woman throughout the whole book.”

Name: _____

Date: _____

My Name

Characterization

Objective: Understanding the importance of a person's name to his or her identity

Activity

Names are very important to the characters in the following excerpts. Read each selection and consider why each character places value on his or her name.

Selection from *Othello* by William Shakespeare:

[Iago to Othello]

He that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him
And makes me poor indeed.

Selection from *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* by Ernest J. Gaines:

[A major in the union army is talking to a young slave girl.]

"Well, just call me Mr. Brown," he said. "And I'm go'n call you something else 'sides Ticey. Ticey is a slave name, and I don't like slavery. I'm go'n call you Jane," he said. "That's right, I'll call you Jane. That's my girl's name back there in Ohio. You like for me to call you that?"

I stood there grinning like a little fool. I rubbed my foot with my big toe and just stood there grinning. The other Troops was grinning at me, too.

"Yes," he said, "I think you do like that name. Well, from now on your name is Jane. Not Ticey no more. Jane. Jane Brown. Miss Jane Brown. When you get older you can change it to what else you want. But till then your name is Jane Brown."

[Later, the mistress of the plantation is talking to Jane.]

"You little wench, didn't you hear me calling you?" she said. I raised my head high and looked her straight in the face and said: "You called me Ticey. My name ain't no Ticey no more, it's Miss Jane Brown. And Mr. Brown say catch him and tell him if you don't like it."

My mistress' face got red, her eyes got wide, and for about half a minute she just stood there gaping at me. Then she gathered up her dress and started running for the house. That night when the master and the rest of them came in from the swamps she told my master I had sassed her in front of the Yankees. My master told two of the other slaves to hold me down. One took my arms, the other one took my legs. My master jecked up my dress and gived my mistress the whip and told her to teach me a lesson. Every time she hit me she asked me what I said my name was. I said Jane Brown. She hit me again: what I said my name was. I said Jane Brown.

My mistress got tired beating me and told my master to beat me some. He told her that was enough, I was already bleeding.

Name: _____

Date: _____

The House on Mango Street – Our Good Day**Word Choice**

Objective: Recognizing the intended meaning of a word and understanding how connotations can affect the imagery and tone of literature

Activity

A thesaurus lists the following related words for the word *run*: “charge,” “scuttle,” “lope,” “bolt,” “hurry,” “bound,” “scamper,” and “dart.” Read the following sentences and indicate what is suggested by each target word. The first one is done for you.

1. The girls *charged* down the hall, oblivious to the stares.

“Charged” means the girls are running down the hall in a purposeful way, as if they have an important mission at the end of the hall.

2. The boys *scuttled* down the alley every evening.

3. The gentlemen *loped* down the dusty road.

4. The man *bolted* into the bar.

5. The geologist *chased* around the laboratory for days.

6. One after another, the prisoners *tumbled* off the bus.

7. His sister *whirled* down the street in her new coat.

8. Before going to college, Sam *darted* around Europe for two months.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Those Who Don't**Realistic Representation of Life**

Objective: Relating literature to life

Activity

Esperanza describes the fear she sees in the faces of the people who drive through her neighborhood. She and the other children are not afraid to live in the neighborhood because it is familiar to them.

1. Write about a time in your life when you were afraid because you found yourself in an unfamiliar place or unusual situation. Did your fear have any foundation in fact, or was it based on generalizations you were making about your situation?
2. What is unusual about the last paragraph of this short chapter?

Name: _____

Date: _____

Beautiful & Cruel**Dialogue, Writing, and Interpretation****Objective:** Relating literature to life**Activity**

In this chapter, Esperanza describes the kind of woman she wants to emulate.

“In the movies there is always one with red red lips who is beautiful and cruel. She is the one who drives the men crazy and laughs them all away. Her power is her own. She will not give it away.”

Think of three female characters from movies, television, or literature who are similar in character, attitude, or appearance as the “beautiful and cruel” woman Esperanza admires. Complete the chart on the next page.

Write a dialogue in which you tell Esperanza what she really wants. We’ve provided your first line.

You: Esperanza, you really don’t want to be a cruel person.

Esperanza: