

Sampler

Reading with Relevance

Building Independent Readers and Thinkers

A Teacher's Guide For The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros





Recommended for: Grade Levels 8-10

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This literacy curriculum is constructed around a content-rich novel that builds students' literacy skills and supports their character development and self-confidence. Students are motivated to read because they relate to the strong, diverse, and resilient characters featured in our selected novels and because each session gives them the opportunity to connect what they've read to their own lives.

Developed, field-tested, and refined in our own tutoring and mentoring programs, this standards-based curriculum has inspired persistently low-performing students to engage with literature, make meaning in their lives, and improve their English language arts skills. Now, *Reading with Relevance* is available to help you dig deep into the social, emotional, and academic needs of your students, whether in your classroom, after-school program, or youth development agency!

Why The House on Mango Street

The House on Mango Street is the story of Esperanza, a pre-teen Chicana growing up in the barrio in Chicago. In the book, Esperanza narrates the stories of herself and her neighborhood and experiences joy, loss, change, and growth. We chose this novel for its powerful attention to some rich social and emotional themes: friendship and family, coming-of-age, poverty, community, loss, and perseverance. Students will find themselves relating to and being inspired by Esperanza; this curriculum will help students build connections between Esperanza's experiences and their own.



This teacher's guide includes:

- A facilitator's guide with tips and resources for implementing the curriculum.
- A map of academic standards addressed through this program.
- Nine individual lesson plans, including vocabulary, discussion questions, journal prompts, extension activities, and all handouts.
- Two assessments to monitor student progress throughout the program.
- Regular checkpoints to help teachers assess their students' progress on ELA standards.
- A culminating essay-writing unit, along with instructions for final student portfolios.
- An appendix with additional teaching resources and activities to continue exploring this novel.









Lesson Plan Format

Provided here is an overview of the lesson plan layout. Each lesson plan is arranged in two double-spread formats to match the flow of the session. Each of these elements is explored in greater depth in the following section, *How to Facilitate*.



How to Facilitate The House on Mango Street

Timing & Structure

This curriculum includes 9 individual lesson plans. Each of these lesson plans may be condensed or expanded to meet your students' reading levels and your classroom or program structure. While we don't define the time constraints for each element of the lesson plan, we do recommend dividing your time in the manner shown below. Please feel empowered to modify this suggested time allocation to best meet the instructional needs of your students. Despite varying session lengths, this reading curriculum should always include the following elements:



This program can be facilitated in a small reading group or in a larger, after-school or school-day classroom setting, however, you will need to embrace different instructional practices depending on your group size. If you are able to create small reading groups, we suggest grouping students by their reading fluency levels. If you are unable to facilitate small reading groups, consider breaking students into small groups for discussions and other activities.

Take a moment to read the "Today's Themes" section that precedes each lesson. Then, write your vocabulary words on the board with the definitions before you begin teaching; the best time to do this is right before the session starts so students have ample time to see the words. A list of vocabulary words will be provided for each session, and you may choose a few to focus on each week. You should also prepare any materials required to complete the day's extension activity.

Each lesson plan will begin with a section that clearly describes the social and emotional themes highlighted in the day's reading. This is provided as an instructional resource to help you set your intentions about the social and emotional learning goals for each of your sessions. This is also an excellent opportunity to self-reflect on your own relationship with the novel's themes.

Reading with Relevance Curriculum: The House on Mango Street © 2016 Moving Forward Institute

Creating Reading Groups

Before Starting a Session

Today's Themes



Story Recap & Vocabulary



Recap the story using the "Story Recap" section of your lesson plan. Begin by asking the students to share with you and each other what happened during the last session's reading. Remind the students of the characters you have encountered; you can ask quick questions like, "Who are the main characters?" and "What were some of the major/ most exciting events to take place last time?" Point out what vocabulary words will be introduced in the upcoming chapters and remind students to look for these words while reading. Please encourage students to copy the days's vocabulary words into their journals.

During this time, students will read the assigned pages Reading defined in each lesson. You may have students read aloud in small groups or in a larger group, you may have students follow along while you read, or you may have students complete silent, independent reading. During training, you will be provided with a "Guided Reading Best Practices Manual," including tips on how to facilitate this portion, depending on your facilitation structure.

During Reading There may be times when unfamiliar themes, references, slang, or historical context are present during the reading. If you feel that it is important to provide definitions or context for your students, this information is included in the "During Reading" section of each lesson.

After you finish reading, ask the questions provided in the "Discussion Questions" section of your curriculum. These questions include reading comprehension, critical thinking, and social/emotional skill-building topics that will prepare students to connect with the story, write in their journals, and complete extension activities.

> The journal prompts are designed to provide a safe space for students to develop and share their thoughts and ideas while they develop critical thinking and improve on writing skills. After discussion, students will respond to journal prompts designed to help them connect the story to their own lives. Each lesson includes two journal topics to choose from. You may use one or both, depending on your students and program.



Discussion Questions



Journal Prompt & Writing





Each lesson plan includes an extension activity students can complete independently. These activities are designed to be fun and engaging while helping students to improve their writing, vocabulary, critical thinking, and other English language arts standard skills.

Checkpoints are included throughout the guide to help support students and instructors, ensuring that students understand the material and are building appropriate skills. Checkpoints can be used to assess student writing and to provide scaffolded instruction for both writers and teachers.

Twice during the program, near the mid-point and at the end of the novel, students will have the opportunity to complete a short assessment to demonstrate their comprehension of the novel's plot and characters. Also, included in the Appendix is an end-of-program evaluation that may be used to collect students' feedback on this reading program.

This reading program culminates with students writing a final essay about the novel. Encourage students to use their previous journal entries and completed extension activities to think through their essays and find necessary information to support their opinions. There are sample graphic organizers in the Appendix that may be helpful for your students in the writing process.

Ask students to identify their favorite journal entries and/ or completed activities and worksheets. Students should choose items that best demonstrate their understanding of the book and show their best work as readers and writers. Portfolios can be used as part of the final evaluation and to assess student improvement. This is a great way for students to show that they have risen to the challenge of writing complete paragraphs, demonstrated organization in their writing, and have a solid understanding of the story and its characters.











Story Summary

The House on Mango Street uses a series of short vignettes to describe a year in the life of Esperanza, a twelve-year-old Chicana (Mexican-American) girl. Esperanza moves with her family into a new house, located on Mango Street in a packed Latino neighborhood in Chicago. While the house is the first her family has owned, it is also small and run down. Esperanza becomes determined to leave Mango Street behind and to one day have a beautiful house of her own.

Esperanza grows up a lot during the year she spends on Mango Street: she develops new friendships, learns about her neighbors, experiences her first crush, and suffers through some difficult incidents. Throughout her experiences, she writes as a way to both express her feelings and reflect on the world in which she lives.

Sandra Cisneros, the only daughter in a family of seven children, was born in Chicago in 1954. She graduated from Loyola University of Chicago and then from the University of Iowa. Cisneros has worked in a number of education jobs and has most recently served as a visiting Professor of Literature at universities across the country. She is best known for her acclaimed first novel, *The House on Mango Street* (1984). Her work experiments with literary forms and investigates the points of view of characters and how they change; Cisneros attributes this to growing up in a context of cultural duality and economic inequality, which endowed her with unique stories to tell. She is the recipient of numerous awards and is regarded as a key figure in Chicana literature.

About the Author





Social and Emotional Themes

Because The House on Mango Street **covers** several potentially sensitive topics for students, we want to prepare you with some information about, and ways to address, these topics.

Pre-Reading Note: Sexual Content and Profanity

This book contains some sexual content, particularly regarding sexual assault, and uses some profanity. Make your students aware of this before you begin reading the book, and let them know that you will not stop reading during these moments. This content may make some students (and/or parents) uncomfortable. However, this potentially controversial content is situated in the context of a deeply meaningful, emotionally-rich novel that is of great benefit to young adult readers. Let students know you expect them to handle this content maturely.

The narrator doesn't tell us the full details, but Esperanza is sexually assaulted and possibly raped at the fair. Sexual assault refers to any unwanted sexual contact, including fondling, molestation, or rape. Sexual assault is startlingly common. Some of your students may have been sexually assaulted: a sexual assault occurs once every 2 seconds in the United States, and about 2/3 of sexual assaults are committed by someone the victim knows. This kind of abuse may be difficult for some of your students to read and talk about, and it is important that you remind all your students that sexual assault is NEVER the victim's fault. If a student brings up a personal story of abuse, please take her or him aside and listen carefully. Immediately assess your student's safety: is she or he currently being abused or is this an event from the past? Be empathetic and supportive, and assure her or him that everybody deserves to be treated with love and kindness and that no one deserves to be assaulted. If you are a mandated reporter, you will not be able to keep this conversation confidential and may be required to make a report, so be sure to disclose this to your student.

Sexual Assault





Intimate Partner Abuse During the reading, we learn about a character, Minerva, who is beaten by her husband. Intimate partner abuse (otherwise known as domestic violence or spousal abuse) is shockingly common and can include physical aggression, assault, or the threat of an assault. Although domestic violence can occur against men and also in the context of same-sex relationships, most abuse is perpetrated by men against women. Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women-more than car accidents, muggings, and rapes combined. Your students may live in a household where a parent or someone close to them is being abused by a partner; up to 10 million children witness some form of domestic violence annually. Your students may even be victims of intimate partner abuse: nearly 1 in 5 teenage girls who have been in a relationship said a boyfriend threatened violence or self-harm if presented with a breakup. If a student comes to you with a story of violence in his or her home or life, be sure to listen sympathetically and assure him or her that no one deserves to be abused. Direct the student to services at school or in the community that might offer assistance. If this abuse happened to your student and you are a mandated reporter, you will not be able to keep this conversation confidential and may be required to make a report, so be sure to disclose this to your student.





We learn that Esperanza's friend Sally is beaten by her father and is afraid of him. Some of your students may be survivors of physical violence and/or live in situations in which they are sometimes or often afraid. Be sensitive to students who may have a difficult time reading or talking about this section. When this section comes up for discussion, make sure that you hold space for students' personal reactions to this intense chapter.

Esperanza lives in a poor neighborhood where she and her family often have to go without adequate food, new clothes, or other things many children take for granted. Some of your students may have similar experiences of poverty, and many may live in impoverished neighborhoods like Esperanza. Students may not have the things their peers have, they may not have opportunities that cost extra money, or they may not eat every day. You can remind students that being poor is not something to be ashamed of. Because students are unlikely to directly ask for help, you can also use the novel as a chance to highlight resources in the school and community to which students might turn if they need support.



bages 33-45



strutted (pg 40): v., walked pompously

G

cumulus (pg 36): n., a type of cloud form that looks like rounded masses heaped on each other

Today's Themes

9

Today's twin themes are **finding beauty** and **experiencing disappointment**. On the one hand, Esperanza experiences a lot of disappointment in the book, like when she finally gets to sit in the canteen, but finds that this is a lonely, alienating experience. But on the other hand, she also finds beauty in many places, which shows us that she can find the good in her life and community. Have students think about these contrasting themes as two ways to look at the same thing. How are the two approaches both real and true ways of seeing the world? How does each make them feel?

Session 2 Recap

In the previous vignettes, Esperanza and her sister visit a junk store and see a beautiful music box, but the owner says it's not for sale. Her friend Meme has a big dog and lives in a house with floors that are slanted and lopsided. They have a Tarzan jumping contest, and Meme breaks both his arms. Their neighbor Louie's cousin drives up in a big, yellow Cadillac and gives them all rides, but then they have to get out quickly because the police arrive. Louie takes off, but crashes the car and is taken to jail. Marin is an older girl who Esperanza thinks is still probably waiting for someone else to change her life. Alicia is a neighborhood girl who is afraid of mice and of her father.





During Reading

"The Eskimos got thirty different names for snow" (pg 35):

A common misconception that alleges that Eskimos (Eskimo people includes the Yupik peoples and Inuit tribes, indigenous people located in the circumpolar region) have multiple ways to say "snow." While the Eskimo/Inuit people have about as many words for snow as we have in English, the Sami People, a different indigenous circumpolar group, do have hundreds of words for snow.

Cream of Wheat cereal... lumps (pg 37): a hot breakfast cereal made from ground faring wheat that can easily develop lumps (that don't taste good)

salamander (pg 40): common name for species of amphibians that typically look like lizards

300 Spartans (pg 44): A 1962 movie depicting the battle in which a small band of Spartans (Greek warriors from Sparta known for their self-discipline and self-restraint) held off the much larger army from Persia for seven days despite being vastly outnumbered.



- How does Darius change when he is thinking about the clouds? What do you think he is feeling?
- What do the girls do with the new shoes they have?
- What kind of attention do they attract with these shoes? How would you feel getting this type of attention?
- Why does Esperanza want to eat in the canteen at school?
- What happens when she gets her mother to send a note?
- How do you think Esperanza feels when she is eating her food in the canteen? How would you feel if you were Esperanza?







200

imitate (pg 59): v., actjust like, copy

goblets (pg 63): n., large, fancy glasses, usually expensive

pillar (pg 63): n., a tall vertical support for a building made of wood or stone

Today's Theme

Today's theme is **being remembered**. When a young man named Geraldo is killed in a hit-and-run accident, no one really knows too much about him, and he dies in obscurity. When Esperanza's aunt dies, Esperanza remembers not just the time her aunt was ill, but also when her aunt was young, vibrant, and beautiful. Have students think about how they remember the people in their lives who are no longer around. How do they keep these memories alive?

ages 58-7

Session 4 Recap

Esperanza and her family go to the baptism of a cousin in all new, fancy clothes, but Esperanza's shoes are old and brown and she is self-conscious about them. One day, she develops hips, which Rachel says are good for holding babies, but Esperanza says they are good for dancing. Esperanza gets a job at a photo-printing shop, but one night a man grabs her and kisses her hard and doesn't let go. One morning, her father tells her that her grandfather is dead; her father cries, and Esperanza holds him.





GE

During Reading

Joan Crawford (pg 58): American actress popular especially in the 1950s and 1960s

"they're not like ordinary playing cards" (pg 63): a reference to Tarot cards, a pack of cards used to tell fortunes

brazer (pg 66): slang for a Mexican-American with a lot of national pride

"wetback" (pg 66): a derogatory slur for a person of foreign nationality, usually a Mexican who has crossed without documentation into the United States (infers they had to swim across the ocean or Rio Grande river to get to the United States)

the Emperor's nightingale (pg 68): A reference to Hans Christian Andersen's "The Nightingale," the story of an emperor who prefers the tinkling of a mechanical bird to a real nightingale, but when the emperor is dying, the song of the real nightingale restores his health.

Marlon Brando (pg 68): famous American movie star and political activist

"The Walrus and the Carpenter" (pg 69): a poem from Lewis Carroll's Alice Through the Looking Glass (made popular as Alice in Wonderland) in which the Walrus and Carpenter lead a crowd of impressionistic oysters to their ultimate death

Discussion Questions

- Why does Esperanza think she deserves to go to hell?
- Why is Esperanza ashamed? Do you think she is right to be ashamed?
- What is Esperanza's fortune according to Elenita? What do you think this means?
- What happens to Geraldo? What do you think about way he will be remembered?
- What is Ruthie like? Do you know someone like Ruthie?
- How is she different than her mother?
- Why does everyone think Earl is married? What do you think?



Session 5: pages 58-71





My Neighborhood

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Appendix Additional Activities

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There's so much more!



For more information, go to **Savvas.com/ReadingwithRelevance**



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