

# The house on mango street – esperanzas voice



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The story of Esperanza is one that many minorities face, even in today's society. Every day she had to deal with things from both a poverty and racist standpoint. She talks about how the poverty she faced affected the way she looked at her self.

She also goes on to talk about how the racial divide she felt, even at a young age, influenced how she felt about the world. Even with all the issues that Esperanza faces, she uses poetry as a means of escape, and uses it to help rebuild her self-confidence. While these problems exist today, we can use *The House on Mango Street*, and Esperanza's story, to look toward the future, and maybe one day, fix this world so no man, woman, or child has to go through the pain and suffering she did.

Throughout *The House on Mango Street* Esperanza dreams of an escape and is able to find solace through writing and reading poetry. Esperanza talks about the effect of her Aunt Lupe, who she would read stories and poems to. Lupe is the first person to really connect Esperanza to her writing. Her aunt stated, It will keep you free (Cisneros 61). In chapter 29 *Four Skinny Trees* is when Esperanza is starting to develop a new sense of self and strength. She uses the trees to find inspiration, Four who grew despite concrete. Four who reach and do not forget to reach. Four whose only reason is to be and be (Cisneros 75). As the book keeps progressing Esperanza takes a look at the women surrounding her on Mango Street. Each is trapped in some situation and she take a special interest in Minerva. Minerva is married with two children to a physically abusive husband. Esperanza compares herself to Minerva because they both write poetry. Esperanza notices and decides she will try to avoid Minerva's path for her future.

Experiences Esperanza encounters with racism also helps to build her character. Racism is something that she is faced with on numerous occasions. In the chapter Those Who Dont Esperanza talks about noticing how people who arent from her Latino neighborhood become scared and that her people of color are dangerous. She believes those who enter her neighborhood and dont belong are often there by mistake. Also, even as a young girl she mentions the change in attitude when going somewhere, in her words, they dont belong. All brown all around, we are safe. But watch us drive into a neighborhood of another color and our knees go skakity-shake and our car windows get rolled up tight and our eyes look straight (Cisneros 28). Later in The House on Mango Street Esperanza has an altercation with Sister Superior at her school about being able to eat in the canteen for lunch. Her mother writes a note stating to please allow her as their house is too far away. The Sisters response was That one? She said, pointing to a row of ugly three-flats, the ones even the raggedy men are ashamed to go into (Cisneros 45). This statement raises the question in the readers mind, why does the Sister assume Esperanza lives in the run-down apartments? One assumption could be based on Esperanza being a little Hispanic girl living a more poverty lifestyle. In some cases, poverty and race intertwines and could be believed that this example shows that correlation.

One factor that shaped Esperanzas character was the poverty her family faced. The first example of their economic status was Esperanza describing her house on Mango Street. She describes the house as bricks crumbling, having an extremely small yard, paint peeling, and wooden bars over the windows (Cisneros 4-5). After describing her house, she talks about a specific

incident with a store clerk. Where do you live? She asked. There I said pointing to the third floor. You live there (Cisneros 5)? Esperanza goes on to explain the way the conversation with the clerk made her feel as if she was nothing. This was a pivotal moment in the growth of Esperanzas character. I knew then I had to have a house. A real house (Cisneros 5). Another example of her shame is during a baptism party. Esperanzas mom buys her a new dress, undergarments, and new socks while she is still having the where an old pair of school shoes. Once every year in September she gets a new pair of shoes for school. Esperanza describes the shoes as scuffed and the heels being crooked. It doesnt matter how new the dress mama bought is because my feet are ugly (Cisneros 47). Esperanza feels ordinary having to wear her school shoes and this affects her self-esteem.

The House on Mango Street follows the story of a young girl named Esperanza Cordero. This book takes us through a year of Esperanzar's life and the growth she experiences. The House on Mango Street talks about the shame Esperanza feels due to her families poverty, the unfairness of the racism she faces, and how beautiful poetry and music can be. The book also shows the lives of some of Esperanzas neighbors. This helps to show the common living condition for Hispanics during this time period. Mamacita is afraid to speak the English language, Alicia has dreams of graduating college while her father wants her to focus on womanly duties, and Minerva who is married with two kids and a husband who is physically abusive. By giving these examples the readers are able to see the male oppression happening around Esperanza which is fueling her dream of leaving Mango Street even more.