

Analysis of the the house on mango street

Linguistics, English



[Your full December 5, Book Critique Sandra Cisneros, in her book “ The House on Mango Street”, has described the feelings and emotional experiences of a young girl named Esperanza, who has moved with her family in a red, old house in the Mango Street. In this paper, I shall give a brief summary of the book, which will be followed by my personal reflection about the purpose of the story and the thematic background that the writer has pondered upon. Esperanza is disappointed with her new house in the Mango Street because she had a different picture of it in her mind before her parents moved here. She joins the Hispanic community in the Street. She feels ashamed of her poor background, and often times tries to hide the fact that she is poor. She experiences bad things when she is in puberty, being forced to kiss and being raped at two instances. Her friends are also victims of violence, at the hands of their fathers or husbands. Her mother warns her to stay away from men. She also has a bad picture of marriage in her mind, due to which she decides not to marry. She plans to leave the neighborhood and go to live on her own in a separate house. Some women try to convince her that she will never be able to refute her past, but she must come back if she leaves the neighborhood, to change the lives of other fellow girls who suffer at the hands of the male dominance. Having read this brief summary, the reader can easily comprehend that the writer is trying to convey a myriad of themes, some of which include identity formulation of the young girl; her dreams, hopes, plans; society and class; gender roles; feminism; and, familial bondage. One of the strong themes that I feel important to discuss here is gender roles. Esperanza is not at all happy about the gender roles assigned by the society to the female gender. She is in a constant struggle

because she feels a rebellion against male dominance. “ She looked out the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow”, writes Sandra (11). This depicts Esperanza’s sadness after she has had abusing experiences from her puberty. For example, when she is forced to kiss by an old man, and when a group of boys rape her- these instances initiate a kind of hatred and aggression against males. One of her friends, Alicia, is being abused by her father after her mother dies. Sally gets beaten up by her father. Minerva, who is a teenage mother of two, suffers from domestic violence. All these instances convince her that she is not going to be a victim at the hands of the males, which is why she decides to leave the neighborhood. Esperanza is a feminist in the story. She is against how men of the society confine women inside the boundaries of their homes. She acquires a sense of rebellion, power, and defiance against gender roles. The line: “[Hips are] good for holding a baby when you're cooking, Rachel says, turning the jump rope a little quicker. She has no imagination” (Sandra 49) perfectly describes the traditional gender role of women. We know that gender roles are defined by society, and are not God given. Society has, unfortunately, confined females inside the boundaries of strict gender roles. For example, she states, “ The boys and girls live in separate worlds. The boys in their universe and we in ours. My brothers for example. They've got plenty to say to me and Nenny inside the house. But outside they can't be seen talking to girls” (Sandra 8). The Mango Street symbolizes the overall society, and Esperanza’s plan to have her own house symbolizes her desire to be independent and free from male oppression. This independence is a new source of power for her, because previously she thought beauty as the

sole power that women can have against men. Her perception about beauty changes when she observes that many beautiful women she knows are suffering at the hands of men. Her rebellion expresses when she says, “ I have begun my own quiet war. Simple. Sure. I am the one who leaves the table like a man, without putting back the chair or picking up the plate” (Sandra 89). I feel that Sandra has very effectively achieved her purpose of portraying the cruelty of our society in terms of gender roles. Sandra has tried to convey the message that women are the same as men, and they should be given liberty of spending their own lives as they want. I believe that Sandra has presented her message in a very lucid manner. Works Cited Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004.