

The House on Mango Street Literary Essay

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The House on Mango Street, written by Sandra Cisneros, is a powerful novella that explores the struggles and aspirations of Esperanza, a young Latina girl growing up in a poor neighborhood. In this essay, we will compare and contrast Esperanza with the other women in The House on Mango Street and explore why she is able to avoid the pitfalls of her environment.

Esperanza is a complex character who possesses strength, resilience, and determination. She dreams of escaping Mango Street and living in a house of her own, away from the poverty and limitations that surround her. Despite facing numerous challenges and hardships, Esperanza remains hopeful and determined to achieve her goals. For example, when she reflects on the fate of many women in her community who are trapped by marriage or teenage pregnancy, she declares: "I have decided not to grow up tame like the others who lay their necks on the threshold waiting for door-mat answers" (Cisneros 22). This quote demonstrates Esperanza's refusal to conform to societal expectations for women in her community.

Furthermore, Esperanza's dreams extend beyond herself; she also aspires to uplift other women around her. She desires independence not just for herself but also for all the girls on Mango Street. In one instance, she states: "One day I will pack my bags...and leave so far they'll never find me...And when I do return...I will be beautiful with words" (Cisneros 91). This passage reveals that Esperanza sees language as a tool for empowerment and self-expression.

While Esperanza stands out as an exceptional character due to her determination and aspirations, there are similarities between her experiences and those of other women in The

House on Mango Street. One such similarity can be seen through Rachel and Lucy's desire for freedom from their restrictive household rules. They dream of breaking free from their strict father's control by running away and starting anew. This desire for autonomy mirrors Esperanza's longing for independence and highlights the shared struggles of young women in their community.

However, there are also significant differences between Esperanza and other women in *The House on Mango Street*. For instance, Sally, a neighbor of Esperanza, succumbs to societal pressures and marries at a young age. She becomes trapped in an abusive relationship and loses sight of her dreams. Unlike Esperanza, who refuses to conform to traditional gender roles, Sally conforms to societal expectations by marrying and sacrificing her own ambitions. Her story serves as a cautionary tale about the dire consequences that can result from succumbing to external pressures.

The key factor that sets Esperanza apart from the other women in *The House on Mango Street* is her unwavering determination and resilience. Despite living in a challenging environment filled with poverty, crime, and limited opportunities, she remains focused on achieving her goals. Even when faced with setbacks or disappointments, she perseveres. This resilience is evidenced when she says: "I will not have my life taken away from me like this" (Cisneros 107). By refusing to let circumstances define her future, Esperanza demonstrates strength of character.

Furthermore, Esperanza benefits from having a supportive network that encourages her aspirations. While many women in her community lack supportive relationships or mentors who believe in their potential, Esperanza finds solace through writing workshops where she receives positive feedback on her work. These workshops provide her with the necessary encouragement and validation needed to pursue her dreams.

Throughout *The House on Mango Street*, Cisneros provides numerous examples that support our analysis of how Esperanza navigates challenges more successfully than other women in her environment. One such example is when Marin shares stories about boys with Rachel and Lucy while babysitting them (Cisneros 30). Through this scene, we witness both Marin's limited worldview due to societal constraints and Esperanza's determination to rise above these limitations.

In conclusion, *The House on Mango Street* showcases the remarkable character of Esperanza and her ability to avoid the pitfalls of her environment. By comparing and contrasting Esperanza with other women in the novella, we gain a deeper understanding of her unique qualities—her determination, resilience, refusal to conform, and support system—that enable her to navigate her challenging circumstances more successfully. Through Cisneros' powerful storytelling, we are reminded of the importance of individual agency and the potential for individuals like Esperanza to overcome adversity in challenging environments.

References

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