

The House on Mango Street

1. Introduction
 - A. Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* as an illustration of the problems faced by Latin women
 - B. Challenges of Latina females as the main focus of the novel
2. The Character of Esperanza as Opposed to Other Latin Women
 - A. Esperanza's search for freedom
 - B. Esperanza's view of changing the role of men in the society
3. Esperanza's Personal Growth
 - A. Life events and their influence on the character's development
 - B. Reflective writing as an evidence of Esperanza's escape from the existing reality
4. Conclusion
 - A. The story of a single character as a reflection of life of the whole society
 - B. The impact of community on one's personal development

INTRODUCTION

Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* is an illustration of the problems faced by Latin women in a culture laden with racism, prejudice, and discrimination. Society as depicted in the book is being dominated by men where women are generally praised for their physical features; however, the Latin women are treated without equality, absolutely like second-rate beings. The ultimate purpose of the novel is to portray the challenges and issues Latina females face every day but at the same time to show the sense of duty one feels to care for the community and loved ones. As such, Cisneros best portrays the effect of community through stigmatization, the events of Esperanza's life, and the feelings that develop into a sense of community and obligation for duty.

THE CHARACTER OF ESPERANZA AS OPPOSED TO OTHER LATIN WOMEN

Cisneros portrays women as the objects of the counterparts in their relationships. This objectifying takes place for the women as daughters, employers, girlfriends or even friends. The females are raised to think that their physical appearances are what matters the most in life. The book depicts how women are obligated to be faithful to their spouses while the male counterparts have complete control of all aspects of the relationships. The main character, Esperanza, is shown differently than the rest of the women characters. She was brought up to be happy with the same role as the rest of the women but surprisingly she is not. Esperanza realizes that she wants to break out of the bondage and live the real life.

The level of concern for physical appearance exhibited by the Latina women in the novel can be regarded as extreme. The women think that if they are not especially sexually appealing then they will not gain the attention from males required for life. Since

the role of a woman is to be taken in, supported, and controlled by a man, they feel they need to make themselves attractive enough to be desired for this role. All the women in the community are raised to believe they are helpless without men. Esperanza seeks to become independent from this role placed upon her by the community, while furthermore she dreams of a society where the men are the ones who are controlled. She also, later, hopes to reach out to the community in order to teach them how to break out of its bonds. Stigmatization is one area Esperanza uses to show the effects of the community but another powerful tool she uses is the perspective into her personal life as she develops and forms bonds.

ESPERANZA'S PERSONAL GROWTH

Cisneros portrays Esperanza growing up both physically and mentally. The story outlines such occurrences as the development of her social life, puberty, her first feelings for someone of the opposite gender and her interest in writing. Esperanza's writing allows her to express herself while providing solace and sense of freedom, it is evident in "Leap and somersault like an apostrophe and comma" (Cisneros 71). The stories she writes give a better depiction of the neighborhood and also show how many courses of action she may take. Shortly after moving into a new house, Esperanza makes two Latina friends that live nearby. All the girls are reaching puberty and are already finding themselves sexual targets in some cases from various members of the community. "Officially" Esperanza begins puberty that summer when she shows an interest in males watching her dance. Following the death of two close family members, Esperanza soon becomes more observant of the women in her neighborhood. One of her friends, Sally, becomes more sexually active and makes Esperanza feel

uncomfortable. More discouraging experiences follow and Esperanza is soon compelled to leave Mango Street and find her own place to live.

Time goes by and Esperanza finally gets ready to leave Mango Street. The girl constantly thinks about the situation and once she gets that feeling, she realizes that she must help the ones she cares of. If she does leave, she'll definitely return to help those who need it and who were part of her life. By the end of the year Esperanza has developed emotionally and physically. Her maturity is evident in all that she does. Her writing continues to reflect all the benefits for leaving as well as how she feels about her life. Writing is both an emotional escape and a sort of reflective measure on the physical escape that she may take.

CONCLUSION

Community is a powerful element and Cisneros portrays this with her writing talent across many aspects of community. Though the novel only depicts a single year in the main character's life, it is able to show the power and value of community through negative stigmatization, the bonding that takes place from experience, and the desire to give back for the positive experiences of life.

Work Cited

Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. The United States: Vintage Contemporaries, 1991.