

The House on Mango Street

Cisneros, Sandra

Author. Sandra Cisneros was born in Chicago in 1954. She is acclaimed worldwide for her poetry and fiction. Her awards include the Lannan Literary Award, the American Book Award, and several writing fellowships.

Book: The book is about Latin culture and Hispanic social issues. It is told in vignettes and follows the story of Esperanza Cordero, a 12-year-old girl growing up in the Hispanic quarter of Chicago. The book is often chosen for its revelations of Spanish culture and what it's like to be Mexican American in a country that is majority white.

Storyline: Using vignettes, readers follow Esperanza Cordero for a year as she turns 13. Themes in the book cover Mexican American culture, social class, race, identity, and more.

Passages: p.49: *I like coffee, I like tea. I like boys and the boys like me. Yes, no, maybe so. Yes no, maybe so...* One day you wake up and [hips] are there. Ready and waiting like a new Buick with keys in the ignition. Ready to take you where?... If you don't get them you may turn into a man.

p.51. *"Some are skinny like chicken lips. Some are baggy like soggy Band-Aids. After you get out of the bathtub. I don't care what kind I get. Just as Long as I get hips."*

p. 55. "He had nice eyes and I didn't feel nervous anymore. Then he asked if I knew what day it was and when I didn't, he said it was his birthday and would I please give him a birthday kiss. I thought I would because he was so old and just as I was about to put my lips on his cheek, he grabs my face with his hands and kisses me hard on the mouth and doesn't let go."

p. 73 "Sometimes I hear them laughing late, beer cans and cats and the trees talking to themselves: wait, wait, wait. Sire lets Lois ride his bike around the block, or they take walks together. I watched them. She holds his hand, and he stops sometimes to tie her shoes. But Mama says those kinds of girls, those girls are the ones that go into alleys. Lois who can't tie her shoes. Where does he take her?"

p. 73 "A boy held me once so hard, I swear, I felt the grip and weight of his arms, but it was a dream. Sire. How did you hold her? Was it? Like this? And when you kissed her? Like this?"

p. 88 "I am the ugly daughter. I am the one nobody comes for. Nenny says she won't wait her whole life for a husband to come and get her, that Minerva's sister left her mother's house by having a baby, but she doesn't want to go that way either. She wants things all her

own, to pick and choose. Nenny has pretty eyes and it's easy to talk that way if you are pretty."

p. 100. [Carnaval assault with what began as a seemingly kind old man in conversation with her]: "Sally, make him stop. I couldn't make them go away. I couldn't do anything but cry. I don't remember. It was dark. I don't remember. I don't remember. Please don't make me tell it all. Why did you leave me all alone I waited my whole life. You're a liar. They all lied. All the books and magazines, everything that told it wrong. Only his dirty fingernails against my skin, only his sour smell again. The moon that watched. The tilt-a-whirl. The red clowns laughing their thick-tongued laugh...He wouldn't let me go. He said I love you. I love you, Spanish girl."

Availability

This material is available to South Carolina public school students in middle and high schools.

Staff Recommendation

Retain for Middle and High School. This material is "age and developmentally appropriate" and does not contain descriptions of "sexual conduct" as defined in S.C. Code Ann. Section 16-15-305 (C)(1). Though the passages provided above contain mentions of a romantic relationship, the passages do address or describe "sexual conduct."