

## ESL Book Club 2022 – Book 1 Discussion Questions

### The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros

Discussion date: Feb 4, 2022 at 10:30 am

1. The author writes, “I’m going to tell you a story about a girl who doesn’t belong...” Why does she feel she doesn’t belong? Is her experience universal for all adolescent girls?
2. What does Esperanza find shameful about her name? Why do you think the author has chosen this name for her main character? (Chapter “My Name”)
3. What kind of person is Esperanza? What does the reader learn from this story about her strengths and weaknesses? (Chapter “A Rice Sandwich”)
4. What is Esperanza’s relationship with her father? How does this story develop Esperanza’s character? (Chapter “Papa Who Wakes Up Tired in the Dark”)
5. What does Esperanza learn from Ruthie’s experience that helps her formulate goals? (Chapter “Edna’s Ruthie”)
6. From the beginning, Esperanza senses she does not want to end up inheriting her great grandmother’s “place by the window... the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow” (Chapter “My Name”). How does Esperanza emotionally and physically separate herself from the other women: Marin, Sally, Rafaela, Minerva, or Ruthie?
  - 6a. Will her solution in “Beautiful & Cruel” [“I am one who leaves the table like a man, without putting back the chair or picking up the plate” p. 89] be an effective one?
7. What do the trees symbolize? What does Esperanza impose of her own character on the trees, and what does she take from the trees? (Chapter “Four Skinny Trees”)
8. What does Esperanza learn from her mother in this story, and how might their relationship be characterized? (Chapter “A Smart Cookie”)
9. What obstacles will Esperanza have to overcome, and what battles will she have to fight as she carves a future for herself?
10. What does Esperanza tell us about her community’s attitude towards non-Mexican Americans? What about the image that the non-Latinos have of the Latinos? (Chapter “No Speak English”)
11. In what way do the Sisters provide the decisive turning point for Esperanza? How does Esperanza’s community fit into her vision of her own future? (Chapter “The Three Sisters”)
12. Although much of the book details experiences outside the narrator’s house, why do you think the author chose *The House on Mango Street* as her title? What does it reveal about her connection to her family, her home and her neighborhood?

13. Given that the narrator is a young female, how does the author make Esperanza and her stories accessible to older and/or male readers?
14. Did the structure of short stories add to the story of Esperanza or distract from it? Did the pieces work together to create a coherent vision of Esperanza's world?
15. Which piece was your favorite? Why?