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## The House on Mango Street

In the novel *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros is a very impactful story that demonstrates a Latina girl named Esperanza living in Chicago and having to face a lot of adversity. First, Esperanza is a young Latina girl, so she is already subject to heavy discrimination in a place like Chicago. She starts their optimistic but soon learns what the real world is like and how people are really treated, especially the different minorities. As she goes through life in Chicago and learns how big of an affect income and economic state really is. She learns about poverty and how bad it is in the area she is and how it literally “defines” people in the country and how much respect they will give you. Income inequality is such a dividing factor in our country and even around the world, it is a shame that it is viewed so heavily, and people feel that your title and job and income is somewhat a result of who you are and how much respect to show you incase you can help them. I feel many people deal with this and for a lot of people poverty was just a product of circumstance and what they were born into, so while some have it made in the middle and upper class a lot must work extremely hard just to get by and live in very bad crime filled areas. *The House on Mango Street* really hit hard with just how much of an impact this makes on people’s perception not just about people in poverty but the mentality of

getting out. When you grow up in this environment you almost do not know how to escape it and start to feel trapped and like the world is against you because you are not valued as much as you should be. She notices that in these poverty areas people have begun to get stuck and have to work extremely hard to break out of it and there are not a lot of opportunities there. She then notices it is also very difficult and dangerous for a young Latina woman in poverty to live her life with the crime going around and the social norms put on people in these certain situations.

As well as not just economically but in the huge gender gap she faced and the country faces. In *House on Mango Street*, Esperanza learns that people judge very harshly on gender and treat a certain gender with more respect and opportunity than another. Esperanza deals with gender inequality and how women are viewed and mistreated. She experiences the lack of opportunity in the job market and how there was such a difference for the standard of men then women. For women the social norms described in the novel are very real in life as well with all this pressure and norms women must follow to be respected. Esperanza sees the norms of motherhood, marriage and other limitations that are put on women that hold them back. She starts to notice that because of how society is structured it is very limiting towards women, and they must work extra hard just to reach the same spot as a man. It is a very sad reality of the world and women are put through these social norms and have all these limiting things imposed on them like an example if you are a woman, you must be married by such age and have kids, and all the rest society wants. This discredits a lot of women's values and morals and makes them feel like they can't escape or be anything else except what society puts on them.

Furthermore, Esperanza must deal with race issues being a Latina woman in a majority white country. She learns that not only her, but all minorities are treated unfairly compared to whites and they are not only respected less but prevented a lot less opportunities. She notices how racist the world is and how people judge very bad based on skin type. She notices all the social norms and stereotypes that are put in place to keep certain people down and not having them move up in the world or into a better environment. When Esperanza does see this, she wants to move up and escape by saying, "I want to be like the waves on the sea, like the clouds in the wind, but I'm me. One day I'll jump out of my skin. I'll shake the sky like a hundred violins." (Esperanza). She uses this quote to move up and break free of her circumstances and really become the independent person she wants to become. She decides to not let society tell her what she can or cannot do and that she wants to become the person she is meant to be and won't let social norms, or discrimination by race, gender or income stop her. From here she starts turning out all the negative and focuses on how to break free and chase her dreams of owning a house and moving away from Mango Street. It is very hard to break free from this and from a real-world perspective it is sad that so many people must work so hard just to be at an even level playing field.

Another example that there is a lot of discrimination in the world and a lot by how men react is not just because they have the issue but it's because of the social norms. I watched a documentary in this class called "Be a Man", it was about how men should traditionally act and how they really are and what they can and can not do. This video featuring Justin specifically really focused on why men act the way we do and how we are told to. It seems as if the bad environment and social norms that men created have such a bad affect, they transfer over and

connect and hurt the women as well by holding them back and not valuing them as much. In the documentary it was all about figuring it out being tough and not asking or having a woman help you. I think that what I learned was doing that and all those issues and stereotypes prolong in men's life to where they eventually treat women unfair and do not look at them as equal or partners but as less than and someone they can walk over. It seems there is just so much wrong with the social norms in place, and we are trying to fix them and let people be who they are and who they want to be instead of pressuring people into everything like motherhood marriage and all the rest of the society checklist.

The House on Mango Street was very informative and a good eye opener to see what society is wrong and how it is so divisive. When seeing how Esperanza had to go through all the issues with not only being in poverty which is very difficult. She also went through being a Latina woman in a country run by "White men" which did not help her feel welcomed. It informs readers as well as about the things people who are minorities in the country go through and all they must do to just be at the same starting level. There is so much discrimination and I hope this story motivates people to see if you have big dreams and want to escape a bad environment do not let social norms or situational circumstance get in your way of achieving the life you want.

## References

Jusitn: “Be a Man” documentary social injustice and negative social norms surrounding what men can and can not do or feel.

Cisneros, Sandra. (1984). *The House on Mango Street*. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. “Esperanza”