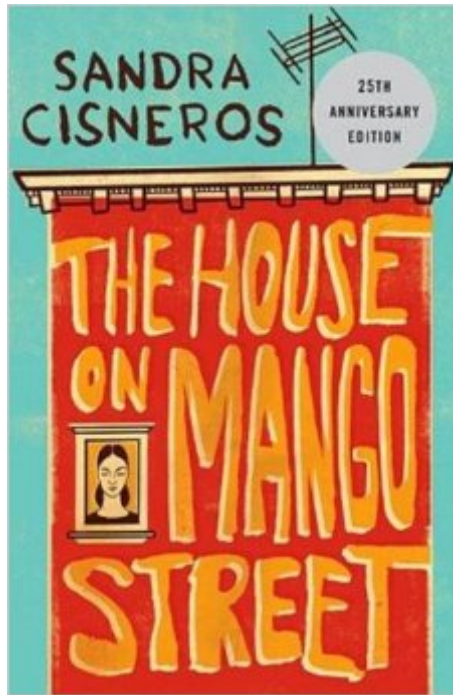


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# The House On Mango Street



## Synopsis

Acclaimed by critics, beloved by readers of all ages, taught everywhere from inner-city grade schools to universities across the country, and translated all over the world, *The House on Mango Street* is the remarkable story of Esperanza Cordero. Told in a series of vignettes — sometimes heartbreaking, sometimes deeply joyous — it is the story of a young Latina girl growing up in Chicago, inventing for herself who and what she will become. Few other books in our time have touched so many readers.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 3.6 out of 5 stars — See all reviews (1,165 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

I read some reviews for this book and I could not believe how underrated it is and how many people didn't understand it. Some people say that it is just a collection of random thoughts, but that is not the case. You see, this book a whole story and instead of having chapters of episodes, it contains "vignettes" which the dictionary defines as "a short descriptive literary sketch". Each vignette contains an important part of the story. The whole story describes the thoughts, feelings, and memories of Esperanza, an hispanic girl living in the poverty corner of the city, with dreams to escape her world. At the same time, she grows up and starts to leave her childhood, while learning about the fears and dangers of the world she never knew of before. Becoming an adult turns out to be a hard challenge. The first vignette called "House On Mango Street" is meant to describe the setting. The second "Hairs" describes the looks and characteristics of the characters. The third called "Boys and Girls" tells the difference between genders, which is important because the story deals with men and women. The following vignette called "My Name" paints the image of self and the feelings

of hope and the future. Therefore, these vignettes are not mere collections of random thoughts and uneducated language, but a poetic story with a well drawn setting, characterization, and gripping tone. Even though the story evolves around hispanics, this is a book for all races. The poverty and dreams of home remind me of the experiences of African-Americans and Chinese, as well as Caucasians. When I was in a Creative Writing class, we wrote many vignettes and if you are a student in Creative Writing you HAVE to get this book and share it with your class and teacher. It will help you understand the importance writing free verses, for this is the best example of vignettes I have ever seen. The voice of the author does not sound profesional or too fancy, but like the ordinary words people say today. it is a story of our time and a tale for all. My only complaint is that it was too short! I wanted to know more about what Esperanza does and her wishes. I also wanted to know what happened to her after the story. Even so, it is pretty plain to see that Esperanza learned how to escape from her cruel world, unlike the people who never knew where she went. I haven't seen such an exquisite story of our modern times since I read the "Joy Luck Club" about two years ago. If you want to read a beautiful story about growing up, living life, and with musical poetry, you must read this book.

I teach English to speakers of other languages at the high school level. For the past five years I have been reading The House on Mango Street with some of my classes. Not only is it the highlight of the year for me, but for my students as well. Cisneros's magnificently lyrical prose forces us to see the world through the perspective of an adolescent Latina. Don't let the simple sentences and short chapters fool you. Beneath the surface lies a rich network of themes: poverty, child abuse, rape, spousal abuse, the importance of education, hypocrisy, and a host of others. If you're looking for a linear story with a clearly defined plot, look elsewhere. Cisneros paints in broad strokes, and her canvas is multi-colored. Seen from up close, each chapter is a self-contained beauty. Seen from a distance, the chapters come together to reveal a masterpiece of Latino literature; it is by turns a feminist novel, a bildungsroman, and a chronicle of the will's triumph. The book has affected me profoundly, and with each new reading I find more to admire about it.

A series of vignettes, rather than a structured novel, *House on Mango Street* is Sandra Cisneros's semi-autobiographical account of growing up Chicana in a poor area of Chicago. Esperanza Cordero, at age eleven, has already discovered that being able to communicate in English is a key to worldly success, and she has begun recording stories of her neighborhood, friends, and everyday life, hoping one day to become a writer. Recreating one year of her life, she vividly depicts the

children's fierce loyalties to each other, their alienation from mainstream society, and their goals in life, sadly limited by the culture and its low expectations for girls and women. Maintaining a childish innocence, Esperanza's first person account reveals her growing awareness of alternatives to her Mango Street existence. She is saddened that her friend Sally, an abused child, never escapes, marrying very early ("in a state where children can marry before they have finished eighth grade"). Alicia, an older, highly motivated friend, however, works to achieve an education and spends long hours traveling to and from school so that she can move beyond Mango Street. Her prescient Aunt Lupe tells Esperanza to "Keep writing. It will keep you free," and a psychic tells her that she must work hard and write so that she can "come back for those who cannot make it out on their own." Dealing with everyday issues of maturity, a growing awareness of her own sexuality, and her resentment of a world which does not value women, Esperanza is an astute observer, telling stories filled with the humor, wonder, and sometimes heartbreak. As she tells about innocently riding in a stolen car; about the death of her friend Marin's boyfriend whose Mexican parents will never hear of his death because no one knows where to find them; about being assaulted while waiting for her friend Sally, who never answers her pleas for help; about Mamacita, who never leaves her apartment because she cannot communicate in English; and about her own mother's inability to travel on public transportation because she is afraid, she recreates Mango Street with all its limitations--and excitements. Like a red balloon which wants to escape its anchor, Esperanza dreams of having a better home, a better life, and greater opportunities. "I have decided not to grow up tame," she says, but she is firmly anchored to Mango Street through her experiences, and these, she discovers ironically, will eventually become the source material for her writing. Through Mango Street, Esperanza defines herself, but through her writing, she will set herself free. n Mary Whipple

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