

The House on Mango Street ~ Sandra Cisneros

NMPL BOOK CLUB – SEPTEMBER 9, 2014 @ 6:30

Discussion Questions

1. 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" ("My Name" 11). How does Esperanza emotionally and physically separate herself from the other women: Marin, Sally, Rafaela, Minerva, or Ruthie?
2. 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" (89). Be an effective one?
3. How is her self-esteem formed, and how does it evolve over the course of the novel?
4. What obstacles will Esperanza have to overcome, and what battles will she have to fight as she carves a future for herself?
5. Can or should *The House on Mango Street* be categorized as a coming-of-age novel, or is it more complex than that?
6. How do the children who inhabit Mango Street become the men and women portrayed in the novel? Is the children's fate inevitable? How does Esperanza set an example for how they can shape their own futures?
7. If you have some knowledge of the history of Chicanos in America, how does this novel reflect that history? How is the Chicanos' treatment in society similar or different from that of other minority groups?
8. Given that the narrator is a young female, how does Cisneros make Esperanza and her stories accessible to older and/or male readers? Does Esperanza's youth affect her telling of the story or her reliability as a narrator? Is there a universal message about one's identity that transcends Esperanza's individual experience?
9. Cisneros' prose has been described as "poetic" and "lyrical." What characteristics of the stories made these critics choose these descriptive terms? What other descriptive words might be fitting for her writing?
10. Did the structure of short vignettes, stories, or sketches add to the story of Esperanza or distract from it? Did the pieces work together to create a coherent vision of Esperanza's world?
11. Which piece was your favourite? Which was the most humorous? surprising? humbling? empowering? memorable?

JOTTINGS...