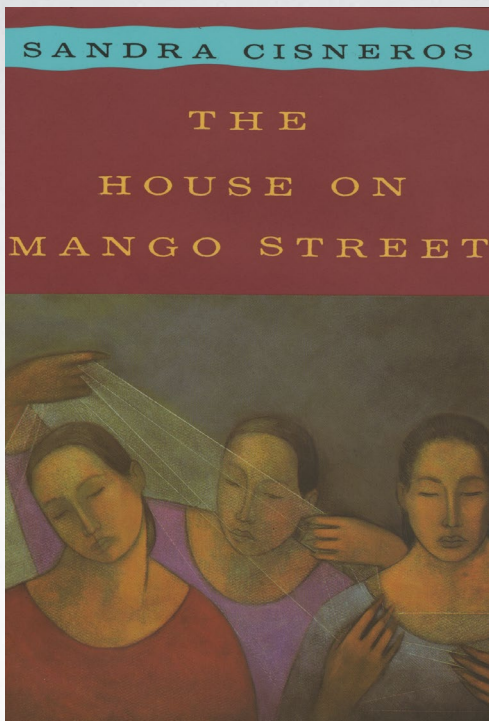
 **LITERARY FOCUS**
CURRICULUM GUIDE



The House on Mango Street
Sandra Cisneros
1984

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Introduction

Thank you for purchasing a curriculum guide from Literary Focus! We hope that the detailed descriptions of each activity in our daily agendas will help you plan your own lessons and provide a consistent thematic focus for your unit on Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*.

Even though our goal is to create a comprehensive framework for an entire unit, there are a number of variables that teachers need to consider when implementing the 15 essential elements into their own curriculum. Since our four-week enrichment classes at Literary Focus meet only twice a week for 50 minutes, we condense our instruction during those eight classes. Our classes run on a “flipped” instructional model, meaning students work on most assignments independently so that our limited time in class is devoted to sharing questions and ideas in a discussion-based, seminar-style format. As you structure your own unit, you will have many options to choose from in this curriculum guide, but you will not be able to do everything. As a result, you will need to select those activities that you think will be most effective in achieving your curricular goals.

The sequence of activities, assignments, and assessments in the Daily Agenda helps us organize our instruction to ensure that we cover each essential element before the end of the unit. Even though you will need to adjust your own daily agenda based on your school's particular schedule, we are confident that these units will be effective in any schedule—no matter if your class meets every day for 50 minutes or every other day for 90 minutes on a block schedule. How you structure the daily sequence will depend not only on your school's schedule, but also your individual teaching style and the pace in which you present the material.

As you read through the curriculum guide, if the purpose or rationale behind any element is unclear, we encourage you to read the full description in the “Framework” section of our website. If you still have questions, please ask them in the comments section at the bottom of each section. If you have that question, there are probably other teachers who do as well! We will respond to your question promptly, and hopefully your query will begin a fruitful discussion on how to best present the material and instruct our students in the future. If you do not want to ask your question in a public forum, please use the “Contact” page on our website or email me directly at dbunting@literaryfocus.org.

Finally, if there are any curricular design elements or instructional strategies that are not discussed in the Framework section of our website, please look through our catalog of past newsletters. For instance, if you are wondering how teachers manage the paper load when students write three AP-style drafts in every unit, we discuss that topic specifically in our July 2022 newsletter: “Managing the Paper Load.” If there is a topic that we have not discussed in a newsletter, please let us know. We will not only respond to your question individually, but we will likely turn that question into the focus of a future newsletter.

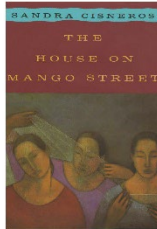
Again, thank you for purchasing a curriculum guide from Literary Focus! We hope it meets your expectations, and if you have any ideas or suggestions on how to make these guides even better, please let us know. We are always striving to improve.

Sincerely,



Derek Bunting
CEO/Founder
Literary Focus, Inc.
dbunting@literaryfocus.org
801.707.5481

The House on Mango Street (1984)

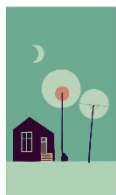


Sandra Cisneros (1954 -)

"I wanted to write something in a voice that was unique to who I was. And I wanted something that was accessible to the person who works at Dunkin' Donuts or who drives a bus, someone who comes home with their feet hurting like my father, someone who's busy and has too many children, like my mother."



AP Literary Argument (2010)



Write an essay that analyzes the importance of "home" to a character and the reasons for its continuing influence. Then explain how the character's idea of home illuminates the larger meaning of the work as a whole.

Authentic Assessment

Hidden Secrets Submission

The travel guide company *500 Hidden Secrets* wants recommendations on "hidden" places, traditions, or activities in your town or city that people tend to overlook or fail to appreciate. Create a 3-5 minute PowerPoint or Google Slides presentation to explain why a particular element of your community is special or unique.



1. AP Literary Argument

After teacher and student introductions, we will briefly introduce the novel and author, assigning as homework [Cisneros Biography](#) to read for the next class. We will also discuss Cisneros' desire to write a story that could only be told from the perspective of a young Latina growing up in a segregated west side of Chicago. We will also discuss the simple language that she uses in each vignette to make it accessible to the working-class people of her neighborhood, like her mother and father, but also the complexity and subtle significance lying underneath that simple language. We will also introduce the final essay of the unit, the [2010 AP Literary Argument](#) prompt, which will serve as the thematic focus for the next four weeks. Students should read and annotate Cisneros' novel with this prompt always in mind, knowing that it will be the subject of the final essay.

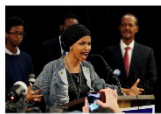
2. Authentic Assessment

Once we have established the thematic focus for the course, we will introduce the Authentic Assessment, which is a final project that asks students to apply the lessons learned from the novel into some real-world situation. For Cisneros' novel, students will imagine the travel guide company *500 Hidden Secrets* wants recommendations for a guide on their town or city that includes "hidden" places, traditions, or activities that most tourists—and perhaps locals—fail to notice or appreciate. Students will work on their [Hidden Secrets Submission](#) over the next four weeks and create a 3-5 minute PowerPoint or Google Slides presentation to highlight one particular element of their town or city that is special or unique. On the last day of class, students will have an opportunity to share their presentations to the whole class or in small groups, depending on how many students want to present.

Essential Questions

1. How important should our homes be?
2. What does it mean to be mature?
3. Do we have an obligation to our communities?

Journal Discussion



"You can leave home all you want, but home will never leave you."

- Sonyrea Tate
(1966 -)

Journal Response

- Explain: What does the quotation mean?
What thoughts or feelings are being expressed?
- Evaluate: What is the significance of the quotation?
Do you agree with its claims? Why or why not?
- Apply: How do these ideas connect to your previous studies?
How are these thoughts still relevant to us today?

Robert Hayden (1913 - 1980)

"Those Winter Sundays"
(1966)



3. Essential Questions

To push students to consider the deeper, more philosophical implications of Cisneros's novel, we will use the [Essential Questions Matrix](#) to determine how students' answers to these questions might evolve over the next four weeks. We will begin the process of thinking more deeply about these questions by first considering a thought-provoking quotation by Sonyrea Tate (1966-), a Black American author best known for her memoir *Little X*. For homework, students will post a 150-word journal response on the [Tate Discussion Board](#) to explain what they think the quote means, to what extent they agree or disagree with its claims, and the relevance it might have in their own lives. After students post their journals on the discussion board, they will then respond to two of their classmates' entries next week.

4. AP Poetry Analysis: Intro

Before beginning the novel, we will first analyze "Those Winter Sundays," a poem by Robert Hayden (1913-1980) that connects thematically to Cisneros' novel concerning the importance of home and how our perceptions might change as we grow older. The [Hayden AP Poetry Analysis](#) will be the first essay that students will have an opportunity to write in the course. After reading the poem aloud, we will introduce the "four pillars" of style analysis—diction, imagery, language, and syntax—and how writers use these literary techniques to establish tone and convey theme. If students would like more information on how writers use these literary techniques, we encourage them to read our [Style Analysis Tutorial](#). Students will answer the study guide questions on the AP prompt for homework, which we will discuss in the next class.

Homework:

Students should post their journals on the [Tate Discussion Board](#), complete the study guide for the [Hayden AP Poetry Analysis](#), and read [Cisneros' Biography](#) for Thursday's class.

Sandra Cisneros (1954 -)

Adapted from the Smithsonian Latino Center biography

Sandra Cisneros was born in Chicago, Illinois on December 20, 1954, the third of seven children. The only surviving daughter, she considered herself the "odd number in a set of men". Cisneros's great-grandfather had played the piano for the Mexican president and was from a wealthy background, but he gambled away his family's fortune. Her paternal grandfather was a veteran of the Mexican Revolution, and he used what money he had saved to give her father, Alfredo Cisneros de Moral, the opportunity to go to college. After failing classes due to what Cisneros called his "lack of interest" in studying, Alfredo ran away to the United States to escape his father's anger. While roaming the southern United States with his brother, Alfredo visited Chicago where he met Elvira Cordero Anguiano. After getting married, the pair settled in one of Chicago's poorest neighborhoods.

Taking work as an upholsterer to support his family, Cisneros's father began "a compulsive circular migration between Chicago and Mexico City that became the dominating pattern of Cisneros's childhood." Their family was constantly moving between the two countries, which necessitated their finding new places to live as well as schools for the children. Eventually the instability caused Cisneros's six brothers to pair off in twos, leaving her to define herself as the isolated one. Her feelings of exclusion from the family were exacerbated by her father, who referred to his "seis hijos y una hija" ("six sons and one daughter") rather than his "siete hijos" ("seven children"). Cisneros's childhood loneliness was instrumental in shaping her later passion for writing.

Cisneros's one strong female influence was her mother, Elvira, who was a voracious reader and more enlightened and socially conscious than her father. Although Elvira was too dependent on her husband and too restricted in her opportunities to fulfill her own potential, she

ensured her daughter would not suffer from the same disadvantages as she did.

Her family made a down-payment on their own home in Humboldt Park, a predominantly Puerto Rican neighborhood on Chicago's West Side when she was eleven years old. This neighborhood and its characters would later become the inspiration for Cisneros's novel *The House on Mango Street*. For high school, Cisneros attended Josephinum Academy, a small Catholic all-girls school. Here she found an ally in a high-school teacher who helped her to write poems about the Vietnam War. Although, Cisneros had written her first poem around the age of ten, with her teacher's encouragement she became known for her writing throughout her high-school years. In high school she wrote poetry and was the literary magazine editor, but, Cisneros claims she did not really start writing until her first creative writing class in college in 1974. After that it took a while to find her own voice. She explains, "I rejected what was at hand and emulated the voices of the poets I admired in books: big male voices like James Wright and Richard Hugo and Theodore Roethke, all wrong for me."

Cisneros was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree from Loyola University Chicago in 1976, and received a Master of Fine Arts degree from the Iowa Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa in 1978. It was while attending the Workshop that Cisneros discovered how the particular social position she occupied gave her writing a unique potential. She recalls being suddenly struck by the differences between her and her classmates: "It wasn't as if I didn't know who I was. I knew I was a Mexican woman. But, I didn't think it had anything to do with why I felt so much imbalance in my life, whereas it had everything to do with it! My race, my gender, and my class! And it didn't make sense until that moment, sitting in that seminar. That's when I decided I would write about something my classmates couldn't write about." She cast aside her attempt to conform to the American literary canon and adopted a writing style that was purposely opposite that of her classmates, realizing that

instead of being something to be ashamed of, her own cultural environment was a source of inspiration. From then on, she would write of her "neighbors, the people [she] saw, the poverty that the women had gone through." Cisneros says of this moment: "So to me it began there, and that's when I intentionally started writing about all the things in my culture that were different from them—the poems that are these city voices—the first part of *Wicked Wicked Ways*—and the stories in *The House on Mango Street*. I think it's ironic that at the moment when I was practically leaving an institution of learning, I began realizing in which ways institutions had failed me.

Drawing on Mexican and Southwestern popular culture and conversations in the city streets, Cisneros wrote to convey the lives of people she identified with. Literary critic Jacqueline Doyle has described Cisneros's passion for hearing the personal stories that people tell and her commitment to expressing the voices of marginalized people through her work, such as the "thousands of silent women" whose struggles are portrayed in *The House on Mango Street*.

Five years after receiving her MFA, she returned to Loyola University Chicago, where she had previously earned a BA in English, to work as an administrative assistant. Prior to this job, she worked in the Chicano barrio in Chicago teaching to high school dropouts at Latino Youth High School. Through these jobs, she gained more experience with the problems of young Latino Americans.

As a pioneer Chicana author, Cisneros filled a void by bringing to the fore a genre that had previously been at the margins of mainstream literature. With her first novel, *The House on Mango Street*, published in 1984, she moved away from the poetic style that was common in Chicana literature at the time and began to define a "distinctive Chicana literary space", challenging familiar literary forms and addressing subjects such as gender inequality and the

marginalization of cultural minorities. According to literary critic Alvina E Quintana, *The House on Mango Street* is a book that has reached beyond the Chicano and Latino literary communities, and is now read by people of all ethnicities. Quintana states that Cisneros's writing is accessible for both Anglo- and Mexican-Americans alike since it is free from anger or accusation, presenting the issues (such as Chicana identity and gender inequalities) in an approachable way. Cisneros's writing has been influential in shaping both Chicana and feminist literature. Quintana sees her fiction as a form of social commentary, contributing to a literary tradition that resembles the work of contemporary cultural anthropologists in its attempt to authentically represent the cultural experience of a group of people, and acknowledges Cisneros's contribution to Chicana feminist aesthetics by bringing women to the center as empowered protagonists in much of her work.

After the success of *The House on Mango Street*, Cisneros published a short story collection *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* in 1991. Her literary success led to a succession of Writer-in-Residence posts at universities in the United States, teaching creative writing at institutions such as the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Michigan. In addition, she has been the recipient of numerous awards including a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in 1991 and 1998. In 1998 she also established the Macondo Foundation, which provides socially-conscious workshops for writers, and in 2000 she founded the Alfredo Cisneros Del Moral Foundation, which awards talented writers connected to Texas. She lived for many years in San Antonio before moving to San Miguel de Allende, a city in central Mexico, where she currently resides.

2010 AP® ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Question 3

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

“You can leave home all you want, but home will never leave you.”
- Sonsyrea Tate

Sonsyrea Tate’s statement suggests that “home” may be conceived as a dwelling, a place, or a state of mind. It may have positive or negative associations, but in either case, it may have a considerable influence on an individual.

Choose a novel or play in which a central character leaves home yet finds that home remains significant. Write a well-developed essay in which you analyze the importance of “home” to this character and the reasons for its continuing influence. Explain how the character’s idea of home illuminates the larger meaning of the work.

Choose a work from the list below or another novel or play of comparable literary merit. Do not merely summarize the plot.

Absalom, Absalom!
All the Pretty Horses
Beloved
Bleak House
Candide
The Cherry Orchard
The Country of the Pointed Firs
Fences
A Free Life: A Novel
The Glass Menagerie
The God of Small Things
Going After Cacciato
The Grapes of Wrath
Great Expectations
The Great Gatsby
Home to Harlem
A House for Mr. Biswas
The House of Mirth
The House on Mango Street

The Inheritance of Loss
Invisible Man
Jane Eyre
The Little Foxes
Look Homeward, Angel
The Namesake
Never Let Me Go
The Piano Lesson
The Poisonwood Bible
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man
The Road
Song of Solomon
A Streetcar Named Desire
Sula
Their Eyes Were Watching God
Things Fall Apart
Wise Blood
The Women of Brewster Place
Wuthering Heights

STOP

END OF EXAM

Authentic Assessment: Hidden Secrets Submission



Premise:

The travel guide company *500 Hidden Secrets* is planning to create a guide of your town or city and is looking for locals to submit ideas on what to highlight in your neighborhood or community that a normal tourist—or even other locals—might overlook or fail to appreciate. While they are taking submissions from people of all ages, they are specifically targeting local high school students to explore the reasons why your town or city is such a great place to grow up. Students should highlight those places, customs, or activities that make their town or city unique or special.

Directions:

Students should create a 3-5 minute PowerPoint or Google Slides presentation that highlights one particular aspect of their neighborhood or community that they consider a “hidden secret” that most people tend to overlook. Students will evaluate their classmates’ presentations and eventually choose the top three submissions, which will be forwarded to editors of *500 Hidden Secrets* to be considered for their upcoming guidebook.

Assessment:

The Hidden Secrets Submission is worth 20 points based on a combination of teacher and student evaluations. Presentations will be judged on the insight and depth of the analysis, the creativity and persuasiveness of the appeal, and the overall professionalism of the presentation.

The Essential Questions for Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*

Before reading Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*, consider how you would initially answer the following questions based on your experiences at this point in your life. As you read and analyze Cisneros' novel, Sonysrea Tate's quotation, and Robert Hayden's poem, be prepared to revisit these questions on the final day of class to determine how your thoughts may have potentially changed over the four weeks.

How important should our homes be?
Before:
After:

What does it mean to be mature?
Before:
After:

Do we have an obligation to our communities?
Before:
After:

AP® ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Question 1

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

In the following poem by Robert Hayden (1913-1980), the speaker looks back on the strained relationship he had with his father during childhood. Read the poem carefully and in a well-organized essay discuss how Hayden contrasts the speaker's attitude towards his father as a child with how he now sees him as an adult. Consider how Hayden uses different literary techniques—such as diction, imagery, language, and syntax—and various poetic devices to convey his theme when formulating your response.

Those Winter Sundays

Sundays too my father got up early
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,
then with cracked hands that ached
from labor in the weekday weather made
Line
5 banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,
and slowly I would rise and dress,
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

10 Speaking indifferently to him,
who had driven out the cold
and polished my good shoes as well.
What did I know, what did I know
of love's austere and lonely offices?

(1966)

AP Prompt: Study Guide

1. How are we supposed to feel about the speaker's father in the opening stanza? What is the significance of the word "too" (1) in the opening line? What impact does the caesura in the fifth line make before the speaker states, "No one ever thanked him" (5)?
2. Why do you think Hayden chose to repeat the hard "k" sound in the opening stanza? How does that sound contribute to the tone? In addition to consonance, what impact does the use of the internal rhymes "blueblack" (2) and "cracked" (3) and "banked" (5) and "thanked" (5) make on the reader?
3. Why does Hayden use an asyndeton between the present participles "splintering, breaking" (6) at the end of the first line of the second stanza? How do the present participles affect the meter in the opening and closing lines of the stanza? Why does Hayden use an enjambment at the end of the stanza?
4. What is the effect on the reader of starting the final stanza with a fragmented thought that continues the thought begun in the second stanza? How does that disconnect contribute to the meaning of the poem as a whole? What seems to be the speaker's feelings about his younger self in this poem?
5. Why does Hayden have the speaker repeat the phrase "What did I know, what did I know" (13) in the penultimate line of the poem? What does that repetition reveal about the speaker? How does the speaker feel about the father now that the speaker is an adult? What have caused his feelings to change over time?

AP Poetry Analysis

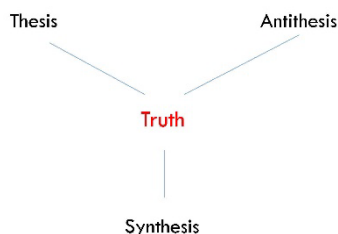
Literary Techniques

1. Diction
2. Imagery
3. Language
4. Syntax

Poetic Devices

1. Alliteration
2. Rhythm/Rhyme/Meter
3. Parallel Structure

Hegel's Dialectic



West Side, Chicago



Row Houses



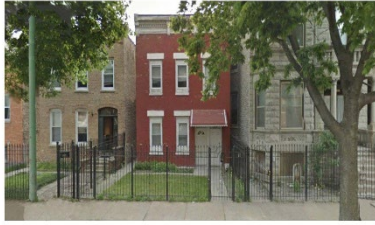
1. AP Poetry Analysis: Redux

At the beginning of class we will review "Those Winter Sundays" from the [Hayden AP Poetry Analysis](#) and answer questions from the study guide. We will also examine how Hayden uses different literary techniques and poetic devices to establish tone and convey theme in his poem. Once students feel comfortable with Hayden's poem, we will introduce [Hegel's Dialectic](#), the rhetorical framework students will use to organize their AP-style essays. Students will identify the central tension in the poem, which will be the focus of their first two body paragraphs (i.e. thesis vs. antithesis) before resolving that tension in their concluding paragraph in a way that reveals Hayden's overall theme (i.e. synthesis). If students would like to review poetic devices and read a sample essay that follows Hegel's Dialectic, we encourage them to read our [AP Poetry Analysis Tutorial](#).

2. Author Background

After we finish analyzing Hayden's poem, we will discuss [Cisneros' Biography](#), which students read for homework. We will consider how her childhood as the only "hija" in a family of seven and her experience at the Iowa Writers Workshop shaped her identity as a Latina writer, especially when she came to the realization that she wanted to "write about something my classmates couldn't write about." We will also discuss the unique style of her book, and how that style in many ways was a reaction against what she had learned in graduate school. Finally, we will discuss the setting of the book, the West Side of Chicago, and the segregated neighborhoods that divide that city. We will also discuss the housing options in many major American cities, and why her house on Mango Street is an improvement but still unsatisfying to Esperanza at the outset of the novel.

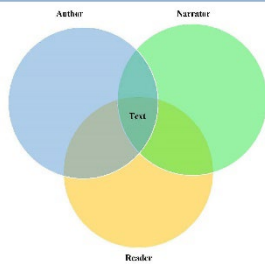
The House on Mango Street



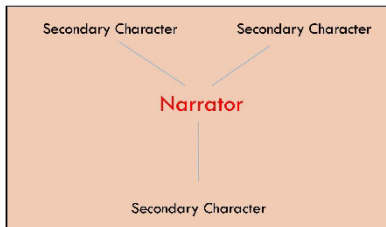
Vocabulary

Context	Definition
We had to leave the <i>flat</i> on Loomis quick. The water pipes broke and the landlord wouldn't fix them because the house was too old. We had to leave fast. (4)	noun 1. a woman's shoe with no heel 2. a musical tone one chromatic half step below another 3. a deflated tire 4. an apartment or suite of rooms on one floor forming a residence

Point of View



First-Person Narration



3. Vocabulary

Before we begin the novel, we will introduce a [Vocabulary List](#) of twenty words that we encourage students to study as they read Cisneros' text. Using the first four words on the list as examples, we will look at the [Vocab Sample Matrix](#) to discuss how contextual clues can help us choose the most appropriate definition of a word based on the way an author uses it in a particular context. Students will study ten words during the first week's reading assignment and then another ten words during the second week. When students have studied all twenty words on the list, they will take a [Vocabulary Quiz](#) on their own during the third week to assess how well they know the appropriate definition of each word and the way that Cisneros specifically uses that word in the context of her novel.

4. Point of View: Intro

Prior to reading the opening paragraphs of the novel, we will introduce narrative point of view and the relationship between the narrator, author, and reader. We will also discuss the difference between a first-person narrator and a third-person limited or omniscient narrator, and why an author would choose one versus the others. As we read aloud the opening paragraphs, we will also discuss how to annotate a text by looking at a [Sample Annotation](#) of the first two pages for students to use as model. Students will also evaluate Esperanza's reliability as a narrator on the [Narrative POV Matrix](#) and how Esperanza's initial judgments about her house and neighborhood potentially foreshadow Cisneros' theme concerning the influence that our conception of "home" has on our identities and lives.

Homework:

Students should read Ch. 1-15 (pp. 3-34) of the novel and take the [Ch. 1-15 Quiz](#) on their own. Students should also write their [Hayden AP Poetry Analysis](#) and schedule a 15-minute [Writing Conference](#) to receive individual feedback on their essay by the end of next week.

Using Hegel's Dialectic in Argumentative Essays

Adapted from John Wetzel's article, "The MCAT Writing Assignment"

Introduction

Almost every American high school student learns how to write five-paragraph themes. In secondary school we learn that the basic short essay should be organized in the following five-paragraph structure:

1. Introduction
2. Body Paragraph
3. Body Paragraph
4. Body Paragraph
5. Conclusion

The five-paragraph theme is a rudimentary tool for beginning writers to master, but it's often difficult for college students to break out of the five-paragraph mode. Essays should deliver *critical* writing, not the "say what you're going to say; say it; then, say what you said" structure of a typical five-paragraph essay. In critical writing, the ideas need to develop organically, but the five-paragraph theme discourages strong connections between ideas. Almost invariably, students write some version of "We can see [thesis] through Example A, Example B, Example C" with the paragraphs about A, B, and C connected to each other with a string of "Also's" or "Moreover's".

Another problem with the five-paragraph theme is that it encourages students to write the dullest, most formulaic conclusions ever. Students have been taught repeatedly to begin their last paragraphs with "In conclusion, this essay has shown that [insert slightly reshuffled sentences from the introduction]." Why bother to go through the process of writing if you end up at the same place you began?

Writing a True Critical Essay

Instead of the five-paragraph essay, we suggest that the essays you write at the college level should follow the basic rhetorical structure of Hegel's Dialectic, namely

- An intellectual proposition (**thesis**)
- A critical perspective on the thesis (**antithesis**)
- A resolution of the tension between the thesis and antithesis by reconciling their common truths and forming a new proposition (**synthesis**)

Hegel's Dialectic represents a compact way of expressing the process of critical thinking and will help you create a unified essay that has a compelling argument and is intellectually satisfying for your reader.

Imagine a Debate to Help You Brainstorm

One thing veteran writers learn is the value of a "generative device" to get ideas flowing. After receiving your essay prompt, take five minutes to imagine that you are witnessing a "debate night" at the local auditorium with your essay prompt being the topic of debate. The first speaker argues for the thesis; the second speaker argues for the antithesis; and the third speaker, the wisest of all, represents the synthesis. The third speaker is like the chorus in a Greek tragedy, who arrives at the end to explain the deeper truth.

Let's see how this five-minute process works with a typical essay prompt:

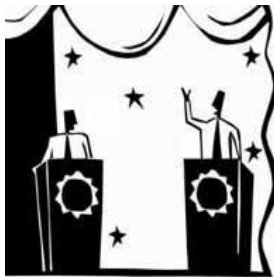
It is a miracle if curiosity can survive a formal education.

Write a unified essay in which you perform the following tasks. Explain what you think the above statement means. Describe a specific situation in which formal education might promote intellectual curiosity. Discuss what educational institutions can do to promote a love of learning without sacrificing educational standards.



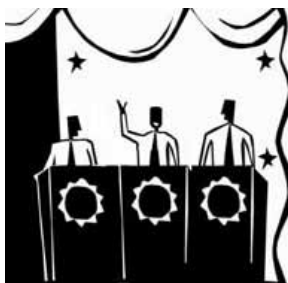
Thesis

Education isn't filling a bucket but lighting a fire. By too great a reliance on competition, testing, and rote learning educational institutions often thwart the natural love of learning in students.



Antithesis

Very few people ever learned long division because they enjoyed it, and few children would volunteer to practice spelling. Sometimes education means suffering years of work after which students can realize an understanding of the world that education has given them.



Synthesis

Although education in the United States seems to be evolving in a direction which may hurt the natural desire to learn in children, with too much emphasis on testing and rote learning, there is no denying that at the university level, our system combines the best of freedom of inquiry with the need for professional training.

After five minutes of brainstorming, you now have a sentence or two for each of the three rhetorical tasks. The art of composition is to balance the structure of the overall form with the creativity of the moment itself. Too much structure, and the essay is stultified, dull, and formulaic. With too much freedom, the essay is a formless stream-of-consciousness. If you practice intellectual balance, however, you will eventually become a writer who can respect opposing viewpoints while still arguing persuasively for your own perspective, a rhetorical skill that will produce strong, compelling arguments that will be of lasting value throughout your life.

Sandra Cisneros
The House on Mango Street

Vocabulary List

Chapters 1-15 (pp. 3-34):

1. flat (4)
2. rosettes (6)
3. chandelier (11)
4. baptize (11)
5. raggedy (12)
6. sassy (16)
7. *marimbas* (20)
8. jutting (22)
9. pleated (25)
10. flecks (27)

Chapters 16-30 (pp. 35-78):

11. *frijoles* (37)
12. *tamales* (39)
13. Spartan (44)
14. anemic (44)
15. *chanclas* (46)
16. *abuelito* (56)
17. *brazier* (66)
18. babushka (67)
19. fuchsia (76)
20. hollyhocks (77)

Sample Vocabulary for Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*

Directions: Look at how each word is used in the context of Sandra Cisneros' novel and then determine which dictionary definition best fits that particular context. Write the appropriate definition in the third box of the matrix and then prepare for the twenty-word vocabulary quiz by studying BOTH the dictionary definition and the context of the way the word is used in Cisneros' text.

Word	Context	Definition
1. flat	We had to leave the <i>flat</i> on Loomis quick. The water pipes broke and the landlord wouldn't fix them because the house was too old. We had to leave fast. (4)	
2. rosettes	But my mother's hair, my mother's hair, like little <i>rosettes</i> , like little candy circles all curly and pretty because she pinned it in pincurls all day, sweet to put your nose into when she is holding you, holding you and you feel safe. . . . (6)	
3. chandelier	My great-grandmother. I would've liked to have known her, a wild horse of a woman, so wild she wouldn't marry. Until my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off. Just like that, as if she were a fancy <i>chandelier</i> . (11)	
4. baptize	I would like to <i>baptize</i> myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees. Especially as Lisandra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do. (11)	

Vocabulary Quiz

I. Definition

- | | | | |
|-----------|---|-----|-----------------|
| _____ 1. | dirty; unkempt; slovenly. | a. | jutting |
| _____ 2. | an apartment or suite of rooms on one floor forming a residence. | b. | <i>frijoles</i> |
| _____ 3. | lacking power, vigor, or vitality; weak; listless. | c. | sassy |
| _____ 4. | extending beyond the main body or line; projecting; protruding. | d. | baptize |
| _____ 5. | old, worn-out shoes no longer appropriate for formal occasions. | e. | flat |
| _____ 6. | a variety of bean extensively cultivated for food in Mexico. | ab. | anemic |
| _____ 7. | a person characterized by stern discipline and austere simplicity. | ac. | fuchsia |
| _____ 8. | to give a name to; to christen; to denominate. | ad. | <i>chanclas</i> |
| _____ 9. | a bright, purplish-red color, reflecting the flower of the same name. | ae. | raggedy |
| _____ 10. | brash; mouthy; rude; disrespectful. | bc. | Spartan |

II. Context

- | | | | |
|-----------|--|-----|-----------------|
| _____ 11. | The nose of that yellow Cadillac was all _____ like an alligator's, and except for a bloody lip and bruised forehead, Louie's cousin was okay. | a. | babushka |
| _____ 12. | But what difference does it make? He wasn't anything to her. . . . Just another _____ who didn't speak English. Just another wetback. | b. | <i>marimbas</i> |
| _____ 13. | [The grandpa's] feet were fat and doughy like thick _____, and these he powdered and stuffed into white socks and brown leather shoes. | c. | chandelier |
| _____ 14. | Until my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off. Just like that, as if she were a fancy _____ . That's the way he did it. | d. | <i>brazier</i> |
| _____ 15. | But my mother's hair, my mother's hair, like little _____, like little candy circles all curly and pretty because she pinned it in pincurls all day | e. | hollyhocks |
| _____ 16. | [The music box] is like drops of water. Or like _____ only with a funny little plucked sound to it like if you were running your fingers across the teeth of a metal comb. | ab. | flecks |
| _____ 17. | Your _____ is dead, Papa says early one morning in my room. <i>Está muerto</i> , and then as if he just heard the news himself, crumples like a coat and cries, my brave Papa cries. | ac. | pleated |
| _____ 18. | Home. Home. Home is a house in a photograph, a pink house, pink as _____ with lots of startled light. The man paints the walls of the apartment pink, but it's not the same, you know. | ad. | <i>abuelito</i> |
| _____ 19. | [Marin] is the one who told us . . . if you count white _____ on your fingernails you can know how many boys are thinking of you and lots of other things I can't remember now. | ae. | rosettes |
| _____ 20. | Ruthie, tall skinny lady with red lipstick and blue _____, one blue sock and one green because she forgot, is the only grown-up we know who likes to play. | bc. | <i>tamales</i> |

Answer Key:

1. ae
2. e
3. ab
4. a
5. ad
6. b
7. bc
8. d
9. ac
10. c

-
11. ac
 12. d
 13. bc
 14. c
 15. ae
 16. b
 17. ad
 18. e
 19. ab
 20. a

Sample Annotation: Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*

As students read a novel or play for the first time, they should highlight any element that might be potentially significant—such as the descriptions of characters, settings, or any detail that an author or playwright might use to establish tone or convey theme. After highlighting the text on the initial read, students should then underline, box, or asterisk the highlighted sections and add margin notes to ask questions or provide commentary.

"Lazy poems" - starts with "and" = lot. why?
 Vignette - Photograph that gives an impression
 ("a few brush strokes")
 Not a full painting
 why write a book of vignettes? Effect?

Read aloud:
 what is your first impression of Esperanza? what is she like?
 * Thesis Statement
 * Quote to support

The House on Mango Street

Rhythmic - string of fragments starting with "and"

We didn't always live on Mango Street. Before that we lived on Loomis on the third floor, and before that we lived on Keeler. Before Keeler it was Paulina, and before that I can't remember. But what I remember most is moving a lot. Each time it seemed there'd be one more of us. By the time we got to Mango Street we were six—Mama, Papa, Carlos, Kiki, my sister Nenny and me. American dream

The house on Mango Street is ours, and we don't have to pay rent to anybody, or share the yard with the people downstairs, or be careful not to make too much noise, and there isn't a landlord banging on the ceiling with a broom. But even so, it's not the house we'd thought we'd get.

Disappointment: should she be?

The House on Mango Street 3

why is she ashamed? What does she use of a comparison?

We had to leave the flat on Loomis quick. The water pipes broke and the landlord wouldn't fix them because the house was too old. We had to leave fast. We were using the washroom next door and carrying water over in empty milk gallons. That's why Mama and Papa looked for a house, and that's why we moved into the house on Mango Street, far away, on the other side of town.

They always told us that one day we would move into a house, a real house that would be ours for always so we wouldn't have to move each year. And our house would have running water and pipes that worked. And inside it would have real stairs, not hallway stairs, but stairs inside like the houses on T.V. And we'd have a basement and at least three washrooms so when we took a bath we wouldn't have to tell everybody. Our house would be white with trees around it, a great big yard and grass growing without a fence. This was the house Papa talked about when he held a lottery ticket and this was the house Mama dreamed up in the stories she told us before we went to bed.

But the house on Mango Street is not the way they told it at all. It's small and red with tight steps in front and windows so small you'd think they were holding their breath. Bricks are crumbling in places, and the front door is so swollen you have to push hard to get in. There is no front yard, only four little elms the city planted by the curb. Out back is a small garage for the car we don't own yet and a small yard that looks smaller between the two buildings on either side. There are stairs in our house, but they're ordinary hallway stairs, and the house has only one washroom. Everybody has to share a bedroom—Mama and Papa, Carlos and Kiki, me and Nenny.

Once when we were living on Loomis, a nun from my school passed by and saw me playing out front. The laundromat downstairs had been boarded up because it had

Crime

4 Sandra Cisneros

Narrative Point of View: Esperanza's Immaturity

Consider the opening first-person narration of Esperanza Cordero in Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*. How reliable is Esperanza's perspective in describing the house that she and her family have moved into on Mango Street? Carefully read the excerpts below and then analyze how Cisneros uses the narration to reveal the areas that Esperanza needs to grow and develop in order to be a mature person by the novel's end.

Concrete Detail
The house on Mango Street is ours, and we don't have to pay rent to anybody, or share the yard with the people downstairs, or be careful not to make too much noise, and there isn't a landlord banging on the ceiling with a broom. But even so, it's not the house we thought we'd get. (3)
Commentary

Concrete Detail
They always told us that one day we would move into a house, a real house that would be ours for always so we wouldn't have to move each year. And our house would have running water and pipes that worked. And inside it would have real stairs, not hallway stairs, but stairs inside like the houses on T.V. (4)
Commentary

Concrete Detail
<i>There.</i> I had to look to where she pointed—the third floor, the paint peeling, wooden bars Papa had nailed on the windows so we wouldn't fall out. <i>You live there?</i> The way she said it made me feel like nothing. [. . .] I knew then I had to have a house. A real house. One I could point to. But this isn't it. The house on Mango Street isn't it. (5)
Commentary

Reading Quiz: Ch. 1-15

Directions: Choose the BEST answer to the following questions:

- _____ 1. Esperanza metaphorically describes her relationship with her younger sister, Nenny, as being like a “red balloon tied to an anchor,” which emphasizes the fact that Nenny
- (A) grounds her in a way that provides needed safety and security
 - (B) limits her because she is too young to be a true friend
 - (C) lacks the creativity and imagination to see color in the world
 - (D) prevents her from spending time with her brothers outside the home
 - (E) is her primary responsibility, which makes her feel important
- _____ 2. Esperanza calls her great-grandmother a “wild horse of a woman” and states that she has “inherited her name” but does not want “to inherit her place by the window,” which symbolizes the
- (A) lack of control that women have over the direction of their lives in Mexican culture
 - (B) importance of education and the opportunities that will come as a result of it
 - (C) difficulty that her classmates have in trying to pronounce her name at school
 - (D) limitations of an immigrant moving to a country that speaks a different language
 - (E) hope that she will one day live up to the example her great-grandmother has set
- _____ 3. Cathy, who claims to be the “great great grand cousin of the queen of France,” tells Esperanza that she can only be her friend “till next Tuesday” because
- (A) she has to spend most of her time taking care of all of her cats
 - (B) Esperanza does not listen to her and befriends Lucy and Rachel instead
 - (C) they have to fly back to France to inherit the family house from a distant cousin
 - (D) her family has decided to move because the neighborhood is getting bad
 - (E) Meme Ortiz’s family bought the house and evicted Cathy’s family
- _____ 4. When visiting Gil’s Furniture Store, Esperanza claims she “turned away and pretended [not to] care about the [music] box,” but Nenny—who asks, “How much?”—is described as “stupider” for not
- (A) understanding how difficult it is to operate a delicate piece of machinery like that
 - (B) recognizing that Gil would never sell something so precious to them or anyone else
 - (C) appreciating how fortunate they are to be allowed to play in the store in the first place
 - (D) considering the more important things they should be buying to help out their family
 - (E) realizing they would never have enough money to afford something that expensive
- _____ 5. Alicia “studies all night and sees mice” in the kitchen after everyone else has gone to bed, which prompts her father to tell her that she should be sleeping instead of studying so that she can
- (A) feel rested in the morning and be able to do her best in school
 - (B) look beautiful on the subway so she can meet a man who might marry her
 - (C) get up early with the tortilla star to make lunches for the rest of the family
 - (D) leave the kitchen and let her father drink beer with his friends late at night
 - (E) get a real job downtown because that is where the best jobs are

Answer Key:

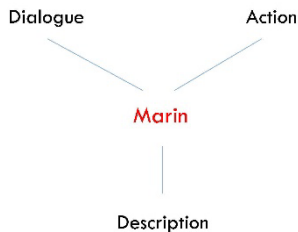
1. B
2. A
3. D
4. E
5. C

Point of View



They always told us that one day we would move into a house, a real house that would be ours for always so we wouldn't have to move each year. And our house would have running water and pipes that worked. And inside it would have real stairs, not hallway stairs, but stairs inside like the houses on T.V. (4)

Characterization



Dialogue

Marin says that if she stays here next year, she's going to get a real job downtown because that's where the best jobs are, since you always get to look beautiful and get to wear nice clothes and can meet someone in the subway who might marry you and take you to live in a big house far away. (26)



Action



And since Marin's skirts are shorter and since her eyes are pretty, and since Marin is already older than us in many ways, the boys who do pass by say stupid things like I am in love with those two green apples you call eyes, give them to me why don't you. And Marin just looks at them without even blinking and is not afraid. (27)

1. Point of View: Redux

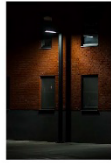
We will begin class by answering questions from the [Ch. 1-15 Quiz](#) before continuing our examination of Cisneros's narrative point of view and discussing Esperanza's immaturity at the beginning of the novel concerning her attitude towards her new house on Mango Street. We will revisit excerpts from the [Narrative POV Matrix](#) to determine how Cisneros wants us to feel about Esperanza's disappointment that her new house on Mango Street is "not the house we thought we'd get." We will also introduce the concept of a "bildungsroman," which is story that follows the growth and development of a character from youth to maturity, and try to predict how Esperanza most likely will change over the course of the novel, especially concerning her concept of "home." We will also consider why she is so disappointed and the significance of her desire for "real stairs, not hallway stairs, but stairs inside like the houses on T.V."

2. Groupwork: Characterization

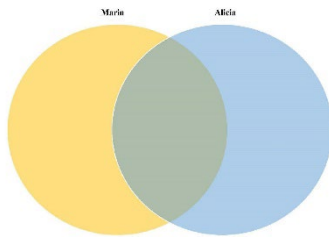
Once we have discussed the narrative point of view, we will introduce the concept of characterization by examining how Cisneros uses description, action, and dialogue to depict Marin, one of the older girls in the neighborhood who serves as a role model for Esperanza. Students will work in small groups on the [Marin Characterization Matrix](#) to contrast how Esperanza thinks about Marin to how Cisneros wants us to feel about her. We will also introduce the concept of "flat," or static, characters (i.e. those that do not change over the course of a story) versus "round," or dynamic, characters (i.e. those that do change) and how authors make use of both to advance plot and convey theme. We will also point out that traditionally a novel's protagonist (i.e. main character) will be a round, or dynamic, character and what that suggests about Esperanza's potential transformation over the course of the novel.

Description

Marin, under the streetlight, dancing by herself, is singing the same song somewhere. I know. Is waiting for a car to stop, a star to fall, someone to change her life. (27)



Literary Foils



Gender



Alicia, who inherited her mama's rolling pin and sleepiness, is young and smart and studies for the first time at the university. Two trains and a bus, because she doesn't want to spend her whole life in a factory or behind a rolling pin. Is a good girl, my friend, studies all night and sees the mice, the ones her father says do not exist. Is afraid of nothing except four-legged fur. And fathers. (31-32)

Race/Ethnicity

You want a friend, [Cathy] says. Okay, I'll be your friend. But only till next Tuesday. That's when we move away. Got to. Then as if she forgot I just moved in, she says the neighborhood is getting bad. [...] In the meantime they'll just have to move a little farther north from Mango Street, a little farther away every time people like us keep moving in. (13)



3. Literary Foils

To introduce the concept of literary foils, we will read aloud the vignette "Alicia Who Sees Mice" and use the [Role Model Venn](#) to compare and contrast the characters of Alicia and Marin, examining how each serves as a role model—both positively and negatively—for Esperanza. We will consider the unique lessons that Esperanza learns from each character and how, despite their obvious differences, they also contain a few similarities that might influence Esperanza's future growth and development as a person. For instance, we will discuss how both characters are fearless and determined to create a better life for themselves and are willing to confront the male-dominated society that seeks to control them. We will also examine, however, the key differences in the way that they choose to pursue the changes they want to see in their lives.

4. Intersectionality: Intro

After comparing and contrasting the characters of Marin and Alicia, we will introduce the concept of "intersectionality," a theoretical framework for understanding how a person's various social and political identities—such as gender, race/ethnicity, and class—combine to create different modes of advantage and disadvantage in a person's life. We will use the [Esperanza Intersectionality Matrix](#) to examine the impact that being female has had on Esperanza's understanding of herself when considering that Alicia has "inherited her mama's rolling pin" and "[i]s afraid of nothing except four-legged fur. And fathers." We will also examine the impact of race/ethnicity on Esperanza as we discuss Cathy's family decision to move "a little farther north from Mango Street" because, as she rudely tells Esperanza, "the neighborhood is getting bad."

Homework:

Students should respond to two of their classmates' journals on the [Tate Discussion Board](#) and schedule a 15-minute [Writing Conference](#) to receive individual feedback on their [Hayden AP Poetry Analysis](#) by the end of the week.

Marin's Characterization in Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*

The novel's narrator, Esperanza, describes her interactions with various characters in her neighborhood on the west side of Chicago, who all make an impression on her and help shape the person that she becomes over the course of the novel. For example, consider how the character of Marin is depicted through dialogue, actions, and description. How does Marin serve as a role model—both positively and negatively—for Esperanza?

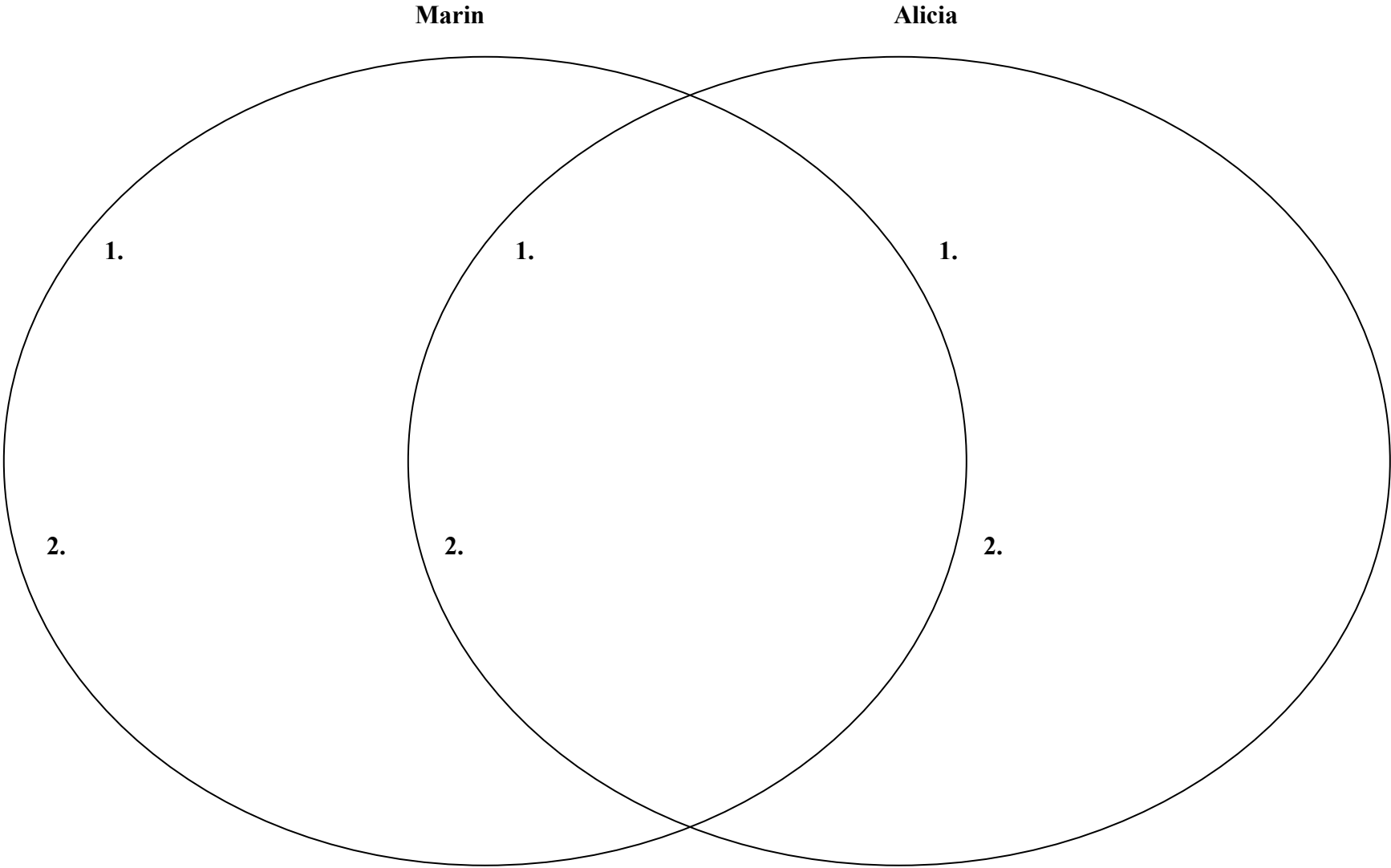
Dialogue
Concrete Detail: Marin says that if she stays here next year, she's going to get a real job downtown because that's where the best jobs are, since you always get to look beautiful and get to wear nice clothes and can meet someone in the subway who might marry you and take you to live in a big house far away. (26)
Commentary:

Action
Concrete Detail: And since Marin's skirts are shorter and since her eyes are pretty, and since Marin is already older than us in many ways, the boys who do pass by say stupid things like I am in love with those two green apples you call eyes, give them to me why don't you. And Marin just looks at them without even blinking and is not afraid. (27)
Commentary:

Description
Concrete Detail: Marin, under the streetlight, dancing by herself, is singing the same song somewhere. I know. Is waiting for a car to stop, a star to fall, someone to change her life. (27)
Commentary:

Role Models in Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*

Compare and contrast the impact that the characters of Marin and Alicia have on the development of the novel's narrator, Esperanza, in both positive and negative ways. Find two ways in which each character's impact on Esperanza is unique and provide evidence from the text to support your claims. Then find one similarity between the two characters and provide evidence from the text for each character to support your claim.



Intersectionality in Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*

Intersectionality is a theoretical framework for understanding how a person's various social and political identities—such as gender, race, and class—combine to create different modes of advantage and disadvantage. Carefully read the following excerpts from Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* and provide commentary on how these incidents might have impacted Esperanza's understanding of herself as a poor Latina girl.

Gender
Concrete Detail: Alicia, who inherited her mama's rolling pin and sleepiness, is young and smart and studies for the first time at the university. Two trains and a bus, because she doesn't want to spend her whole life in a factory or behind a rolling pin. Is a good girl, my friend, studies all night and sees the mice, the ones her father says do not exit. Is afraid of nothing except four-legged fur. And fathers. (31-32)
Commentary:

Race/Ethnicity
Concrete Detail: You want a friend, [Cathy] says. Okay, I'll be your friend. But only till next Tuesday. That's when we move away. Got to. Then as if she forgot I just moved in, she says the neighborhood is getting bad. [. . .] In the meantime they'll just have to move a little farther north from Mango Street, a little farther away every time people like us keep moving in. (13)
Commentary:

Class
Concrete Detail: And then I don't know why, but I have to turn around and pretend I don't care about the box so Nenny won't see how stupid I am. But Nenny, who is stupider, already is asking how much and I can see her fingers going for the quarters in her pants pocket. This, the old man says shutting the lid, this ain't for sale. (20)
Commentary:

Class

And then I don't know why, but I have to turn around and pretend I don't care about the box so Nenny won't see how stupid I am. But Nenny, who is stupider, already is asking how much and I can see her fingers going for the quarters in her pants pocket.

This, the old man says shutting the lid, this ain't for sale. (20)



Style Analysis

Diction

Word Choice

Connotation vs. Denotation

dog vs. mutt
giggle vs. laugh
strict vs. rigid

Imagery

Sensory Details

- Sight
- Sound
- Smell
- Touch
- Taste

Diction



It was my great-grandmother's name and now it is mine. She was a horse woman too, born like me in the Chinese year of the horse—which is supposed to be bad luck if you're born female—but I think this is a Chinese lie because the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don't like their women strong. (10)

Imagery

My great-grandmother. I would've liked to have known her, a wild horse of a woman, so wild she wouldn't marry. Until my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off. Just like that, as if she were a fancy chandelier. That's the way he did it. (10-11)



1. Intersectionality: Redux

We will continue to discuss the theoretical framework of "intersectionality," which explores how a person's social and political identities—such as gender, race/ethnicity, and class—combine to create advantages and disadvantages in a person's life. We will revisit the [Esperanza Intersectionality Matrix](#) to see how these various factors influence how Esperanza sees herself and the world around her. Not only is she female and of Mexican descent, but Esperanza is also young and poor, which is best exemplified in the story of "Gil's Furniture Bought & Sold," where she pretends she doesn't want the music box "so Nenny won't see how stupid I am." If students are interested in reading more about the controversy surrounding intersectionality in our current political climate, we encourage them to read an excerpt from the 2019 *Vox* article, "[The Intersectionality Wars.](#)"

2. Groupwork: Style Analysis

Once we have discussed the concept of intersectionality, we will review the "four pillars" of style analysis—diction, imagery, language, and syntax—as we examine the impact that Esperanza's great-grandmother has had on her both positively and negatively. Students will work in small groups on the [Cisneros Style Matrix](#) to determine what Esperanza wants to "inherit" from her great-grandmother and what she wants to leave behind. As students read the passage, they will consider the connotation of individual words (i.e. diction); the use of sensory details (i.e. imagery); the use of metaphors, symbols, and allusions (i.e. language); and the way Cisneros constructs individual sentences (i.e. syntax) to establish tone and convey theme. If students want extra guidance on how authors use literary techniques, we encourage them to review our [Style Analysis Tutorial](#).

Style Analysis

Language

Figurative Language

- Metaphors
- Symbols
- Allusions

Syntax

Sentence Construction

- Order
- Punctuation
- Tenses

Language



She looked out the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow. I wonder if she made the best with what she got or was she sorry because she couldn't be all the things she wanted to be. Esperanza. I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window. (11)

Syntax

I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees. Esperanza as Lisandra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do. (11)



Symbolism



Someday I will have a best friend all my own. One I can tell my secrets to. One who will understand my jokes without my having to explain them. Until then I am a red balloon, a balloon tied to an anchor. (9)

3. Symbolism

After we review various literary techniques that Cisneros uses in the vignette "My Name," we will introduce the concept of symbolism as we consider the central metaphor from "Boys & Girls" on the [Red Balloon Matrix](#). We will discuss why Esperanza does not like having to look after her younger sister, Nenny, who Esperanza thinks is too young to be a "real" friend, and how until she gets older, she will just be "a red balloon, a balloon tied to an anchor." Students will consider why Esperanza feels so negatively about her situation, and how her attitude and perspective might change over the course of the novel. If students want more information on how writers use symbolism in literary works, they should read "[Is That a Symbol?](#)" from Thomas C. Foster's *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*.

4. AP Passage Analysis: Intro

In preparation for our next essay, we will introduce the [Cisneros AP Passage Analysis](#) by reading the prompt and trying to identify the implied tension that will be the focus of the students' first two body paragraphs (i.e. thesis vs. antithesis). As we review [Hegel's Dialectic](#), we will discuss how students need to resolve the tension in their third body paragraph in a way that reveals Cisneros' overall theme (i.e. synthesis). In other words, students should consider how Geraldo's story might serve as a "magic casement" or an "illuminating incident"—in the words of [Edith Wharton](#)—that potentially reveals "the meaning of the work as a whole." If students want to receive further guidance and read a sample essay following Hegel's Dialectic, we encourage them to read our [AP Passage Analysis Tutorial](#).

Homework:

Students should read Ch. 16-30 (pp. 35-78) of the novel and take the [Ch. 16-30 Quiz](#) and [Vocab Quiz](#) on their own. Students should also write their [Cisneros AP Passage Analysis](#) and schedule a 15-minute [Writing Conference](#) to receive feedback on their essay by the end of next week.

from “The Intersectionality Wars”

by Jane Coaston, *Vox* (May 28, 2019)

The current debate over intersectionality, a legal term coined by professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, is really three debates: one based on what academics like Crenshaw actually mean by the term, one based on how activists seeking to eliminate disparities between groups have interpreted the term, and a third on how some conservatives are responding to its use by those activists.

Crenshaw has watched all this with no small measure of surprise. “This is what happens when an idea travels beyond the context and the content,” she said. “Intersectionality is a prism to bring to light dynamics within discrimination law that weren’t being appreciated by the courts,” Crenshaw said. “In particular, courts seem to think that race discrimination was what happened to all black people across gender, and sex discrimination was what happened to all women. If that is your framework, what happens to black women and other women of color is going to be difficult to see.”

But then something unexpected happened. Crenshaw’s theory went mainstream, arriving in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 2015 and gaining widespread attention during the 2017 Women’s March, an event whose organizers noted how women’s “intersecting identities” meant that they were “impacted by a multitude of social justice and human rights issues.”

When you talk to conservatives about the term itself, however, they say the concept of intersectionality—the idea that people experience discrimination differently depending on their overlapping identities—isn’t the problem. Because, as David French, a writer for *National Review*, told me, the idea is more or less indisputable.

“An African American man is going to experience the world differently than an African American woman,” French told me. “Somebody who is LGBT is going to experience the world differently than somebody who’s straight. Somebody who’s LGBT and African American is going to experience the world differently

than somebody who’s LGBT and Latina. It’s sort of this commonsense notion that different categories of people have different kinds of experience.”

What many conservatives object to is not the term but its application on college campuses and beyond. Conservatives believe that it could be (or is being) used against them, making them the victims, in a sense, of a new form of overlapping oppression. To them, intersectionality isn’t just describing a hierarchy of oppression but, in practice, an inversion of it, such that being a white straight cisgender man is made anathema.

In a 2018 clip for Prager University, an online platform for conservative educational videos, pundit Ben Shapiro described intersectionality as “a form of identity politics in which the value of your opinion depends on how many victim groups you belong to. At the bottom of the totem pole is the person everybody loves to hate: the straight white male.” At the end of the video, Shapiro concludes, “But what do I know? I’m just a straight white male.”

In an interview, Shapiro gave me a definition of intersectionality that seemed far afield from Crenshaw’s understanding of her own theory. “I would define intersectionality as, at least the way that I’ve seen it manifest on college campuses, and in a lot of the political left, as a hierarchy of victimhood in which people are considered members of a victim class by virtue of membership in a particular group, and at the intersection of various groups lies the ascent on the hierarchy.”

And in that new “hierarchy of victimhood,” Shapiro told me, white men would be at the bottom. “In other words, if you are a woman, then you are more victimized than a man, and if you are black, then you’re more victimized than if you were white. If you’re a black woman, you are more victimized than if you are a black man.”

I had sent Shapiro Crenshaw’s 1989 paper prior to our conversation. The paper, Shapiro said, “seems relatively unobjectionable.” He just didn’t think it was particularly relevant. “I first started hearing about this theory in the context of a lot of the discussions on campus,

the ‘check your privilege’ discussions. That was the first place that I came across it, and that’s honestly the place that most people first came across it in the public eye.”

Crenshaw said conservative criticisms of intersectionality weren’t really aimed at the theory. If they were, and not largely focused on whom intersectionality would benefit or burden, conservatives wouldn’t use their own identities as part of their critiques. (Shapiro’s tongue-in-cheek disclaimer of “I’m just a straight white male,” for example.) Identities simply wouldn’t matter—unless, of course, they actually do, and the people at the top of our current identity hierarchy are more concerned about losing their spot than they are with eliminating those hierarchies altogether.

“When you’re going to sign on to a particular critique by rolling out your identity, exactly how was your identity politics different from what you’re trying to critique?” Crenshaw said. “It’s just a matter of who it is, that’s what you seem to be most concerned about.”

There’s nothing new about this, she continued. “There have always been people, from the very beginning of the civil rights movement, who had denounced the creation of equality rights on the grounds that it takes something away from them.”

To Crenshaw, the most common critiques of intersectionality—that the theory represents a “new caste system”—are actually affirmations of the theory’s fundamental truth: that individuals have individual identities that intersect in ways that impact how they are viewed, understood, and treated. Black women are both black and women, but because they are *black women*, they endure specific forms of discrimination that black men, or white women, might not.

But Crenshaw said that contrary to her critics’ objections, intersectionality isn’t “an effort to create the world in an inverted image of what it is now.” Rather, she said, the point of intersectionality is to make room “for more advocacy and remedial practices” to create a more egalitarian system.

In short, Crenshaw doesn’t want to replicate existing power dynamics and cultural structures just to give people of color power over white people, for example. She wants to get rid of those existing power dynamics altogether—changing the very structures that undergird our politics, law, and culture in order to level the playing field. Still, as Crenshaw told me, “plenty of people choose not to assume that the prism [of intersectionality] necessarily demands anything in particular of them.”

The conservatives I spoke to understood quite well what intersectionality is. What’s more, they didn’t seem bothered by intersectionality as legal concept, or intersectionality as an idea. (I asked Shapiro this question directly, and he said, “the original articulation of the idea by Crenshaw is accurate and not a problem.”) Rather, they’re deeply concerned by the practice of intersectionality, and moreover, what they concluded intersectionality would ask, or demand, of them and of society.

Indeed, intersectionality is intended to ask a lot of individuals and movements alike, requiring that efforts to address one form of oppression take others into account. Efforts to fight racism would require examining other forms of prejudice (like anti-Semitism, for example); efforts to eliminate gender disparities would require examining how women of color experience gender bias differently from white women (and how nonwhite men do too, compared to white men).

This raises big, difficult questions, ones that many people (even those who purport to abide by “intersectionalist” values) are unprepared, or unwilling, to answer. Once we acknowledge the role of race and racism, what do we do about it? And who should be responsible for addressing racism, anyway?

Intersectionality operates as both the observance and analysis of power imbalances, and the tool by which those power imbalances could be eliminated altogether. And the observance of power imbalances, as is so frequently true, is far less controversial than the tool that could eliminate them.

Style Analysis: Esperanza’s Great-Grandmother in “My Name”

Consider how Sandra Cisneros uses different literary techniques—such as diction, imagery, language, and syntax—in the vignette “My Name” from *The House on Mango Street* to convey the impact that Esperanza’s great-grandmother has had on Esperanza’s understanding of herself. Carefully read the following passage and then provide commentary on how Cisneros uses each literary technique to convey her overall theme.

Diction (Word Choice/Connotation)		Language (Metaphors/Symbols/Allusions)
Concrete Detail:	<p>In English my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting. It is like the number nine. A muddy color. It is the Mexican records my father plays on Sunday mornings when he is shaving, songs like sobbing.</p> <p>It was my great-grandmother’s name and now it is mine. She was a horse woman too, born like me in the Chinese year of the horse—which is supposed to be bad luck if you’re born female—but I think this is a Chinese lie because the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don’t like their women strong.</p> <p>My great-grandmother. I would’ve liked to have known her, a wild horse of a woman, so wild she wouldn’t marry. Until my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off. Just like that, as if she were a fancy chandelier. That’s the way he did it.</p> <p>And the story goes she never forgave him. She looked out the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow. I wonder if she made the best with what she got or was she sorry because she couldn’t be all the things she wanted to be. Esperanza. I have inherited her name, but I don’t want to inherit her place by the window.</p> <p>At school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. But in Spanish my name is made out of a softer something, like silver, not quite as thick as sister’s name—Magdalena—which is uglier than mine. Magdalena who at least can come home and become Nenny. But I am always Esperanza.</p> <p>I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees. Esperanza as Lisandra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do. (10-11)</p>	Concrete Detail:
Commentary:		Commentary:
Imagery (Sensory Details)		Syntax (Sentence Structure)
Concrete Detail:		Concrete Detail:
Commentary:		Commentary:

Symbolism: “A Red Balloon, a Balloon Tied to an Anchor”

When we examine the central metaphor that Esperanza identifies with at the beginning of *The House on Mango Street*, we must also consider how Esperanza will potentially change over the course of the story. How is Esperanza’s initial conception of herself and her relationship to her sister and the rest of her community a sign of her youth and immaturity? How might the meaning of this symbol change with more age and experience?

Interpretation #1

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Interpretation #2

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Interpretation #3

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Is That a Symbol?

from *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*

by Thomas C. Foster (2003)

Is that a symbol? Sure, why not. The next question, however, is where things get hairy: what does it mean, what does it stand for? When someone in my class asks about meaning, I usually come back with something clever, like "Well, what do you think?" Everyone thinks I'm either being a wise guy or ducking responsibility, but neither is the case. Seriously, what do *you* think it stands for, because that's probably what it does. At least for you.

Here's the problem with symbols: people expect them to mean something. Not just any something, but one something in particular. You know what? It doesn't work like that. Oh, sure, there are some symbols that work straightforwardly: a white flag means, I give up, don't shoot. Or it means, we come in peace. See? Even in a fairly clear-cut case we can't pin down a single meaning, although they're pretty close. So some symbols have a relatively limited range of meanings, but in general a symbol can't be reduced to standing for only one thing. Instead, the thing referred to will probably involve a range of possible meanings and interpretations.

The problem for readers is that they want the symbol to mean one thing for all of us and for all time. That would be easy, convenient, manageable for us. But that handiness would result in a net loss: the novel would cease to be what it is, a network of meanings and significations that permits a nearly limitless range of possible interpretations. The meaning of a symbol isn't lying on the surface of a novel. Rather, it waits somewhere deeper, and part of what it requires of us is to bring something of ourselves to the encounter. If we want to figure out what a symbol means, we have to use a variety of tools on it: questions, experience, pre-existing knowledge.

In *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain gives us the Mississippi. Twain sends Huck and the escaped slave Jim down the river on a raft. The river is a little bit of everything in the novel. At the beginning it floods, killing livestock and people, including Huck's father. Jim uses the river to escape to freedom, but his "escape" is paradoxical since it carries him deeper and deeper into slave territory. The river is both danger and safety since the relative isolation from land and detection is offset by the perils of river travel on a makeshift conveyance.

On a personal level, the river/raft provides the platform on which Huck, a white boy, can get to know Jim not as a slave but as a man. And, of course, the river is really a road, and the raft trip a quest that results in Huck growing to maturity and understanding. He knows himself well enough at the end that he will never return to childhood and St. Petersburg and bossy women, so he "lights out for the territory" instead.

So what are we to do? You can't simply say, "Well, it's a river, so it means *x*." Instead, you need to ask questions of the text; what's the writer doing with this image, this object. Reading literature is a highly intellectual activity, but it also involves instinct to a large degree. Much of what we think about literature, we feel first.

We tend to give writers all the credit, but reading is also an event of the imagination; our creativity, our inventiveness, encounters that of the writer, and in that meeting we puzzle out what she means, what we understand her to mean, and what uses we can put her writing to.

Imagination isn't fantasy. We can't simply invent meaning without the writer. Rather, a reader's imagination is the act of one creative intelligence engaging another. So engage that other creative intelligence. Listen to your instincts. Pay attention to what you feel about the text. It probably means something.

AP® ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Question 2

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

In the following passage from Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* (1984), Esperanza, the novel's first-person narrator, recounts a story she was told by her friend Marin about Geraldo, a boy she met one night at a dance. Carefully read the passage and then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how Cisneros uses various literary techniques—such as diction, imagery, language, and syntax—to convey different points of view and ways of understanding the life and death of someone like Geraldo.

Line
5 She met him a dance. Pretty too, and young.
Said he worked in a restaurant, but she can't
remember which one. Geraldo. That's all.
Green pants and Saturday shirt. Geraldo.
That's what he told her.

10 And how was she to know she'd be the last one
to see him alive. An accident, don't you know.
Hit-and-run. Marin, she goes to all those
dances. Uptown. Logan. Embassy. Palmer.
Aragon. Fontana. The Manor. She likes to
dance. She knows how to do cumbias and
salsas and rancheras even. And he was just
someone she danced with. Somebody she met
that night. That's right.

15 That's the story. That's what she said again
and again. Once to the hospital people and
twice to the police. No address. No name.
Nothing in his pockets. Ain't it a shame.

20 Only Marin can't explain why it mattered, the
hours and hours, for somebody she didn't even
know. The hospital emergency room. Nobody
but an intern working all alone. And maybe if
the surgeon would've come, maybe if he hadn't
lost so much blood, if the surgeon had only
25 come, they would know who to notify and
where.

30 But what difference does it make? He wasn't
anything to her. He wasn't her boyfriend or
anything like that. Just another *brazier* who
didn't speak English. Just another wetback.
You know the kind. The ones who always look
ashamed. And what was she doing out at three
a.m. anyway? Marin who was sent home with
her coat and some aspirin. How does she
35 explain?

She met him at a dance. Geraldo in his shiny
shirt and green pants. Geraldo going to a
dance.

What does it matter?

40 They never saw the kitchenettes. They never
knew about the two-room flats and sleeping
rooms he rented, the weekly money orders sent
home, the currency exchange. How could they?

45 His name was Geraldo. And his home is in
another country. The ones he left behind are far
away, will wonder, shrug, remember.
Geraldo—he went north . . . we never heard
from him again.

AP Prompt: Study Guide

1. What's the impact of repeating the one-word sentence of "Geraldo" (3,4) in the opening paragraph? How does the short sentence of "That's all" (3) establish the tone of the story? What point does Cisneros seem to be making about the life of an immigrant in this country, especially one that comes alone?
2. When Esperanza, the narrator, says, "No address. No name. Nothing in his pockets. Ain't it a shame" (17-18), whose perspective does she seem to be assuming? What appears to be the tone of these short sentences, especially the final one? Is the loss of a person's life just a "shame," or something more?
3. Even though Marin "can't explain why it mattered, the hours and hours, for somebody she didn't even know" (19-21), the reader should understand why this story is so important to Marin. What does she see in Geraldo? What does Cisneros want the reader to understand about the larger significance of this story?
4. How does the "intern working all alone" (22) and the surgeon not coming to the hospital reflect the fate of poor people in our country? Whose attitude is being expressed when Esperanza refers to Geraldo with ethnic slurs such as "[j]ust another *brazier* who didn't speak English. Just another wetback" (29-30)?
5. Who are the "they" who "never knew about the two-room flats and sleeping rooms he rented, the weekly money orders sent home, the currency exchange" (40-43)? What is implied by concluding, "How could they?" (43)? What should we understand about the importance of "home" (43, 44) from this story?

2011 AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION
FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS (Form B)

Question 3

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

In *The Writing of Fiction* (1925), novelist Edith Wharton states the following:

At every stage in the process of his tale the novelist must rely on what may be called the *illuminating incident* to reveal and emphasize the inner meaning of each situation. Illuminating incidents are the magic casements of fiction, its vistas on infinity.

Choose a novel or play that you have studied and write a well-organized essay in which you describe an “illuminating” episode or moment and explain how it functions as a “casement,” a window that opens onto the meaning of the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

You may select a work from the list below or another appropriate novel or play of comparable literary merit.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
As I Lay Dying
The Awakening
Beloved
Catch-22
The Catcher in the Rye
Dr. Faustus
Emma
The Good Soldier
Heart of Darkness
M. Butterfly
Major Barbara
The Mayor of Casterbridge
Mrs. Dalloway
Native Son

Oedipus Rex
Othello
Passing
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man
The Portrait of a Lady
Pride and Prejudice
The Remains of the Day
The Scarlet Letter
A Soldier's Play
A Streetcar Named Desire
Surfacing
Their Eyes Were Watching God
Twelfth Night
Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?
Who Has Seen the Wind

STOP

END OF EXAM

Reading Quiz: Ch. 16-30

Directions: Choose the BEST answer to the following questions:

- ____ 1. During her cousin's baptism party in the basement of the Precious Blood Church, Esperanza at first refuses to dance with Uncle Nacho because she is
- (A) angry that her mother has drunk too much, forcing her to fan her hot face with a paper plate
 - (B) embarrassed that she has to wear her old saddle shoes with her brand-new pink dress
 - (C) sad that her father could not be there because he had to return to Mexico after his father died
 - (D) tired from having had to study all night for her first big test at the Catholic high school
 - (E) nervous that the boy who is a man might stand on the side and watch her dance
- ____ 2. On the first day of her job at the Peter Pan Photo Finishers, Esperanza meets "an older Oriental man" who makes her feel "better" and not "so nervous anymore" until he
- (A) says hello and talks to her for a while about Esperanza's just starting her job that day
 - (B) asks if Esperanza knows what day it is and then tells her that it is his birthday
 - (C) invites her to be friends with him and says she can sit in the lunchroom with him next time
 - (D) starts to laugh and tells her that she can sit down when she needs to while working
 - (E) grabs her face with both hands and kisses her hard on the mouth and doesn't let go
- ____ 3. Esperanza thinks she "will go to hell and most likely . . . deserve[s] to be there" for laughing and imitating Aunt Lupe the day she dies, a fact that makes her especially ashamed since Aunt Lupe always
- (A) listened to her poems and encouraged her to keep writing
 - (B) was pretty like Esperanza's mother and dark and good to look at
 - (C) had strong swimmer's legs, the bones hard and parting water
 - (D) walked down the street in a Joan Crawford dress and funny felt hat
 - (E) held cousin Totchy in one hand and baby Frank in the other
- ____ 4. While Esperanza sits at Elenita's kitchen table getting her fortune read and hearing that one day she will have "a home in the heart," Esperanza cannot help but feel
- (A) gratitude
 - (B) anger
 - (C) pride
 - (D) disappointment
 - (E) relief
- ____ 5. When Esperanza feels like "a tiny thing against so many bricks," she looks at the "four skinny trees" in front of her house, who inspire her for all of the following reasons EXCEPT that they
- (A) are four who do not belong here but are here
 - (B) bite the sky with violent teeth and never quit their anger
 - (C) are four raggedy excuses who are too sad and too skinny to keep keeping
 - (D) grew despite concrete, who reach and do not forget to reach
 - (E) have a strength that is secret and send ferocious roots beneath the ground

Answer Key:

1. B
2. E
3. A
4. D
5. C

AP Passage Analysis



How does the story of Geraldo serve as an "illuminating incident" or "magic casement"—in the words of author Edith Wharton—that reveals Cisneros' overall theme and the meaning of the work as a whole?

Thesis

Only Marin can't explain why it mattered, the hours and hours, for somebody she didn't even know. The hospital emergency room. Nobody but an intern working all alone. And maybe if the surgeon would've come, maybe if he hadn't lost so much blood, if the surgeon had only come, they would know who to notify and where. (66)



Antithesis



The Bracero Program (1942–1964)

But what difference does it make? He wasn't anything to her. He wasn't her boyfriend or anything like that. Just another brazer who didn't speak English. Just another wetback. You know the kind. The ones who always look ashamed. And what was she doing out at three a.m. anyway? (66)

Synthesis

They never saw the kitchenettes [. . .] the weekly money orders sent home, the currency exchange. How could they?

His name was Geraldo. And his home is in another country. The ones he left behind are far away, will wonder, shrug, remember. Geraldo—he went north . . . we never heard from him again. (66)



1. AP Passage Analysis: Redux

We will begin class by answering questions from the [Ch. 16-30 Quiz](#) and [Vocabulary Quiz](#) before discussing the significance of Geraldo's story on the [Cisneros AP Passage Analysis](#). As we review [Hegel's Dialectic](#), we will use the [Passage Analysis Matrix](#) to identify the tension between how the authorities see Geraldo versus the way Marin and Esperanza see him (i.e. thesis vs. antithesis). We will also discuss the racist slurs "wetback" and "brazer," derived from the U.S. government's Bracero Program during World War II, before we discuss how Cisneros tries to resolve the tension by using Geraldo's story as a "magic casement" or "illuminating incident"—in the words of writer [Edith Wharton](#)—to reveal "the meaning of the work as a whole" (i.e. synthesis). If students want to receive further guidance and read a sample essay following [Hegel's Dialectic](#), they should read our [AP Passage Analysis Tutorial](#).

2. Groupwork: Symbolism

Once we have discussed the significance of Geraldo's story, we will discuss how settings can be used symbolically to reveal an author's theme. Students will work in small groups on the [Skinny Trees Matrix](#) to determine why Esperanza identifies with the "four skinny trees" planted outside her house, which she describes as "[f]our raggedy excuses" that "do not belong here but are here." Students will also discuss why she finds strength in their ability to "send ferocious roots beneath the ground" and from their desire to "bite the sky with violent teeth" and their determination to "never quit their anger." We will also discuss the significance of each tree having "their arms around the other" and why if one were to "forget his reason for being, they'd all droop like tulips in a glass." Finally, we will discuss how this metaphor compares with Esperanza's previous claim of being "a [red] balloon tied to an anchor."

"Four Skinny Trees"



They are the only ones who understand me. I am the only one who understands them. Four skinny trees with skinny necks and pointy elbows like mine. Four who do not belong here but are here. Four raggedy excuses planted by the city. From our room we can hear them, but Nenny just sleeps and doesn't appreciate these things. (74)

"The Family of Little Feet"

It's Rachel who learns to walk the best all strutted in those magic high heels. She teaches us to cross and uncross our legs, and to run like a double-dutch rope, and how to walk down to the corner so that the shoes talk back to you with every step. Lucy, Rachel, me tee-tottering like so. Down to the corner where the men can't take their eyes off us. We must be Christmas. (40)



from "Cisneros' Revision of the 'Bildungsroman' Novel"



"Sandra Cisneros appropriates and revises the traditional European 'Bildungsroman' by emphasizing the communal instead of the individual, by telling her story in fragmented and circular narrative patterns instead of linear movement, and by her critique of American materialism and manipulation of the stereotypical 'American Dream' to include those usually excluded: the poor and/or non-white."

- Maria Karafilis, University of Maryland

Literary Criticism

- What claims do you agree with?
- What claims do you find interesting, but don't necessarily agree with?
- What claims do you disagree with?

3. Cisneros' Feminist Theme

After we examine the symbolic significance of the "four skinny trees," we will revisit Cisneros' dedication in the novel—"A las Mujeres" ("To the Women")—to consider Esperanza's growth and maturation from a feminist perspective. We will use an excerpt from "The Family of Little Feet" on the [Feminist Theme Matrix](#) to discuss why the girls are so enthralled with the high heels that they have been given and how Cisneros uses their experience to convey her overall theme concerning the difficulty and dangers of growing up as a girl in our society. In particular, we will examine why the girls ignore Mr. Benny's warning and believe that "these are the best shoes" because of all the male attention they receive. We will also discuss what the girls learn from their experience and why they do not want to keep the shoes at the end of the story.

4. Literary Criticism: Intro

To prepare for Thursday's class, we will preview Maria Karafilis' essay, "[Cisneros' Revision of the 'Bildungsroman' Novel](#)," which students will read for homework. We will discuss the purpose of literary criticism, which is to make us think either differently or more deeply about the text we are reading, which should also be the students' goal when writing their own essays. We will emphasize that literary criticism is simply an interpretation—and, thus, subject to debate. When students read Karafilis' essay, they should complete the [Literary Criticism Matrix](#) by stating the claims that they agree with, the claims that they find interesting (but do not necessarily agree with), and the claims that they definitely disagree with. Students will share their thoughts on Karafilis' argument at the beginning of Thursday's class.

Homework:

Students should read "[Cisneros' Revision of the 'Bildungsroman' Novel](#)" and complete the [Literary Criticism Matrix](#) for next class. Students should also schedule a 15-minute [Writing Conference](#) to receive individual feedback on their [Cisneros AP Passage Analysis](#) by the end of the week.

The Tragic Story of Geraldo in Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*

In Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*, Esperanza recounts the story she hears from Marin about Geraldo, an undocumented immigrant with no identification who is killed in a hit-and-run accident. Carefully read the following excerpts and provide commentary on how Cisneros' shifting tones and points of view potentially serve as an "illuminating incident" that helps her convey "the meaning of the work as a whole."

Thesis
Concrete Detail: <p>Only Marin can't explain why it mattered, the hours and hours, for somebody she didn't even know. The hospital emergency room. Nobody but an intern working all alone. And maybe if the surgeon would've come, maybe if he hadn't lost so much blood, if the surgeon had only come, they would know who to notify and where. (66)</p>
Commentary:

Antithesis
Concrete Detail: <p>But what difference does it make? He wasn't anything to her. He wasn't her boyfriend or anything like that. Just another <i>brazier</i> who didn't speak English. Just another wetback. You know the kind. The ones who always look ashamed. And what was she doing out at three a.m. anyway? (66)</p>
Commentary:

Synthesis
Concrete Detail: <p>They never saw the kitchenettes [. . .] the weekly money orders sent home, the currency exchange. How could they? His name was Geraldo. And his home is in another country. The ones he left behind are far away, will wonder, shrug, remember. Geraldo—he went north . . . we never heard from him again. (66)</p>
Commentary:

Symbolic Settings: The “Four Skinny Trees” in Sandra Cisneros’ *The House on Mango Street*

Consider the “four skinny trees” that Esperanza identifies with at the end of Sandra Cisneros’ *The House on Mango Street* with the “red balloon tied to an anchor” that she identifies with at the beginning. Carefully read the following excerpts and provide commentary on how the change in Esperanza’s conception of herself and her relationship to her community helps convey Cisneros’ theme and the meaning of the work as a whole.

Concrete Detail
Their strength is secret. They send ferocious roots beneath the ground. They grow up and they grow down and grab the earth between their hairy toes and bite the sky with violent teeth and never quit their anger. This is how they keep. (74)
Commentary

Concrete Detail
Let one forget his reason for being, they’d all droop like tulips in a glass, each with their arms around the other. Keep, keep, keep, trees say when I sleep. They teach. (74-75)
Commentary

Concrete Detail
When I am too sad and too skinny to keep keeping, when I am a tiny thing against so many bricks, then it is I look at trees. When there is nothing left to look at on this street. Four who grew despite concrete. Four who reach and do not forget to reach. Four whose only reason is to be and be. (75)
Commentary

Sandra Cisneros' Feminist Theme in *The House on Mango Street*

The dedication in Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* is "A las Mujeres" ("To the Women"). Carefully read the following passage from the vignette "The Family of Little Feet" and provide an argument for why the girls are so enamored with their new high heels and the feminist theme that Cisneros conveys concerning the difficult, sometimes threatening, circumstances that girls have to navigate growing up in our society.

Girls' Beliefs	Concrete Details	Cisneros' Theme
Claim:	<p>Hurray! Today we are Cinderella because our feet fit exactly, and we laugh at Rachel's one foot with the girl's grey sock and a lady's high heel. Do you like these shoes? But the truth is it is scary to look down at your foot that is no longer yours and see attached a long long leg.</p> <p>[. . .] Then Lucy screams to take our socks off and yes, it's true. We have legs. Skinny and spotted with satin scars where scabs were picked, but legs, all our own, good to look at, and long.</p> <p>It's Rachel who learns to walk the best all strutted in those magic high heels. She teaches us to cross and uncross our legs, and to run like a double-dutch rope, and how to walk down to the corner so that the shoes talk back to you with every step. Lucy, Rachel, me tee-tottering like so. Down to the corner where the men can't take their eyes off us. We must be Christmas.</p>	Claim:
Concrete Detail:	<p>Mr. Benny at the corner grocery puts down his important cigar: Your mother know you got shoes like that? Who give you those?</p> <p>Nobody.</p> <p>Them are dangerous, he says. You girls too young to be wearing shoes like that. Take them shoes off before I call the cops, but we just run.</p> <p>On the avenue a boy on a homemade bicycle calls out: Ladies, lead me to heaven.</p> <p>But there is nobody around but us.</p> <p>Do you like these shoes? Rachel says yes, and Lucy says yes, and yes I say, these are the best shoes. We will never go back to wearing the other kind again. Do you like these shoes?</p> <p>In front of the laundromat six girls with the same fat face pretend we are invisible. They are the cousins, Lucy says, and always jealous. We just keep strutting.</p>	Concrete Detail:
Commentary:	<p>Across the street in front of the tavern a bum man on the stoop.</p> <p>Do you like these shoes?</p> <p>Bum man says, Yes, little girl. Your little lemon shoes are so beautiful. But come closer. I can't see very well. Come closer. Please.</p> <p>You are a pretty girl, bum man continues. What's your name, pretty girl?</p> <p>And Rachel says Rachel, just like that.</p> <p>Now you know to talk to drunks is crazy and to tell them your name is worse, but who can blame her. She is young and dizzy to hear so many sweet things in one day, even if it is a bum man's whiskey words saying them. (40-41)</p>	Commentary:

from “Cisneros’ Revision of the ‘Bildungsroman’ Novel”
by Maria Karafilis, University of Maryland (1998)

In *The House on Mango Street*, Sandra Cisneros appropriates and revises the traditional European “Bildungsroman” by emphasizing the communal instead of the individual, by telling her story in fragmented and circular narrative patterns instead of linear movement, and by her critique of American materialism and manipulation of the stereotypical “American Dream” to include those usually excluded: the poor and/or non-white.

One of the most explicit ways Cisneros reconciles dominant American culture and traditional Mexican culture is through her focus on the community. Several critics have examined how Cisneros supplants a focus on the “private,” individual development of the protagonist by emphasizing the critical role the surrounding Chicano community plays in Esperanza's maturation. Ellen McCracken describes this shift as the rooting of Esperanza's “individual self in the broader socio-political reality of the Chicano community.” Instead of striking out by herself, leaving the provinces for the city, as protagonists in a traditional “Bildungsroman” would do, Esperanza learns of herself and her culture in great part through her connections with other people. In many ways, the Chicano community in her Chicago barrio serves as an extended family, and Esperanza learns about herself and her complex position as a working-class Chicana in the urban United States through the stories of her neighbors. Many chapters in the novel narrate incidents in the lives of others and constitute some of the “experiences” that shape Esperanza and her maturation.

Scanning the chapter titles (over half of which refer to other characters) shows this emphasis on other members of the community. We see this practice of learning from others in a chapter Cisneros places early on in the text, “My Name.” From the title, it seems that the chapter will focus on Esperanza, but it does so only indirectly. What we really get in this chapter is the story of

Esperanza's great-grandmother, her namesake, a woman who was “a wild horse of a woman, so wild she wouldn't marry. Until my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off. Just like that.” The experience of her great-grandmother, who “looked out the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow,” seems to be common for Chicanas, as we see this image of women imprisoned within the domestic sphere by husbands or fathers, confined within the frame of a window, reiterated throughout the novel. Esperanza, however, learns from these experiences and is able to avoid this fate in her own maturation.

The importance of community for Esperanza—of finding out where one belongs and making a space for oneself; realizing that she does indeed belong on Mango Street and to her Chicano community after all—is crucial. Cisneros demonstrates this through the image of the “four skinny trees” Esperanza looks at outside her window whenever she is “too sad and too skinny to keep keeping, when I am a tiny thing against so many bricks.” Cisneros directly connects these trees to Esperanza, and their physical form resembles the narrator's pre-pubescent, adolescent body: “They are the only ones who understand me. I am the only one who understands them. Four skinny trees with skinny necks and pointy elbows like mine. Four who do not belong here but are here.” These trees with which Esperanza identifies extol strength through interdependence and the importance of community and (human) contact. Their will is “violent” and their “ferocious” roots (ties to the land, the community) are the key to their survival: “Let one forget his reason for being, they'd all droop like tulips in a glass.” The presence of four trees precludes reading the image as anything other than a representation of community and its importance for ethnic Americans. Three trees could be read as signifying the Holy Trinity, two trees as representing the importance of the heterosexual marriage bond (which Cisneros repeatedly exposes as destructive to women), and one tree, of course, as symbolizing the power of the lone, self-sufficient individual. Cisneros undermines all of these traditional supports (religion, marriage, and independence) and leaves the

reader with a clear image of the strength and necessity of interdependence. Thus, although the text narrates the ultimate development of one primary character, it counterbalances this liberation of the protagonist by continually reinforcing the need for community and demonstrating that it is through the recognition and appreciation of Chicano culture and community that this human development is possible.

Sandra Cisneros also yokes the repressed and dominant traditions through the formal elements of the text. Cisneros uses realism, but, instead of using a straight, linear narration to chart the chronological coming-of-age of the protagonist, she writes her Bildungsroman in a fragmented, episodic form. We learn of Esperanza (and of life in the Chicano barrio) through snippets, anecdotes, and often naively stated observations, which forces the reader to do what Esperanza must do—to make sense of these disjointed parts and fragments and construct them into a life, an experience, a narrative.

The fragmented form of the text is especially powerful when Cisneros relates the story of Geraldo, a young man who appears at a dance and later is killed in a hit-and-run accident. Geraldo is not mentioned in any of the subsequent vignettes; after a few pages we never hear of him again, just as his family "in another country" will never hear of him again. The episodic narration of Cisneros's re-evaluated Bildungsroman not only challenges the traditional, linear writing that valorizes one particular line of progress and stifles the alternative voices and experiences that abound in Cisneros's text, but it also underscores the transient, "insignificant" nature of the immigrant experience in American culture. Geraldo's tale is simply one migrant's experience in a vast, anonymous history of many.

We also see Cisneros's nonlinear writing style in the circular pattern of the text. Whereas the traditional Bildungsroman begins with the birth of the protagonist and proceeds chronologically until the point of maturation and assimilation into a larger society, Cisneros's novel ends virtually (but significantly not quite) where it began. Even after

the numerous displacements, Esperanza ultimately remembers Mango Street, the place where she began. Esperanza's journeying, both physical and psychological, does not cut a straight, linear path. In fact, Cisneros demonstrates that Esperanza's initial belief that she can "walk away" from her culture and her community is an illusion; she may leave temporarily (and Esperanza's friend Alicia doubts even this possibility), but she must return. Her maturation, like her text, eventually will leave Esperanza squarely where she began: on Mango Street. This revision of the American idealization of mobility is important because instead of signifying the freedom to journey and conjuring the image of forward-moving progress, Cisneros reinforces the importance of community and returning to the neighborhood that helped to shape her as a Chicana growing up in American society.

In fact, it is a set of figures who also occupy the space between dominant American culture and traditional Mexican culture that impresses upon Esperanza the very necessity of this return to Mango Street: the three sisters, "las comadres," who appear near the close of the work and resemble the mythological Fates, who offer Esperanza the most important advice she receives. These women give her strategies for survival as well as knowledge of herself, and they remind her not to forget about the rest of the women in her community. The appearance of las comadres also signals a shift away from traditional paternal/maternal sources of guidance to a communal one. The three aunts repeatedly utter Esperanza's name, calling it "a good, good name." The narrator, however, tells us at the beginning of the novel that her name is ambivalent, signifying hope in English and longing or lack in Spanish. We realize that these are precisely the two elements that Esperanza must integrate in her development: the hope and ability to break out of the cycle of poverty and oppression Chicanas often experience from both dominant American society and patriarchal Chicano society, and the memory/longing of the other women "who cannot leave as easily." When the two definitions are amalgamated, the complete, complex process of development for the protagonist becomes clear.

Literary Criticism: “Cisneros’ Revision of the ‘Bildungsroman’ Novel”

When reading Maria Karafilis’ essay on Sandra Cisneros’ novel *The House on Mango Street*, identify one of Karafilis’ ideas that you agree with, one idea that you find interesting (but do not necessarily agree with), and one idea that you definitely disagree with. After paraphrasing Karafilis’ claims, provide your own commentary on each of those ideas and be prepared to share your insights and observations with the rest of the class.

An Idea That You Agree With
Writer’s Claim:
Your Commentary:

An Idea That You Find Interesting
Writer’s Claim:
Your Commentary:

An Idea That You Disagree With
Writer’s Claim:
Your Commentary:

"No Speak English"

Home. Home. Home is a house in a photograph, a pink house, pink as hollyhocks with lots of startled light. The man paints the walls of the apartment pink, but it's not the same, you know. She still sighs for her pink house, and then I think she cries. I would. (77)



Uncle Nacho



And Uncle [Nacho] spins me, and my skinny arms bend the way he taught me, and my mother watches, and my little cousins watch, [...] and everyone says, wow, who are those two who dance like in the movies, until I forget that I am wearing only ordinary shoes, brown and white, the kind my mother buys each year for school. (47)

Papa

My Papa, his thick hands and thick shoes, who wakes up tired in the dark, who combs his hair with water, drinks his coffee, and is gone before we wake, today is sitting on my bed.

And I think if my own Papa died what would I do. I hold my Papa in my arms. I hold and hold and hold him. (57)



Aunt Lupe



[Aunt Lupe] listened to every book, every poem I read her. One day I read her one of my own. [...] That's nice. That's very good, she said in her tired voice. You just remember to keep writing, Esperanza. You must keep writing. It will keep you free, and I said yes, but at that time I didn't know what she meant. (60-61)

3. Family Influence

Once we have discussed Esperanza's growing appreciation for her "home" on Mango Street, we will use the [Family Influence Matrix](#) to examine the impact that Esperanza's family members have on her growth and maturity. For instance, we will discuss the significance of Uncle Nacho's encouraging her to dance despite her embarrassment at having to wear her old "chanclas," the shoes that her mother "buys each year for school." We will also consider the impact that the death of her grandfather, her *abuelito*, has on Esperanza as she considers what would happen if her own father died and how that thought prompts her "to hold and hold and hold him." Finally, we will discuss the guilt that Esperanza feels for making fun of Aunt Lupe before she dies when she considers that her aunt was the one who most encouraged her writing, telling her that it will keep her "free."

4. AP Literary Argument: Intro

To prepare for the final essay, we will revisit the [2010 AP Literary Argument](#) prompt and discuss how Esperanza's feelings about her "home" on Mango Street change over the course of the novel in a way that reflects Cisneros' overall theme. As we review [Hegel's Dialectic](#), students will consider the central tension in the novel between Esperanza's individual dreams and ambitions at the beginning of the novel and her emerging sense of duty and responsibility to her community as she grows older (i.e. thesis vs. antithesis). As students finish the novel, they will consider how Cisneros attempts to resolve this tension in a way that reveals "the meaning of the work as a whole" (i.e. synthesis). If students would like to receive further guidance and read a sample essay that follows Hegel's Dialectic, we encourage them to read our [AP Literary Argument Tutorial](#).

Homework:

Students should read Ch. 31-44 (pp. 79-110) of the novel and take the [Final Exam](#) on their own. Students should also write their [2010 AP Literary Argument](#) and schedule a 15-minute [Writing Conference](#) to receive feedback on their essay by the end of next week.

Esperanza's Changing Attitude towards "Home" in Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*

In the first vignette of Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*, Esperanza expresses disappointment in her house on Mango Street since it is not "like the houses on TV." Consider how Esperanza's attitude towards "home" changes in the following excerpts from the middle of the novel and then provide commentary on how Esperanza's new understanding and appreciation of her "home" reflects the meaning of the work as a whole.

"A Rice Sandwich"
Concrete Detail: You don't live far, she says. You live across the boulevard. [. . .] And then she made me stand up on a box of books and point. That one? she said, pointing to a row of ugly three-flats, the ones even the raggedy men are ashamed to go into. Yes, I nodded even though I knew that wasn't my house and started to cry. (45)
Commentary:

"Elenita, Palms, Cards, Water"
Concrete Detail: What about a house, I say, because that's what I came for. Ah, yes, a home in the heart. I see a home in the heart. Is that <i>it</i> ? [. . .] Only I don't get it. A new house, a house made of heart. I'll light a candle for you. (64)
Commentary:

"No Speak English"
Concrete Detail: Home. Home. Home is a house in a photograph, a pink house, pink as hollyhocks with lots of startled light. The man paints the walls of the apartment pink, but it's not the same, you know. She still sighs for her pink house, and then I see she cries. I would. (77)
Commentary:

The Importance of Family in Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*

As Esperanza matures over the course of Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*, she begins to appreciate her family and the growing importance that they have in her life. Carefully read the following excerpts and provide commentary on what Esperanza learns from the influence of Uncle Nacho, her Papa, and Aunt Lupe and how Cisneros uses Esperanza's emerging maturity to convey the overall theme of her novel.

"Chanclas"
Concrete Detail: And Uncle [Nacho] spins me, and my skinny arms bend the way he taught me, and my mother watches, and my little cousins watch, [. . .] and everyone says, wow, who are those two who dance like in the movies, until I forget that I am wearing only ordinary shoes, brown and white, the kind my mother buys each year for school. (47)
Commentary:

"Papa Who Wakes Up Tired in the Dark"
Concrete Detail: My Papa, his thick hands and thick shoes, who wakes up tired in the dark, who combs his hair with water, drinks his coffee, and is gone before we wake, today is sitting on my bed. And I think if my own Papa died what would I do. I hold my Papa in my arms. I hold and hold and hold him. (57)
Commentary:

"Born Bad"
Concrete Detail: [Aunt Lupe] listened to every book, every poem I read her. One day I read her one of my own. [. . .] That's nice. That's very good, she said in her tired voice. You just remember to keep writing, Esperanza. You must keep writing. It will keep you free, and I said yes, but at that time I didn't know what she meant. (60-61)
Commentary:

I. Characters

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| _____ 1. Her husband locks her in the apartment because she is “too beautiful to look at.” | a. Esperanza |
| _____ 2. Esperanza does not want to inherit her “sadness” or “her place by the window.” | b. Nenny |
| _____ 3. She marries a “marshmallow salesman” to escape the strict religion of her father. | c. Mama |
| _____ 4. She misses her homeland and cries when her baby son begins speaking English. | d. Papa |
| _____ 5. She is too young to be Esperanza’s friend, but they often see things similarly. | e. Great-grandmother |
| _____ 6. She writes poems on “little pieces of paper” after her children have gone to bed. | ab. Cathy |
| _____ 7. He is likely an illegal alien, a <i>brazier</i> , who came to this country to earn money. | ac. Marin |
| _____ 8. When boys say “stupid things” to her, she stares at them “without even blinking.” | ad. Alicia |
| _____ 9. She is a racist claiming to be “the great great grand cousin of the queen of France.” | ae. Sally |
| _____ 10. The three sisters tell her she must one day return to Mango Street “for the others.” | bc. Geraldo |
| _____ 11. She was a strong swimmer who always had time to listen to Esperanza’s poetry. | bd. Rafaela |
| _____ 12. She sings operas with “velvety lungs” but thinks Madame Butterfly was “a fool.” | be. Elenita |
| _____ 13. Her father thinks she should be sleeping at night instead of studying for school. | cd. Minerva |
| _____ 14. Esperanza is “disappointed” after giving her five dollars to hear her fortune told. | ce. Aunt Lupe |
| _____ 15. On weekends he takes his family to look at all the rich houses where he works. | de. Mamacita |

II. Settings

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| _____ 16. Esperanza unexpectedly receives her first kiss from “an older Oriental man.” | a. Monkey Garden |
| _____ 17. Sally leans against the fence “with [her] eyes closed as if no one was watching.” | b. Canteen |
| _____ 18. Esperanza cries as the “special kids” watch her eat “a rice sandwich” by herself. | c. Junk Store |
| _____ 19. Uncle Nacho insists that Esperanza dance with him despite her wearing <i>chanclas</i> . | d. Bedroom |
| _____ 20. Esperanza cries helplessly as “the sky tipped” and the “high black gym shoes ran.” | e. Photo Shop |
| _____ 21. Papa breaks down and cries when he tells Esperanza that her <i>abuelito</i> has died. | ab. Church Basement |
| _____ 22. Esperanza finds “three big sticks and a brick” to try to protect Sally from the boys. | ac. Kitchen |
| _____ 23. Marin is asked for information about a boy she had danced with earlier that night. | ad. Schoolyard |
| _____ 24. Esperanza quickly turns away in shame “so Nenny won’t see how stupid [she is].” | ae. Carnival |
| _____ 25. Alicia sees mice late at night and early mornings when rising with the “tortilla star.” | bc. Hospital |

III. Metaphors/Symbols/Allusions

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| _____ 26. eyes like Egypt, nylons the color of smoke, and shiny black hair like raven feathers | a. Esperanza |
| _____ 27. a little oyster, a little piece of meat on an open shell for us to look at | b. Ruthie |
| _____ 28. red lipstick and blue babushka, one blue sock and one green | c. Marin |
| _____ 29. a wild horse of a woman who was carried off like a fancy chandelier | d. Sally |
| _____ 30. one with red red lips, beautiful and cruel, who has a power all her own | e. Papa |
| _____ 31. hair that smells like the warm smell of bread before you bake it | ab. Great-grandmother |
| _____ 32. dancing alone under the streetlight, waiting for a car to stop, a star to fall | ac. Mama |
| _____ 33. wakes up tired in the dark, drinks coffee, and is gone before the children wake | ad. Rafaela |
| _____ 34. coconut and papaya juice hauled up by a clothesline in a paper shopping bag | ae. Aunt Lupe |

IV. Comprehension (a = true; b = false)

- _____ 35. When Minerva comes over bruised and beaten, Esperanza says there is nothing she can do to help her.
- _____ 36. After Esperanza is sexually assaulted, she claims Sally, the storybooks, and the magazines all lied to her.
- _____ 37. When Sally gets married and moves to the suburbs, Esperanza is happy she has found someone to love.
- _____ 38. Esperanza feels ashamed after talking with the Three Sisters for having once made such a selfish wish.
- _____ 39. At the end of the novel Esperanza vows never to leave Mango Street so she can stay and help others.

V. Quotations

- _____ 40. “Yes. That’s Mexico all right. That’s what I was thinking exactly.”
a. Esperanza
b. Marin
- _____ 41. “Ah, yes, a home in the heart. I see a home in the heart. . . . A new house, a house made of heart. I’ll light a candle for you.”
c. Mama
d. Cathy
e. Mr. Benny
- _____ 42. “You want a friend. Okay, I’ll be your friend. But only till next Tuesday. That’s when we move away. Got to. The neighborhood is getting bad.”
ab. Aunt Lupe
ac. Nenny
ad. Mamacita
- _____ 43. “That’s nice. That’s very good. You just remember to keep writing, Esperanza. You must keep writing. It will keep you free.”
ae. Gil
bc. Alicia
bd. Elenita
- _____ 44. “This . . . this ain’t for sale.”
- _____ 45. “I have begun my own quiet war. Simple. Sure. I am one who leaves the table like a man, without putting back the chair or picking up the plate.”
- _____ 46. “He not here. . . . No speak English. . . . Holy smokes!”
- _____ 47. “Shame is a bad thing, you know. It keeps you down. You want to know why I quit school? Because I didn’t have nice clothes. No clothes, but I had brains. Yup, I was a smart cookie then.”
- _____ 48. “Like it or not you are Mango Street, and one day you’ll come back too. Who’s going to [make it better]? The mayor?”
- _____ 49. “The best jobs are [downtown], since you always get to look beautiful and get to wear nice clothes and can meet someone in the subway who might marry you and take you to live in a big house far away.”
- _____ 50. “Your mother know you got shoes like that? Who give you those? Them are dangerous. You girls too young to be wearing shoes like that. Take them shoes off before I call the cops.”

Answer Key:

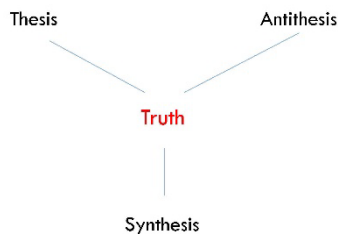
- | | |
|--------|--------|
| 1. bd | 26. d |
| 2. e | 27. ae |
| 3. ae | 28. b |
| 4. de | 29. ab |
| 5. b | 30. a |
| 6. cd | 31. ac |
| 7. bc | 32. c |
| 8. ac | 33. e |
| 9. ab | 34. ad |
| 10. a | |
| 11. ce | 35. a |
| 12. c | 36. a |
| 13. ad | 37. b |
| 14. be | 38. a |
| 15. d | 39. b |
| | |
| 16. e | 40. ac |
| 17. ad | 41. bd |
| 18. b | 42. d |
| 19. ab | 43. ab |
| 20. ae | 44. ae |
| 21. d | 45. a |
| 22. a | 46. ad |
| 23. bc | 47. c |
| 24. c | 48. bc |
| 25. ac | 49. b |
| | 50. e |

AP Literary Argument (2010)



Write an essay that analyzes the importance of "home" to a character and the reasons for its continuing influence. Then explain how the character's idea of home illuminates the larger meaning of the work as a whole.

Hegel's Dialectic



"Bums in the Attic"

People who live on hills sleep so close to the stars they forget those of us who live too much on earth. They don't look down at all except to be content to live on hills. [. . .]

One day I'll own my own house, but I won't forget who I am or where I came from. Passing bums will ask, Can I come in? I'll offer them the attic, ask them to stay, because I know how it is to be without a house. (86-87)



"Alicia and I Talking on Edna's Steps"



No, Alicia says. Like it or not you are Mango Street, and one day you'll come back too.
 Not me. Not until somebody makes it better.
 Who's going to do it? The mayor?
 And the thought of the mayor coming to Mango Street makes me laugh out loud.
 Who's going to do it? Not the mayor. (107)

1. AP Literary Argument: Redux

We will begin class by answering questions from the [Final Exam](#) and the final chapters of the novel before revisiting the [2010 AP Literary Argument](#) prompt and considering how the importance of "home" has changed for Esperanza over the course of the novel. As we review [Hegel's Dialectic](#), we will use the [Red Clowns Matrix](#) to examine the central tension in the novel between Esperanza's initial desire to leave Mango Street and her eventual feelings of duty and responsibility towards the people in her community (i.e. thesis vs. antithesis). We will also discuss how Cisneros resolves that tension at the end of the novel in a way that reveals "the meaning of the work as a whole" (i.e. synthesis). If students would like to receive further guidance and read a sample essay that follows Hegel's Dialectic, we encourage them to review the [AP Literary Argument Tutorial](#).

2. Groupwork: Esperanza's Maturity

After discussing the final essay, we will examine Esperanza's transformation from the beginning of the novel to the end. Students will work in small groups on the [Esperanza Maturity Matrix](#) to analyze how Esperanza's attitude towards her home and community change in vignettes like "Bums in the Attic," where Esperanza notes that people "who live on hills sleep so close to the stars they forget those of us who live too much on earth." We will also compare Esperanza's dream house to the one she now imagines where she will invite "[p]assing bums" to stay in her attic. We will also examine Esperanza's desire to remain strong and independent so she won't ever have to live in "a man's house." Finally, we will consider Alicia's claim that "[l]ike it or not, you are Mango Street, and one day you'll come back too," with the implication that it will only be people like Esperanza who "makes it better."

"A House of My Own"

Not a flat. Not an apartment in back. Not a man's house. Not a daddy's. A house all my own. With my porch and my pillow, my pretty purple petunias. My books and my stories. My two shoes waiting beside the bed. Nobody to shake a stick at. Nobody's garbage to pick up after.



Only a house quiet as snow, a space for myself to go, clean as paper before the poem. (108)

Rafaela



Rafaela who drinks and drinks coconut and papaya juice on Tuesdays and wishes there were sweeter drinks, not bitter like an empty room, but sweet sweet like the island, like the dance hall down the street where [. . .] always there is someone offering sweeter drinks, someone promising to keep them on a silver string. (80)

Minerva

One day [Minerva] is through and lets him know enough is enough. Out the door he goes. Clothes, records, shoes. Out the window and the door locked. But that night he comes back and sends a big rock through the window. Then he is sorry and she opens the door again. Same story. (85)



Sally



[Sally] sits at home because she is afraid to go outside without his permission. She looks at all the things they own: the towels and the toaster, the alarm clock and the drapes. She likes looking at the walls, at how neatly their corners meet, the linoleum roses on the floor, the ceiling smooth as wedding cake. (102)

3. Cautionary Tales

In the final section of the novel, we are introduced to three additional characters—Rafaela, Minerva, and Sally—who serve as negative role models for Esperanza and represent the type of life that she is determined to avoid. We will use the [Cautionary Tales Matrix](#) to consider the significance of Rafaela's desire to go down the street to the dance hall where "always there is someone offering sweeter drinks, someone promising to keep them on a silver string." We will also examine the example that Minerva sets when she throws her husband out until he "sends a big rock through the window" before he apologizes and "she opens the door again." Finally, we will discuss Sally's desire to leave her abusive father's house, only to run away and marry a man who refuses to let her go outside "without his permission."

4. Authentic Assessment: Intro

As a reminder for students who want to share their [Hidden Secrets Submission](#) on Thursday, they should consider the various places, traditions, or events in their community that are unique and often missed or overlooked by visiting tourists and underappreciated by local residents. Students should create a 3-5 minute PowerPoint or Google Slides presentation to share with the *500 Hidden Secrets* guidebook committee that is overseeing submission proposals and be ready to explain what makes the place, tradition, or event so unique and why most local people and tourists tend to overlook it when visiting their town or city. Students should be prepared to share their presentations—either with the whole class or in small groups, depending on how many students want to present—at the beginning of Thursday's class.

Homework:

Students should prepare their [Hidden Secrets Submission](#) if they would like to present on Thursday and schedule a 15-minute [Writing Conference](#) to receive individual feedback on their [2010 AP Literary Argument](#) by the end of the week.

The Trauma of “Red Clowns” in Sandra Cisneros’ *The House on Mango Street*

A traditional bildungsroman is a coming-of-age story where the protagonist matures by leaving home and becoming independent and self-reliant. Consider how Sandra Cisneros upends this expectation in the vignette “Red Clowns” from *The House on Mango Street* and explain how Cisneros uses Esperanza’s sexual assault to redefine youth and maturity in a way that conveys the overall theme and the meaning of the work as a whole.

Youth	Concrete Details	Maturity
Claim:	<p>Sally, you lied. It wasn’t what you said at all. What he did. Where he touched me. I didn’t want it, Sally. The way they said it, the way it’s supposed to be, all the storybooks and movies, why did you lie to me?</p> <p>I was waiting by the red clowns. I was standing by the tilt-a-whirl where you said. And anyway I don’t like carnivals. I went to be with you because you laugh on the tilt-a-whirl, you throw your head back and laugh. I hold your change, wave, count how many times you go by. Those boys that look at you because you’re pretty. I like to be with you, Sally. You’re my friend. But that big boy, where did he take you? I waited such a long time. I waited by the red clowns, just like you said, but you never came, you never came for me.</p> <p>Sally Sally a hundred times. Why didn’t you hear me when I called? Why didn’t you tell them to leave me alone? The one who grabbed me by the arm, he wouldn’t let me go. He said I love you, Spanish girl, I love you, and pressed his sour mouth to mine.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Then the colors began to whirl. Sky tipped. Their high black gym shoes ran. Sally, you lied, you lied. He wouldn’t let me go. He said I love you, I love you, Spanish girl. (99-100)</p>	Claim:
Concrete Detail:		Concrete Detail:
Commentary:		Commentary:

Esperanza's Emerging Maturity in Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*

Consider how Esperanza matures over the course of Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* concerning her dreams of having a "real house" one day as opposed to the one she now has on Mango Street. Carefully read the following excerpts and provide commentary on how Esperanza's aspirations and attitudes have changed and how Cisneros uses Esperanza's growth and maturation to reveal "the meaning of the work as a whole."

Before	Concrete Details	After
	<p><i>from "Bums in the Attic":</i></p> <p>People who live on hills sleep so close to the stars they forget those of us who live too much on earth. They don't look down at all except to be content to live on hills. [. . .]</p> <p>One day I'll own my own house, but I won't forget who I am or where I came from. Passing bums will ask, Can I come in? I'll offer them the attic, ask them to stay, because I know how it is to be without a house. (86-87)</p>	
	<p><i>from "Alicia and I Talking on Edna's Steps":</i></p> <p>No, Alicia says. Like it or not you are Mango Street, and one day you'll come back too. Not me. Not until somebody makes it better. Who's going to do it? The mayor? And the thought of the mayor coming to Mango Street makes me laugh out loud. Who's going to do it? Not the mayor. (107)</p>	
	<p><i>from "A House of My Own":</i></p> <p>Not a flat. Not an apartment in back. Not a man's house. Not a daddy's. A house all my own. With my porch and my pillow, my pretty purple petunias. My books and my stories. My two shoes waiting beside the bed. Nobody to shake a stick at. Nobody's garbage to pick up after. Only a house quiet as snow, a space for myself to go, clean as paper before the poem. (108)</p>	

Cautionary Tales in Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*

As Esperanza grows into a young woman, she has interactions with three characters—Rafaela, Minerva, and Sally—who all make an impression on her and help shape the person that she becomes at the end of the novel. Consider the excerpts below and provide commentary on what Esperanza learns from each character and how her understanding reflects Cisneros' overall theme and “the meaning of the work as a whole.”

Rafaela
Concrete Detail: Rafaela who drinks and drinks coconut and papaya juice on Tuesdays and wishes there were sweeter drinks, not bitter like an empty room, but sweet sweet like the island, like the dance hall down the street where [. . .] always there is someone offering sweeter drinks, someone promising to keep them on a silver string. (80)
Commentary:

Minerva
Concrete Detail: One day [Minerva] is through and lets him know enough is enough. Out the door he goes. Clothes, records, shoes. Out the window and the door locked. But that night he comes back and sends a big rock through the window. Then he is sorry and she opens the door again. Same story. (85)
Commentary:

Sally
Concrete Detail: [Sally] sits at home because she is afraid to go outside without his permission. She looks at all the things they own: the towels and the toaster, the alarm clock and the drapes. She likes looking at the walls, at how neatly their corners meet, the linoleum roses on the floor, the ceiling smooth as wedding cake. (102)
Commentary:

Authentic Assessment



Hidden Secrets Submission

The travel guide company *500 Hidden Secrets* wants recommendations on “hidden” places, customs, or activities in your town or city that people tend to overlook or fail to appreciate. Create a 3-5 minute PowerPoint or Google Slides presentation to explain why a particular element of your community is special or unique.

Essential Questions

1. How important should our homes be?
2. What does it mean to be mature?
3. Do we have an obligation to our communities?

Sandra Cisneros (1954 -)

“I wanted to write something in a voice that was unique to who I was. And I wanted something that was accessible to the person who works at Dunkin’ Donuts or who drives a bus, someone who comes home with their feet hurting like my father, someone who’s busy and has too many children, like my mother.”



Sonsyrea Tate (1966 -)



“You can leave home all you want, but home will never leave you.”

1. Authentic Assessment: Redux

We will begin class by giving students an opportunity to share—either to the whole class or in small groups, depending on how many students want to present—their [Hidden Secrets Submission](#) and discuss why a particular place, tradition, or event in their town or city is unique and often missed by tourists and underappreciated by their own community as well. After each presentation, students can ask follow-up questions and offer their own insights and observations about what seems interesting or unique about the presenter's hometown or city. Ultimately, we encourage students to consider how the project has made them think differently or more deeply about where they live and the impact it has had on who they are as individuals and the way they see their community and the way their perspective might change as they grow older.

2. Groupwork: Essential Questions

Once students have shared their presentations, we will revisit the [Essential Questions Matrix](#) to consider how students' perspectives may have changed over the past four weeks. Students will share their initial responses to the questions with their small groups and discuss how the ideas of Sandra Cisneros, Sonsyrea Tate, and Robert Hayden may have influenced their thinking. In particular, students should consider how Cisneros' theme connects to the ideas expressed on the [Tate Discussion Board](#) about how our homes will always be a part of us—both positively and negatively—no matter where we go in life. Students should also revisit the [Hayden AP Poetry Analysis](#) and consider how his theme in the poem relates to Cisneros' novel concerning the nature of maturity and whether we have inherent obligations and responsibilities to our families and communities.

Robert Hayden (1913-1980)

What did I know, what did I know
of love's austere and lonely offices?

- from "Those Winter Sundays" (1966)



Socratic Method



Socrates (470-399 BCE)

The Socratic Method is a form of cooperative dialogue centered around the asking of questions to promote critical thinking with the goal of creating a greater understanding and appreciation of the complexities of the subject under discussion.

Socratic Seminar

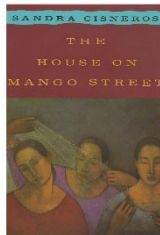
???

???

Truth

???

The House on Mango Street (1984)



3. Socratic Seminar

Before we begin our discussion, students will be introduced to the [Socratic Method](#) and how that educational philosophy translates to the goals of a Socratic Seminar, which is a search for "truth," rather than a debate. In other words, the intent is not to win the argument, but to explore the complexity of the issues involved. To establish a communal code of conduct, we provide the following five guidelines for the seminar:

1. Be courteous and respectful at all times.
2. Seek to understand as well as to be understood.
3. Support your claims with evidence from the text.
4. Maintain an open mind and consider new ideas.
5. Keep moving the discussion forward.

Students are not required to raise their hands to speak during the seminar; instead, they should allow the person speaking to finish their thought and then jump in to offer a response—always deferring to students who have not spoken as much as they have. Students should also build off previous arguments to ensure the discussion evolves as organically as possible.

4. Course Evaluation

Finally, students will be asked to submit a [Course Evaluation](#) to provide feedback for what went well over the past four weeks and what could be improved when we teach the class again. We encourage students to be as specific as possible to help us improve our curricular designs and instructional strategies to ensure future classes are as effective and engaging as possible. Honest feedback is the only way we can improve, so it is much appreciated!

Homework:

If students have had a positive experience—which we hope they have!—we encourage them to share their thoughts on the [Student Testimonial](#) page so prospective students and parents can understand the value of our program in building better readers, writers, and thinkers.

Socratic Method: What Is It and How Can You Use It?

by Jack Maden, *Philosophy Break* (July 2021)

The Socratic method is a form of cooperative dialogue whereby participants make assertions about a particular topic, investigate those assertions with questions designed to uncover presuppositions and stimulate critical thinking, and finally come to mutual agreement and understanding about the topic under discussion (though such mutual agreement is not guaranteed or required).

In more formal educational settings, the Socratic method is harnessed by teachers to “draw out” knowledge from students. The teacher does not directly impart knowledge, but asks probing, thought-provoking questions to kickstart a dialogue between teacher and student, allowing students to formulate and justify answers for themselves.

In Stanford University’s “Speaking of Teaching” newsletter, the Socratic method is described as the following:

The Socratic method uses questions to examine the values, principles, and beliefs of students. Through questioning, the participants strive first to identify and then to defend their moral intuitions about the world which undergird their ways of life. Socratic inquiry deals not with producing a recitation of facts but demands rather that the participants account for themselves, their thoughts, actions, and beliefs. Socratic inquiry aims to reveal the motivations and assumptions upon which students lead their lives.

Proponents of the Socratic method argue that, by coming to answers themselves, students better remember both the answer and the logical reasoning that led them there than they would if someone had simply announced a conclusion up front. Furthermore, people are generally more accepting of views that they have come to based on their own rational workings.

The great philosopher Bertrand Russell once commented, “As usual in philosophy, the first difficulty is to see that the problem is difficult.” Being an inquisitive dialogue, the Socratic method is particularly effective here, revealing hidden subtleties and complexities in subjects that may otherwise appear obvious or simple, such as whether the world around us is “real.” Apply the Socratic method to such a subject, and participants quickly discover how difficult it is to establish a solid answer. This is a good outcome, Russell thinks, for informed skepticism has replaced uninformed conviction — or, as he puts it, “the net result is to substitute articulate hesitation for inarticulate certainty.”

As such, the Socratic method is at its most effective when applied to topics about which people hold deep convictions—such as questions on ethics, values, politics, and how to live. After just a little probing on the foundations of our convictions on such topics, we learn that what may have appeared simple is in fact a very complicated issue mired in difficulty, uncertainty, and nuance — and that our initial convictions might be less justified than we first thought.

Why is it called the Socratic method?

The Socratic method derives its name from the conversational technique of ancient Greek philosopher Socrates, as presented in his student Plato’s dialogues written between 399 BC and 347 BC. The son of a midwife, Socrates draws parallels between his method and midwifery. In Plato’s dialogue “Theaetetus,” Socrates states:

The only difference [between my trade and that of midwives] is my concern is not with the body but with the soul that is experiencing birth pangs. And the highest achievement of my art is the power to try by every test to decide whether the offspring of a young person’s thought is a false phantom or is something imbued with life and truth.

Socrates’s approach of sometimes relentless inquiry differed to the teachers in ancient Athens at the time, known as the Sophists, who went for the more conventional “sage on a stage” educational method, trying to persuade

people round to their viewpoints on things through impressive presentation and rhetoric.

This distinction in approach made Socrates somewhat of a celebrity of contrarian thought. While the Sophists tried to demonstrate their knowledge, Socrates did his best to demonstrate his (and everybody else's) ignorance. His guiding principle was that we know nothing — and so, as W. K. C. Guthrie argues in *The Greek Philosophers*, the Socratic method was for Socrates as much a device for establishing ignorance as it was establishing knowledge.

Indeed, Plato presents Socrates approaching various influential thinkers from ancient Athenian society and discussing many different subjects with them, including justice, knowledge, beauty, and what it means to live a good life. Typically the interlocutor in discussion with Socrates begins by making a confident, seemingly self-evident assertion about a particular topic. Socrates then asks them questions about said topic, wrapping them in a tangled web of contradictions and false presuppositions, before concluding that the assertion that began the discussion is hopelessly misguided.

Given this consistent outcome of most if not all of Plato's dialogues, some have questioned whether Socrates himself actually provides an effective template for the Socratic method as we know it today, in that while the illusion of cooperative dialogue is present, the conversations are largely dominated by Socrates picking apart the views of others.

Was Socrates's method successful?

The purpose of Socrates's questioning was usually to jolt people out of their presuppositions and assumptions, and most of Plato's dialogues end with Socrates kindly declaring the ignorance or even stupidity of those he spoke to. The only knowledge available to us, Socrates assures us, is knowing that we know nothing.

Socrates's apparent victories in the name of reason and logic, while hugely entertaining and intellectually stimulating for the reader today, led to many important people in ancient Athens getting rather annoyed. Alas, Socrates was sentenced to death for corrupting the minds of the youth — but went on annoying his accusers until the very end with a wondrous exposition on piety and death, as recorded in a collection of Plato's dialogues, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*.

Following Socrates's death, Plato continued to write dialogues featuring Socrates as the protagonist in honor of his great teacher. This has led to lively discussion around how much of the Socrates featured in Plato's dialogues represents Socrates, and how much he represents Plato. Regardless, Plato's dialogues — written over 2,000 years ago — are wondrous, and we are lucky to have them.

How can you use the Socratic method today?

Though things ended rather morbidly for Socrates, his method of questioning has evolved and lived on as a brilliant way to draw people out of ignorance, encourage critical thinking, and cooperate in the pursuit of knowledge. Socrates is a martyr not just for philosophy, but for educational dialogue and productive, stimulating exchanges of different perspectives around interesting subjects of all kinds.

Any time you ask questions to get people to think differently about things, any time you participate in healthy, productive debate or problem solving, any time you examine principles and presuppositions and come to an answer for yourself, you channel the same principles Socrates championed all those years ago.



Course Evaluation

Student: _____ **Course:** _____

1. What teaching methods did you find MOST effective for learning or understanding the material? In your opinion, what made these activities, assignments, or methods effective or engaging? The more specific your feedback, the better we can emphasize these aspects of the course moving forward.

2. What teaching methods did you find LEAST effective for learning or understanding the material? In your opinion, what made these activities, assignments, or methods not very effective or engaging? The more specific your feedback, the better we can avoid these aspects of the course moving forward.