

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: