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Humanities-¾

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**Beating Mango Street**

Vince Lombardi once said, “Its not whether you get knocked down, its whether you get up.” Esperanza, the main character in the novella, *The House on Mango Street* relates to this quote because even when she is living with close to nothing, she still is able to stand up for herself and fight to succeed. Education is a large part of Esperanza’s life. Sandra Cisneros, the author of *The House on Mango Street,* shares how hard it isa to grow up in a tiny apartment on Mango Street in Chicago, Illinois. Even though she grows up in a poverty filled barrio in Chicago, Esperanza develops the will to get out of Mango Street.

Esperanza, at the beginning of the novella is immature and does not comprehend a lot of things that are going on around her. Her immaturity is shown in this passage, “ Where do you live? She asked. There, I said pointing up to the third floor. You live there? There. 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. You live there? What she said it made me feel like nothing. There I lived there. I nodded”(Cisneros 5). This quote shows that Esperanza is insecure about her house and the neighborhood she lives in. The nun in this quote, seems not capable of believing that this nice little girl could live in such a dilapidated house. This explains why is why she reacts the way she does.To Espeanza the nuns reaction proves that her house also shows her family's social status and makes a negative statment about her family. This showed Esperanzas immaturity because she cried right in front of the nun. However, this is not the only scenario in the novella that shows her insecurity. Another quote, also proves her lack of confidence. “It’s like all of a sudden he let go a million moths all over the dusty furniture and swan-neck shadows and in our

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bones it’s like drops of water or like marimbas only with a funny little plucked sound to it like if you were running your fingers across the teeth of a metal comb and then I don’t know why, but I have to turn around a pretend I don’t care about the box so Nenny won’t see how stupid I am” (Cisneros 20). This passage gives more examples of how Esperanza does not feel comfortable about her poverty. The reason she turns her head away so no one could see her reaction is because she does not want to show to her sister that she wants the music box. Esperanza is embarrassed by her poverty because she does not have the enough money to purchase the music box. In the beginning of the novella, Esperanza is a very immature girl since she is overly concerned by other people’s opinions, but towards the middle of the novel, she begins to accept herself and her life.

Towards the middle of the book Esperanza starts to realize that Mango Street is giving her the drive to become successful. The following example shows, clearly, how she is starting to accept herself. “And all I hear is the clapping when the music stops. My uncle and me bow and he walks me back in my thick shoes to my mother. All night the boy who is a man watches me dance. All night he watched me dance” (Cisneros 48). In this passage, Esperanza is dancing with her uncle at a party. When the dance is over, everyone is clapping and she feels like she is noticed and respected. This proves that Esperanzas self confidence is increasing. This quote also shows how she is maturing because in the past she has really critical about her self-image and here about boys recognizes that a boy notices her. The second piece of evidence proves Esperanza is gaining confidence is, “In the movies there is always one with red red lips who is beautiful and cruel. She is the one who drives the man crazy and laughs them all the way, her power her own. She will not give it away. I have begun my own quiet war. Simple sure. I am one who lives the table like a man without putting back the chair or picking up the plate” (Cisneros

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89). This quote shows that Esperanza finally knows what she needs to do to succeed and to get out of Mango Street. She understands the only way is to be cruel to men so that they have no control over her. This also shows that because she knows this, she has become a stronger more confident person person. Esperanza, during the middle of the novella, starts to gain confidence.

At the end of the novella, Esperanza is older, knows what she needs to do to succeed, and becomes a confident young woman. This quote shows one way how Esperanza has become confident, “I put it down on paper and then the ghost does not ache so much. I write it down and Mango says goodbye sometimes. She does not hold me with both arms she sets me free” (Cisneros 110). This quote shows that Esperanza is getting ready to leave Mango Street. Within the quote she is talking about how Mango Street has helped to turn her into the confident, woman that she is at the novellas end. Also she is very confident in her writing, which is the means that she uses to leave Mango Street. Yet there are other quotes that discuss Esperanza being confident. “ You must remember to come back. For the ones that cannot leave as easily as you. You will remember? She asked as if she was telling me. Yes yes, I said a little confused. Good she said, rubbing my hands good. That’s all you can go” (Cisneros 105). This quote shows that not only is Esperanza confident in herself, but it also proves that others are confident in her. Secondly, this quote illustrates how she needs to come back for the people who cannot get out by themselves. This shows Esperanza’s understanding that when she is ready, she must come back to Mango Street to help the other young women who do not have her talents. Confident and ready, Esperanza now knows what she has to do to get out of Mango Street.

Through overcoming a series of trials and tribulations, Esperanza develops the will to get out of Mango Street even when it look like she had no chance of getting out. Esperanza, throughout the book,

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doubts herself. She doubts her looks, her family, and her ability to leave Mango Street. But the experiences that she goes through during her time on Mango Street, show her what she can do with her life and what she has to do to get there. What readers can take from this story is that even if u come from nothing you are still able to be successful in life.

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**Work Cited**

Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street.* New York: Vintage Books, 1984.