Lesson 4: *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros

What will students be learning?

STANDARD(S)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

Students apply thinking skill to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

BENCHMARK(S)

Students read classic and contemporary literature of the United States about experiences and traditions of diverse ethnic groups.

Student identify the purpose, perspective, and historical and cultural influences of a speaker, author, or director.

OBJECTIVE(S)

Students will appreciate the Latino culture through literature and films.

Students will comprehend setting, characterization, and a sense of "place."

Students will create a *piñata.*

Students will role play a vignette of their choice

SPECIFICS

The House on Mango Street is a collection of 44 vignettes written from the point of view of Esperanza Cordero, a Mexican-American girl who recently moved to a poor Latino *barrio* in Chicago with her parents. Esparanza's conflicts center around desperation, poverty, and guilt. Esparanza's desire to escape Mango Street combined with guilt about turning her back on her family, values and culture is a major theme.

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Read aloud

Characterization chart

Write a letter

Role play

Reflective journals

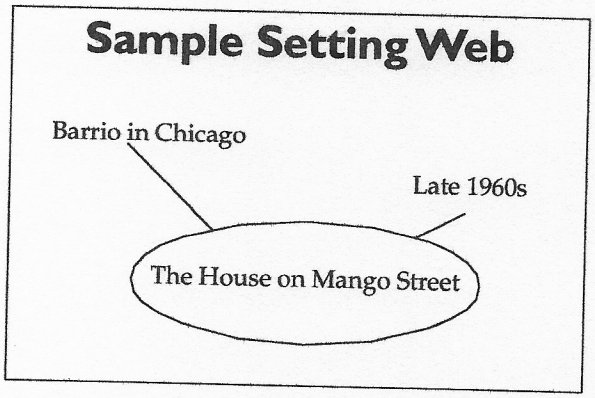
PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Teacher should read *The House on Mango Street*, research biographical information about Sandra Cisneros, preview the three films, and select one to show the class. Teacher should experiment with making a *piñata*. This lesson includes daily reflective journals. Some sample reflection topics are included. The activities in this lesson span several weeks, and they should not be rushed as the vignettes are rich with culture and personal history.

Lesson 4 (cont.)

ACTIVITIES

Complete your daily reflective journal. Listen to the teacher-guided discussion about Sandra Cisneros and explanation of how to maintain the Characterization Chart. Read the first 18 vignettes aloud with the class, taking turns. Let the teacher read some aloud as well. Stop after each vignette and discuss the *implied* significance as it is often not directly stated. Note that these short literary sketches deal primarily with Esperanza, her family, and their home on Mango Street. Stop on page 43.



Produce a setting web. Share your web with a partner. Review your Characterization Chart, noting Esperanza's sense of Latino family, her conflicts, the stereotyping, and her hopefulness. Read the next ten vignettes in small groups, discussing, after each vignette, the world beyond Mango Street, her search for a new home, and her values surrounding family, respect, trust, and responsibility. Maintain your Characterization Chart. Stop on page 72.

Listen as your teacher demonstrates the techniques of role playing. Then with a partner or small group prepare a role play of one of the first 28 vignettes. You may add creative script, music, or props. Present your drama to the class. Read the next six vignettes with a partner, once again stopping after each to note the people around Esperanza and their conflicts. Stop on page 86.

Read the next three vignettes, which reveal a lot about Esperanza's family and her relationship with them. Esperanza doesn't wish to be like other young women who are simply waiting for a man to come along; notice how her emotional strength is emerging. Stop on page 92. Write a letter to Esperanza expressing your feelings about her conflicts, values, and dreams. In your letter, share a personal struggle with her.

Quietly read the next four vignettes to yourself, reflecting on the social issues revealed and Esperanza's emerging maturity. How is she changing? Complete your Characterization Chart.

With a partner, read the final four vignettes. Does Esperanza accept Mango Street? Does she appreciate her background as a springboard for her future? Will she leave Mango Street? Will her culture, values, experiences, and family remain alive in her heart? Discuss these questions with your partner and then participate in a whole class, teacher-guided discussion.

Watch the movie selected by the teacher. Be prepared to compare/contrast the family in the Latino community as shown in the movie with what you learned from the novel.

Create a *piñata*. Listen carefully to the teacher's instructions. Be creative and have fun.

Lesson 4 (cont.)

Directions for *piñatas:*

1. Cut the colorful tissue paper into strips, approximately 9 inches long and 4 inches wide. Cut 2-inch fringes along the width of each strip. Use 8 to 9 strips per *piñata.*
2. Add candy to the cups and then tape the two styrofoam or paper cups together at the rims.
3. Overlap the strips of tissue paper, beginning at one end of the *piñata* and working in one direction only, either top to bottom or bottom to top. You are trying to create fullness with the fringes of the tissue paper strips.
4. Loop the string or ribbon and tape the two ends together in the center at the top of your *piñata.*

Materials for *piñatas:*

candy
colorful tissue paper in many bright colors
scissors
colorful string or ribbon
paper cups, 2 per student
tape

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros
Characterization Chart; students will continue on, writing about all 44 vignettes
Reflective Journal Ideas
Peer Assessment
One of these movies:

Like Water for Chocolate. Director Alfonso Arau. Rated R. 105 minutes.
A Walk in the Clouds. Director Alfonso Arau. Rated PG-13. 102 minutes.
Mi Familia. Producer Frances Ford Coppola. Rated R. 134 minutes.
La Bamba. Director Luis Valdez. Rated PG-13. 103 minutes.

Materials for *piñatas* (see above)

ASSESSMENT

Active participation is vital; therefore, each student should use the Peer Assessment form to assess their peers on the following: active listening, insightful contributions, respectfulness, and attitude.

Reflective Journal Ideas

Day 1: *Lo que a tus padres hicieres, tus hijos haran contigo.* (What goes around comes around.) Explain this *dicho,* using an example from your experience.

Day 2: *Amor con amor se paga.* (If you give love, you will receive love. —Jose Martí) Express your opinion about this *dicho.* Have you ever given love and not had it returned?

Day 3: *Quien canta, sus males espanta.* (Sing away your troubles.) Does having a cheerful attitude during the difficult times help? Explain.

Day 4: *De tal palo, tal astilla.* (A chip off the old block.) Thinking about your parents and you, explain how this dicho is true or untrue.

Day 5: *Cada oveja con su pareja.* (Every sheep with its kind. Birds of a feather flock together.) Should families always stick together? Reflect on your family and give an example.

Day 6: Reflecting on your family, which value was the most important during your elementary years? How was this value modeled?

Day 7: Interpret this saying: When you hate, the only person you hurt is yourself because the ones you hate don't know and those that do, don't care.

Day 8: "In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart." Do you agree with this Anne Frank quote?

Day 9: As humans, we always have two choices, two roads to take; one is easy, but its only reward is that it *is* easy. Explain about a time when you opted to take the easy path.

Day 10: Imagine that you can change one thing about your family. What would you change? Predict the results of this change.

Days 11, 12, 13, 14, 15: Complete these sentence stems:

I feel energetic when...

I feel truly appreciated by my family when...

I feel whimsical when...

I feel respected when...

I feel like trusting _(person)_ when...

Characterization Chart

Protagonist: Esperanza Cordero

Vignette	Descriptive detail about her family, friends, values, conflicts, culture, or decisions
1. "The House on Mango Street"	
2. "Hairs"	
3.	

Characterization Chart

Protagonist: Esperanza Cordero (page 2)

Vignette	Descriptive detail about her family, friends, values, conflicts, culture, or decisions
4.	
5.	

Peer Assessment

Rate each peer from 1–5; 5 being "poor" to 1 being "excellent."

Student's Name	Active listening	Insightful Contributions	Respectfulness	Attitude