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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2012 Volume II: Storytelling: Fictional Narratives, Imaginary People, and the Reader's Real Life

Development of the Latina Voice in *The House on Mango Street*

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by Joseph Mitacek

This unit explores the book *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros. The unit develops as a cultural analysis about challenges that prohibit individuals from achieving their goals. The purpose of the unit is to counter the tragic fate of so many characters in the book that are trapped by the constructs of their environment. The author tells her personal story through the protagonist, Esperanza — the Spanish word for 'hope.' Esperanza grows to see constraints of her own community and seeks to avoid the pitfalls that have befallen others. In the end Esperanza leaves Mango Street, promising to return for those left behind. This mirrors Cisneros' own story of moving from her family to become an accomplished author, but returning by telling her story and to show her endless readers there still is hope.

The unit explores themes such as identity, machismo, the Latina voice, family and storytelling. These themes are supplemented by examining the current cultural climate and identifying barriers within it that could prevent student success. In the unit, after learning about the presented themes, students will identify the challenges that are obstacles to their goals and create a plan to lead them to success.

(Developed for Reading Workshop, grade 9; recommended for Spanish for Heritage Speakers, World Studies, and Reading Workshop, grades 7-10)

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