

Celeste Brown
Humanities

The Girl in the Sad Red House

Growing and changing is a part of getting older, and sometimes it's difficult. The book *The House on Mango Street*, by Sandra Cisneros, is about a young girl named Esperanza who is growing up in the ghetto and trying to figure out who she is. Esperanza starts out as an ashamed, insecure little girl but becomes a young woman who is confident and accepts who she is and where she comes from.

When first opening the book, readers meet Esperanza, a young girl who lacks confidence and is ashamed of where she lives. For example, when a nun from Esperanza's school makes a comment about where she lives, Esperanza says, "You live there? The way she said it made me feel like nothing. There. I live there." (Cisneros 5). Esperanza is already insecure about where she lives and the nun's comment only made her feel worse. She wants the approval of other people, and she wants to feel proud of what she has. In addition, Esperanza expresses her insecurity with the little things about herself when she says, "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." (Cisneros 10). Esperanza is ashamed of her name, she feels like all it represents is bad things and sadness. She is so insecure about who she is that she'll find the bad in every aspect of her life, including her name. Esperanza is a young girl who is easily affected by the comments made by others and the comments made by herself. She is a girl who can't seem to escape her own insecurities and is often weighed down by them.

Throughout the book Esperanza gains confidence and independence while accepting where she comes from. For example, Esperanza has a realization about her future and who she wants to be and says, "My mother says when I get older my dusty hair will settle and my blouse will learn to stay clean,

but I have decided not to grow up tame like the others who lay their necks on the threshold waiting for the ball and chain.” (Cisneros 88). Esperanza doesn’t want to be like the other women in her community who think marriage is the only way out. She wants to be a strong, independent woman and she’s made the decision that she will be. In addition, Esperanza finally accepts where she comes from and that Mango Street is a part of her, “...but what I remember most is Mango Street, sad red house, the house I belong but do not belong to.” (Cisneros 110). Esperanza realizes that no matter how much she tries to deny it, Mango Street is a part of who she is. She has matured throughout the book, to the point where she can look at Mango Street from a different perspective. Esperanza has grown from a naive little girl to the knowledgeable young woman she is now.

In the beginning, Esperanza is a young woman who lacks confidence but grows up to become a strong, independent woman who is secure with herself. Throughout the book readers follow Esperanza through her journey into adulthood. As she battles with insecurities and dealing with who she is and who she wants to be and the pressures of becoming a young woman. Eventually she gains confidence and sets herself apart from the other women in her community while finally coming to peace with Mango Street. Everybody can agree that changing and growing up isn’t easy and Esperanza is quite the example. In retrospect, even the hardships will seem worthwhile and pay off.