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The Growth of Esperanza

Dr. Seuss once said, "Today you are You, that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is Youer than you." Esperanza would really benefit from this advice because she is on a demanding quest to discover who she is and her importance in the world. Esperanza is the main character in *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros. In the novella, Esperanza learns how to deal with issues involving her poverty, gender and ethnicity. Despite her insecurity in the beginning of the novella, Esperanza gains the confidence she needs in order to escape Mango Street and all of the troubles she encounters around her poverty, gender and race.

Esperanza is very insecure at the beginning of this novella. For instance, Esperanza says "And I don't know why, but I have to turn around and pretend I don't care about the box so Nenny won't see how stupid I am" (Cisneros 20). Esperanza is embarrassed by her ambition to buy something that she cannot afford. Esperanza already has a lack of confidence because of her family's poverty, but the fact that she is so insecure that she worries about her younger sisters opinion proves that Esperanza is very insecure. However, this is not the only example of Esperanza's insecurity. For example, Esperanza says, "I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees" (Cisneros 11). Esperanza is telling the reader how she feels about her name. Esperanza is insecure about her name because she feels that it does not describe who she is inside. Esperanza is therefore insecure about who she really is and she does not want others to judge her based on the characteristics her name describes to her. At the beginning of the novella, Esperanza is very insecure.

In the middle of the novella, Esperanza begins to gain confidence. For instance, Esperanza says,

“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 who is proud to be my mother. All night the boy who is a man watches me dance. He watched me dance” (Cisneros 48). In this passage, Esperanza notices a boy watching her dance. It is evident that Esperanza is beginning to mature when she not only sees the boy watching her, but also when she comes to the realization that he is watching her dance. The fact that Esperanza notices and accepts that the boy is looking at her, shows the confidence she is gaining. Nevertheless, this is not the only example of Esperanza gaining confidence. For example, Esperanza says, “In the movies there is always the one with red red lips who is beautiful and cruel. She is the one who drives the men crazy and laughs all the way. Her power is her own. She will not give it away. I have begun my own quiet war. Simple. Sure. I am the one who leaves the table like a man, without putting back the chair or picking up the plate” (Cisneros 89). In this passage, Esperanza decides she is not going to let a man control her. She is gaining confidence in herself, by figuring out that she can only rely on herself as opposed to anyone else. Esperanza is showing the growth in her confidence by making her own rules that go against stereotypes for women. Esperanza gains confidence in the middle of the novella.

Esperanza is a fully confident woman in the end of the novella. For example, Esperanza says, “One day I will pack my bags of books and paper. One day I will say goodbye to Mango. I am too strong for her to keep me here forever. One day I will go away” (Cisneros 110). Esperanza is expressing her plan to leave Mango Street. Esperanza is finally growing up and becoming confident in herself. She realizes that she is strong and mature enough to leave Mango Street and make a new life all her own. On the other hand, this is not the only example of Esperanza’s confidence. Esperanza quotes, “I make a story for my life, for each step my brown shoe takes. I say, “ And so she trudged up the wooden stairs, her sad brown shoes taking her to the house she never liked” (Cisneros 109). Sandra

Cisneros is revealing to the reader that she is Esperanza. In addition, she is now mature and confident in herself because she accepts who she is and where she comes from. Esperanza learns that if she had not lived in that house, she would not be the fully confident woman she is today. In the end of the novella, Esperanza is a confident woman.

Esperanza begins as a very insecure girl, but by the end of the novella, she becomes confident enough to escape Mango Street. Esperanza starts out very immature in the beginning of the novella because of the insecurity she feels about her gender, race, house and poverty. In the middle of the novella, Esperanza begins to gain confidence by noticing boys taking interest in her, and by deciding she will not let a man control her. In the end of the novella, Esperanza becomes fully confident by leaving Mango Street, but still having the maturity to come back and free all the woman who could not free themselves. All teenage girls would benefit from reading Esperanza's story. In the teenage years, girls tend to be insecure and they will be able to connect to Esperanza's story and reassure themselves that they can become confident in themselves no matter where they come from.