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Humanities-1/2

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**Influences on Esperanza**

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams”. Esperanza is one who follows her dreams because she tries to find ways to leave Mango Street without ending up like women in her neighborhood. Esperanza is the main character in Sandra Cisneros’ novella *The House on Mango Street.* She is around many young women who are being held back from success by their race, their poverty and their gender. Many of these women plan to improve their situations with the help of a man because she has seen so many unsatisfied relationships, Esperanza is determined not to end up like that and is influenced with the idea of escaping Mango Street without a man.

Marin is a young woman from Mango Street who tries to guide Esperanza. For example, Marin is described as, “Marin, under a streetlight, dancing by herself, is singing the same song somewhere. I know. Is waiting for a car to stop, a star to fall, someone to change her life” (Cisneros 27). This quote shows how Marin wants to leave Mango Street with a man. Esperanza learns from Marin’s unsuccessful attempt to escape Mango Street, that she cannot wait around for a man to help her escape. Therefore, Marin guides Esperanza to rely on no one but herself. But there are other examples of how Marin guides Esperanza to find another way to escape Mango Street. For instance, “Marin says if she stays here next year she’s going to get a job downtown because that’s where the best jobs are since you always get to look beautiful and get to wear nice clothes and can meet someone in the subway who might marry you and take you to love in a big house far away” (Cisneros 26). Marin shows Esperanza that she can escape Mango Street by wearing nice clothes and looking attractive. Esperanza rejects Marin’s advice and is still figuring out how to save herself from Mango Street. Therefore, Marin guides Esperanza to look for more opportunities rather than relying on her looks or a man to escape.

Alicia is another person who affects Esperanza. She is known as, “Is a good girl, my friend, studies all night and sees the mice, the ones her says do not exist. Is afraid of nothing except four-legged fur and fathers” (Cisneros 32). This passage shows that Alicia is not being treated right by her father. Because Alicia is smart, she understands that the only way to get away from her father and Mango Street is through her education, which is why she studies all night. Through Alicia Esperanza learns that another way to get out of Mango Street is through school. Therefore Alicia helps Esperanza learn that by doing good at school, she will have a better chance of leaving. Another way to show how Alicia helps Esperanza is, “No, Alicia says. Like it or not you are Mango Street, and one day you’ll come back too” (Cisneros 107). This explains how Alicia knows that, like it or not, Mango Street is part of who they are. If Esperanza leaves, and does not return, then other young girls from Mango Street will still be suffering from the same problems. Therefore Esperanza is influenced by Alicia to one day come back and help the other young women of Mango Street.

Another women who shows Esperanza not to make the same mistake as she did, is Sally. For example, Sally is described as, "Sally, you lied. It wasn't what you said at all what he did. Where he touched me. I didn't want it Sally. The way they said it, the way it's suppose to be, all the storybooks and the movies, why did you lie to me?" (Cisneros 99). This quote explains that Sally leaves Esperanza all alone with the men she does not know and, as a result she is raped. Esperanza does not like that Sally let her down. Esperanza trusted Sally, she trusted her to make sure that nothing will happen to her or hurt her. There is another way Sally shows Esperanza that leaving Mango Street with a man is not a good idea. Sally leaves Mango Street through marriage, "She sits at home because she is afraid to go out ode without his permission" (Cisneros 102). This shows that Sally has now escaped Mango Street, but her attempt of leaving is not successful because she has married a controlling and abusive husband. As a result she is forced to be trapped inside her house. Esperanza learns from Sally's mistake and sees that she needs to focus on helping herself rather than getting distracted by anything, like a man, that will keep her from getting out of Mango Street freely. Esperanza is still determined that she will not leave and be treated the same way Sally is treated because of a man.

Marin, Alicia and Sally influence Esperanza with their different attempts of escaping Mango Street. If Esperanza never knew Marin, Alicia and Sally’s situations then she may have never realized the importance of women relying on themselves and nobody else. Each of the three women teach Esperanza that she cannot wait for anyone to help her get out of Mango Street, especially a man. Every women can learn from reading about the situations of Esperanza and her neighbors. Yet, there are still many young women who think escaping with a man from an unsatisfied life is the best idea yet.

**Work Cited**

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