

## **Student Sample #1: Interpretive Essay**

We need role models because we need someone to look up to and talk to them so we could know what we want to do later in life. There are all types of people that you can look up to in life. They can point you in the wrong or right direction. In the novel The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros, the main character Esperanza has a variety of female role models. Her mother plays a big role in her life because that's one of the main people she looks up to. "I could've been somebody, you know?" Her mother says and sighs. (90). Esperanza doesn't want to be like her mother, but she looks up to her. There are many role models that surround Esperanza: Some are trapped in abusive relationships, waiting for others to change their lives. Some are actively trying to change things on their own. Through these women and Esperanza's reaction to them, Cisneros shows not only the hardships women face but also explores their power to overcome them.

One of Esperanza's role models is Sally, who is trapped in an abusive relationship. She doesn't get to do the things she wants to do. It was like her husband had put her into a cage and never unlocks it for her to play outside. Esperanza says, "Except he won't let her talk on the telephone. And he doesn't let her look out the window. And he doesn't like her friends, so nobody gets to visit her unless he's working. She sits at home because she's afraid to go outside without his permission" (101-102). Sally would never disappoint her husband. She would do anything to make him happy or just to make him love her.

Sally is getting treated like Rafaela, who is scared and sorry. Rafaela's husband doesn't let her out because he thinks someone is going to be distracted by her beauty. She should think if he really does love her, he would let her out and trust

her. Love is all about trust. “On Tuesdays Rafaela’s husband comes home late because that’s the night he plays dominoes. And then Rafaela, who is still young but getting old from leaning out the window so much, gets locked indoors because her husband is afraid she will run away since she is so beautiful to look at” (79). This quote shows that Rafaela isn’t trying to change her life around. Esperanza sees this and she doesn’t want her life to be like that.

Alicia is another of Esperanza’s role models. She puts a good example out for people like her that are trying to make a difference. She studies all the time. She wants to be someone when she grows up. She doesn’t want to sleep around and get locked up in a house living off her husband’s money. Esperanza tells us, “Alicia, who inherited her mama’s rolling pin and sleepiness, is young and smart and studies for the first time at the university. Two trains and a bus, because she doesn’t want to spend her whole life in a factory or behind a rolling pin” (31-32). This quote shows she is trying to change things around for her, her family, and for the community. She takes “two trains and a bus” which shows that whatever or how long it would take, she will still go for it. She is a good person and that does a lot for her. She sets her goals and goes for them.

Esperanza is trying to set something out for herself. She is trying to get where Alicia is at right now. She is trying to set examples for her little brothers and sister. She doesn’t want to sit around and wait for someone to fix things for her. She is saying that she is independent. Esperanza says, “One day I will pack my bags of books and papers. 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” (110). This means that she will one day go away. No one knows where but she is taking her books and the main place she would need books is at school. When she says, “I am too

strong,” that shows she doesn’t need anyone to do things for her; she’s independent.

Rafaela and Sally were role models that would set Esperanza in the wrong direction, and Alicia is a role model that would set her in the right direction. These are people who help her figure out what she wants to be in life. Esperanza doesn’t want to be one of those women that’s in an abusive relationship or locked up in her house. She wants to do what she likes.

## Student Sample #2: Interpretive Essay

Some people think negative things about themselves and don't like who they are or where they're from. That's what Esperanza, the main character in the book The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros, thinks about herself. She doesn't think highly of herself and the role models in her life are not what she wants to be. She's ashamed of where she lives, she hates her name and she doesn't have enough self-confidence in who she is until a friend shows her the way by helping her see who she really is and giving her advice about what to do. Esperanza's negative view of herself slowly changes as she begins to focus on her larger community and her place within it. Through this, Cisneros shows that knowing and accepting where we have come from is an important part of growing up and determining who we are.

In the beginning of the book Esperanza is ashamed of where she comes from because she wanted a big house. The house on Mango Street is not the house she wanted. The house was small with windows "so tight" she thought they were "holding their breath." Esperanza complains about her house and plans to go away. But one day Alicia and Esperanza are talking and Alicia says, "You live right here, 4006 Mango Street. No, this isn't my house, I say, shaking my head as if shaking could undo the year I lived there." Alicia, Esperanza's friend, is trying to talk some sense into her head. She tells Esperanza, "No, like it or not, you are Mango Street, and one day you'll come back too." She tells Esperanza this so she will see that Mango Street is a part of who she is because she lives there. She can't escape that Mango Street will always be there wherever she goes and one day she'll come back to remember what life was like living there.

In the end, Esperanza understands. Alicia has finally gotten through to her to accept where she is living. The thing that helps Esperanza accept her home is writing. As she write about her home, she gains a kind of freedom because she knows one day she will pack her bags and leave Mango Street behind. But she says, “They will not know that I have gone away to come back. For the one’s I left behind. For the one’s who cannot out.”

In conclusion, I have told you about a girl named Esperanza’s life and how she feels about herself and where she lives, and how she can’t understand while she lives there until advice comes that will set her free. She starts to change once she gets the point and talks about her future as someone who is free to be the person she wants to be.

### **Student Sample #3: Interpretive Essay**

Each of us has a number of role models in our lives. Some of these models may be positive, some negative. For me, my parents are truly my role models. They have given me examples of what I can become in life. In The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros, the title character Esperanza has a variety of female role models in her life. Many are trapped in abusive relationships, waiting for others to change their lives. Some are actively trying to change things on their own. Through these women and Esperanza's reaction to them, Cisneros shows not only the hardships women face but also explores their power to overcome them.

One of these characters is Sally. Her father was physically abusing Sally. Esperanza says, "But Sally doesn't tell about the time he hit her with his hands just like a dog, she said, like if I was an animal" (92). Esperanza is using Sally as a way to show us negative abuse.

Alicia is also a role model for Esperanza. Alicia is a role model because she is "young and smart and studies at the university." Esperanza admires her because now she goes to the university and she is going to succeed in life. By going to the university she is going to get a well paying job and not a factory job or a job taking care of kids. If she gets paid well she could move off of Mango Street and go somewhere else.

Another role model she has is her Aunt Lupe because she encouraged her to see the importance of writing. Esperanza says,

She listened to every book, every poem I read her. One day I read her one of my own. I whispered it into the pillow:

I want to be  
Like the waves on the sea,  
Like the clouds in the wind,  
But I'm me.  
One day I'll jump  
Out of my skin.  
I'll shake the sky  
Like a hundred violins (60-61)

Aunt Lupe, who looked like Joan Crawford before she got sick, taught Esperanza how to feel and how to open her mind. Before she died she told Esperanza, "That's very good, she said in her tired voice. You just remember to keep writing, Esperanza. You must keep writing. It will keep you free" (110). Esperanza remembered her aunt as she grew into womanhood. Her aunt inspired her to change.

The conversation with Aunt Lupe shows her how to break free from Mango Street and actively change her life. "I put it down on paper and then the ghost does not ache so much. I write it down and Mango says goodbye sometimes. She does not hold me with both arms. She sets me free" (110). She writes about her hard things so people could know about it. By writing she feels relieved.

In this essay I wrote about how Esperanza's role models made her succeed in life. From Sally, Esperanza learns that she does not want to be in a situation where she is physically abused. From her friend Alicia and her Aunt Lupe she learns that

education and writing will help her get free in life. These role models made Esperanza change her life.

#### **Student Sample #4: Interpretive Essay**

As children, it is good to have someone to look up to. I guess you can call them role models. Role models are needed to give us some type of direction in life, for us to be able to look at and have an idea of that we want to become. Role models can be good or bad. As confusing as it may seem, sometimes it can help to be able to look at someone who hasn't done anything to be proud of in his or her life and use that person as an example of what you don't want to become. Esperanza, the main character in The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros, has a variety of female role models in her life to look to, some good and some bad. Many are trapped in abusive relationships, waiting for others to change their lives. Some are actively trying to change things on their own. Through these women and Esperanza's reactions to them, Cisneros shows not only the hardships women face, but also explores their power to overcome them.

One role model of Esperanza's is her childhood friend Sally. Sally is a girl who grew up with an abusive father. Esperanza describes her by saying, "Sally is the girl with eyes like Egypt and nylons the color of smoke." She is the type of person every female wants to be like: Pretty with shiny black hair and beautiful eyes. To try and get out of her situation with her father, she marries a man who does the same thing to her. Esperanza says, "She is happy, except sometimes her husband gets angry and once he broke the door where his foot went through, though most days he is okay." All Sally knows is abuse because it's all around her. Everyone around her got married to get away from their lives at home and it only seemed normal for her to do the same. Esperanza sees this as a mistake for Sally, but an inspiration for her to do otherwise.

Another role model is Minerva. Esperanza says, “Minerva is only a little bit older than me but already has two kids and a husband who left. Her mother raised her kids alone and it looks like her daughter will go that way too.” Esperanza has all these negative influences in her life, but they may actually be good for her to see. Esperanza and Minerva sort of depend on each other in their lives and situations. They share their writing with one another: “But when the kids are asleep after she feeds them their pancake dinner, she writes poems on little pieces of paper that she folds over and over and holds in her hands a long time, little pieces of paper that smell like a dime. She lets me read her poems. I let her read mine.” Esperanza has even been there for Minerva when her husband beat her up.

There is one woman role model that Esperanza never got the chance to know: Her great grandmother, Esperanza, who she was named after. “My great-grandmother. I would’ve liked to have known her, a wild horse of a woman, so wild she wouldn’t marry. Until my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off.” Even though she never met her, Esperanza used her as another example of why she didn’t want to marry. She wanted to be an independent woman who can take care of herself. A man taking care of her was not something she was looking forward to doing or letting happen. Her grandmother was forced to marry and Esperanza doesn’t want to end that way

.

In conclusion, Esperanza has high hopes for herself and doesn’t want the traditions of early marriage to stop her from going after her dreams. She has all these women, these caught women, whom she can look up to and be able to say, “I don’t want to live like that. I can take care of myself.”