

My Name By Sandra Cisneros Answer Key

"My Name"

An excerpt from The House on Mango Street

By Sandra Cisneros

In English my name means hope. 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.

It was my great-grandmother's name and now it is mine. She was a horse woman too, born like me in the Chinese year of the horse--which is supposed to be bad luck if you're born female-but I think this is a Chinese lie because the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don't like their women strong.

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. Just like that, as if she were a fancy chandelier. That's the way he did it.

And the story goes she never forgave him. She looked out the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow. I wonder if she made the best with what she got or was she sorry because she couldn't be all the things she wanted to be. Esperanza. I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window.

At school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. But in Spanish my name is made out of a softer something, like silver, not quite as thick as sister's name Magdalena--which is uglier than mine. Magdalena who at least--can come home and become Nenny. But I am always Esperanza.

I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees. Esperanza as Lisandra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do.

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Sandra Cisneros' poignant short piece, "My Name," is a part of her acclaimed novel "The House on Mango Street." The narrative explores the significance of identity, culture, and the struggle for self-definition through the lens of her protagonist, Esperanza Cordero. This article delves into the themes, character analysis, and literary devices present in "My Name," providing an answer key of sorts for readers seeking to understand the depth and implications of Cisneros' work.

Thematic Exploration

Cisneros weaves various themes into "My Name," making it a rich text for analysis. The following themes stand out prominently:

1. Identity and Self-Perception

Esperanza's relationship with her name is central to her identity. She expresses discomfort and a sense of alienation associated with her name, which is rooted in cultural and familial expectations. Her name is a symbol of her heritage, yet it also represents the confines of her identity. The struggle between embracing her roots and desiring individuality is a recurring theme.

2. Gender Roles

Cisneros subtly critiques the gender roles prevalent in Esperanza's community. The name Esperanza, which means hope, carries with it the weight of expectations. Her desire to change her name reflects a deeper yearning for freedom from societal constraints often imposed on women.

3. Cultural Heritage

The importance of cultural heritage is evident in Esperanza's reflections on her name. She describes how names hold stories, traditions, and histories that shape an individual's identity. Cisneros emphasizes the connection between personal identity and cultural background, illustrating how names can be both a source of pride and a burden.

Character Analysis

The primary character of "My Name" is Esperanza Cordero, who serves as both the narrator and the protagonist. Her introspection offers a profound understanding of her character and the challenges she faces.

1. Esperanza Cordero

Esperanza's character is marked by her sensitivity and introspection. She grapples with her identity throughout the passage, ultimately expressing a desire for a name that reflects her individuality rather than her cultural background. This internal conflict showcases her as a complex and relatable character who embodies the immigrant experience.

- Identity Crisis: Esperanza's struggle with her name signifies her broader quest for identity.
- Courage and Resilience: Despite her discomfort, Esperanza exhibits resilience, ultimately aspiring for self-definition and empowerment.

Literary Devices

Cisneros employs various literary devices that deepen the reader's understanding of the text and

enhance its emotional impact.

1. Symbolism

The name “Esperanza” itself is symbolic of hope. However, her desire to change her name to something more appealing underscores her conflict with her cultural identity. The act of renaming can be seen as a metaphor for her aspirations and her quest for self-acceptance.

2. Imagery

Cisneros uses vivid imagery to evoke emotions and paint a picture of Esperanza's world. Descriptions of her surroundings and the feelings associated with her name help readers connect with her experiences.

3. Tone

The tone of “My Name” is reflective and introspective. Cisneros creates a sense of nostalgia and longing, allowing readers to empathize with Esperanza’s feelings of displacement and her yearning for belonging.

Key Quotes and Their Analysis

Certain quotes from “My Name” encapsulate the themes and emotions that Cisneros seeks to convey. Here are a few key quotes along with their analysis:

1. "In English, my name means hope."

This quote highlights the duality of Esperanza’s name. While it signifies hope, it also suggests the burden of expectation. The contrast between her name’s meaning and her feelings towards it reflects her internal struggle.

2. "I wish I could be like the waves of the sea."

This metaphor emphasizes Esperanza’s desire for freedom and fluidity in her identity. Unlike her name, which feels fixed and confining, the waves symbolize a natural and unrestrained existence.

3. "I have not decided to be born."

This poignant reflection underscores the idea of choice in identity formation. Esperanza feels trapped by her name and circumstances, highlighting the theme of agency in self-definition.

Discussion Questions

For educators and readers looking to delve deeper into the text, consider the following discussion questions:

1. How does Esperanza's perception of her name evolve throughout the passage?
2. What role does cultural background play in shaping personal identity?
3. In what ways does Cisneros challenge traditional gender roles through Esperanza's character?
4. How does the symbolism of names extend beyond "My Name" to other characters in "The House on Mango Street"?

Conclusion

Sandra Cisneros' "My Name" serves as a powerful exploration of identity, culture, and the quest for self-definition. Through Esperanza Cordero's reflections, readers are invited to consider the complexities of names and the stories they carry. As a poignant piece within "The House on Mango Street," it encourages introspection on the part of the reader, prompting questions about personal identity and the cultural narratives that shape it. By understanding the themes, character dynamics, and literary devices employed by Cisneros, readers can gain a comprehensive insight into the richness of this text. The exploration of names, identity, and cultural heritage resonates deeply, making "My Name" a significant work in contemporary literature that continues to speak to the experiences of many.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main theme of 'My Name' by Sandra Cisneros?

The main theme is the struggle for identity and the impact of cultural heritage on personal identity.

How does Sandra Cisneros use her name to express her cultural identity in 'My Name'?

She reflects on the significance of her name, its meanings, and how it connects her to her Mexican heritage.

What literary devices are prominent in 'My Name'?

Cisneros uses imagery, symbolism, and personal narrative to convey her feelings about her name

and identity.

How does the author feel about her name throughout the essay?

She expresses mixed feelings; while her name connects her to her roots, it also makes her feel different and misunderstood.

What role does the concept of femininity play in 'My Name'?

Cisneros explores the expectations and stereotypes associated with being a girl and how they relate to her name.

In what way does 'My Name' reflect the immigrant experience?

The essay highlights the challenges of navigating cultural identity in a new environment and the complexities of assimilation.

What is the significance of the name 'Esperanza' in the essay?

Esperanza means 'hope' in Spanish, symbolizing her aspirations and desires for a future that transcends her current identity.

How does Cisneros connect her name to her family in 'My Name'?

She discusses how her name is a link to her family history and the expectations placed upon her by her relatives.

What conclusion does Cisneros reach about her name by the end of the essay?

She acknowledges the complexity of her name and embraces it as a part of her identity, while also seeking to redefine it on her own terms.

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