

Name: _____

Directions: read the following passage and correct the mistakes in a color other than black, and then highlight your corrections. The number in the square box to the left of the paragraph tells you how many mistakes are in that paragraph."

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Mexican american author Sandra Cisneros's novella *The House on Mango Street* is the story of a Latina girl Esperanza Cordero who grows up on the mean streets of an innercity neighborhood. Originally published in 1984 the novel enjoyed immediate critical acclaim.

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So whats the big deal here? Why is everyone so infatuated with this book? Well we have a couple of theories about that. First of all you'll notice that its not a dificult read. *The House on Mango Street* was being taught both to thirteen year olds and college students. The writing is simplistic enough for younger readers to understand while at the same time sophisticated enough to keep the interest of writers and literary scholars. Impressive, huh? And guess what? The author did that on purpose.

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In her introduction to the 25th anniversary addition of *The House on Mango Street* Cisneros explains "she wants the writers she admires to respect her work, but she also wants people who don't usually read books to enjoy these stories too". In other words, the way Cisneros sees it liturature isn't an exclusive club. Its something that everyone should be able to enjoy, even those people who dont have much experience with reading literature because there young, or because they are busy working for a living. However just because her writing is easy to understand doesn't mean that it's boring or simplistic, you'll notice that each sentence is carefully crafted to evoke emotion beauty or even just the pleasure of sound. It's kind of like reading a poem that tells a story.

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The other quality that makes this book so apealing is it's pervading sense of optimism. Though many of the stories she tells are painful and sad, cisneros never writes them with a sense of despair. Instead her characters display a determination to persevere, to reach and to dream of a better life.

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Esperanza Cordero is one of the most likable characters you'll ever meet. Shes smart she's funny she's lonely and charmingly awkward – she's just like you. OK, so maybe you didn't grow up in an urban barrio in Chicago. But who hasn't never felt ashamed about some part of their identity; whether it's the amount of money they're family has, the house they live in, or just being different from the other kids at school? Ever felt embarrassed about wearing the wrong shoes to a party? Meet Esperanza – we think you've got a lot in common.

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Our point is that, on nearly every page of *The House on Mango Street*, you'll probably find something that will make you cringe. Or laugh out loud. Or whimper in empathy. It's that kind of book. It's almost impossible not to relate to the sassy spunky heroine – a budding writer who survives the pain and humiliation of puberty by writing angsty, heartfelt poetry.

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Esperanza is the kind of characters that draws attention to the universal experience of being human and especially to the particularly awkward time of life that we call puberty. Reading her story helps us to feel more connectted with the people around us, because it reminds us that even though we've all had painful or embarrassing experiences, we all have the potential to overcome them. And that's kind of awesome.