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Elements of Style

**Style**—the distinctive way in which a writer uses language, from how he/she puts sentences together to his/her choice of vocabulary and use of literary devices.

**Metaphor**—a comparison between two things that are basically dissimilar in which one thing becomes another.

*Example:* “But my mother’s hair… is the warm smell of bread before you bake it.”

**Simile**—a comparison between two things that are basically dissimilar using “like” or “as” to make the comparison.

*Example:* “My papa’s hair is like a broom.”

**Personification**—the act of giving human qualities to something that is not human.

*Example:* “And me, my hair is lazy.”

**Alliteration**—the repetition of similar consonant sounds within a phrase or sentence.

*Example:* “It is the smell when she makes room for you on her side of the bed still warm with her skin.”

**Repetition**—the act of repeating words or phrases for dramatic effect

*Example:* In “Hairs,” the words “hair,” “holding you,” and “rain” are repeated.

**Imagery**—images and/or details that emphasize our senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch) to recreate a scene for the reader

*Example:* “The snoring, the rain, and Mama’s hair that smells like bread.”

**Onomatopoeia**— The use of words whose sounds echo their meanings

**Diction**— The author’s word choice

**Voice**— The writer’s unique use of language that demonstrate the writer’s personality

**Tone**— The writer’s attitude toward a subject, character, or event in a story

**Connotation**— An attitude or feeling associated with a word

**Denotation**— A dictionary definition of a word; its literal meaning

**Idiom**— A common figure of speech whose meaning is different from the literal meaning of the words
CHARACTER MAP

INSTRUCTIONS: As you read, fill out the following character map to keep track of character relationships.
The House on Mango Street—Pre-readings

**Overview:** For the next few weeks we will be reading, studying and analyzing Sandra Cisneros’ short novel, *The House on Mango Street*. The novel is made up of 44 short character sketches, or stories, called vignettes. Esperanza, a Mexican-American young woman who just moved with her family to Mango Street, narrates them. Since the stories don’t really follow each other chronologically, we are going to read the novel in the thematic sections outlined for you below. We will be addressing different subjects and literary devices for each set of stories. Before we discuss each section you will do a pre-reading assignment. Pre-readings should be about 1 page.

Section One: Self Definition and Identity

**Pre-reading question:** What is the personal significance of your given name (first, middle and last)? Does your name mean different things to you, your family, and your friends? What are your nicknames? What do your nicknames mean to you and those who call you those names?

*Read pp. 3-11 The House on Mango Street; Hairs; Boys and Girls; My Name*

Section Two: Friendship, Neighborhood, Home

Pre-reading question: Is living in a house your family owns different from living in a house or apartment your family rents? How? Are renters, owners and homeless people all considered equal citizens in America? Why or why not?

*Read pp. 12-25 Cathy Queen of Cats; Our Good Day; Laughter; Gil’s Furniture Bought and Sold; Meme Ortiz; Louie, His Cousin and His Other Cousin*

Section Three: Freedom and Entrapment

**Pre-reading question:** In what areas of your life are you most free to do what you like? In what areas of your life do you have the least freedom? Consider the roles gender, race, religion, education, class, age, and upbringing play in limiting an individual’s personal freedom.

*Read pp. 26-38 Marin; Those Who Don’t; There Was an Old Woman…; Alicia Who Sees Mice; Darius and the Clouds; And Some More*

Section Four: Growth and Maturity, Sexuality

**Pre-reading question:** How is growing into a teenage body (physically, mentally and emotionally) like moving into a new house/apartment? Compare the experiences of moving into a new house/apartment to the experiences of being a teenager.

*Read pp. 39-55: The Family of Little Feet; A Rice Sandwich; Chanclas; Hips; The First Job*
Section Five: Gender Roles and Expectations

Pre-reading question: Should parents/guardians raise their teenage girls in the same way that they raise their teenage boys? Why or why not? What rules should be the same for girls and boys? What should be different? Do you have brothers, sisters, cousins, etc. who are treated differently from you because of gender? Explain.

Read pp. 56-73: Papa Who Wakes Up Tired in the Dark; Born Bad; Elenita, Cards, Palm, Water; Geraldo No Last Name; Edna’s Ruthie; The Earl of Tennessee; Sire

Section Six: Fitting in

Pre-reading question: Describe a situation where you once felt really out of place or uncomfortable. Why did you feel this way? What does the word “outcast” mean? What kinds of attributes make people into outcasts? Why must society have outcasts?

Read pp. 74-87: Four Skinny Trees; No Speak English; Rafaela Who Drinks Coconut and Pineapple Juice on Tuesdays; Sally; Minerva Writes Poems; Bums in the Attic

Section Seven:

Pre-reading question: What parts of your life would you most like to escape? Can you escape these elements at some point in your life? If so, how? If not, why not?

Read pp. 88-102: Beautiful and Cruel; A Smart Cookie; What Sally Said; The Monkey Garden; Red Clowns; Linoleum Roses

Section Eight: Finding One’s “Home”

Pre-reading question: What inspires you most in life? What do you see your future holding for you? What obstacles might stand in your way? In what ways will you attempt to overcome them and achieve your future desires?

Read pp. 103-110: The Three Sisters; Alicia and I Talking on Edna’s Steps; A House of My Own; Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes
**Writing Situation:**

In the vignette “Hairs,” Sandra Cisneros reveals a lot about the narrator’s family, especially her mother, through a discussion of one physical trait: hair. Her first paragraph describes the hair of the narrator’s father and the hair of her siblings, using those descriptions to give the reader insight into each of their personalities. Cisneros also reveals the narrator’s feelings towards her mother in the passage, using a variety of stylistic devices to achieve this effect. Think about the people in your own family, the characteristics you share with them and those which make them (and you) distinctive. Decide which physical trait you would like to write about. Is the trait one you share with your family or yours alone? How might you present your piece Cisneros did with metaphors, similes, personification, alliteration, repetition and sensory details?

**Prewriting Directions**

Due: __________

Number your paper, write the following prompts, and answer them:

1. **SUBJECT:** Who will you write about? (Yourself? Family member(s)? A close friend?)
2. **PERSONALITY TRAIT:** What is special about that person? What is their personality like? What sets them apart or makes them interesting? What favorite memories do you have about them?
3. **PHYSICAL TRAIT:** What physical trait (part of their body) will you write about them? How can you make that trait reflect their personality?
4. **ELEMENTS OF STYLE:** What four different elements of style from the style sheet will you use to describe their physical trait and personality?

**Writing Directions**

Due __________

Now that you have done some thinking and prewriting about your subject, using your prewriting and the vignette “Hairs” as a model, write a vignette about your subject that discusses an important physical trait and how it reveals something about the person who possesses it and your relationship to him/her. You may choose to discuss a trait that you share with your subject, or one that makes a particular family member—or you—stand out from the others because it is different. You must incorporate at least four different stylistic devices in your vignette. Your vignette must be at least eight typed lines (not sentences) long (maximum of 12 pt font), or one handwritten page.
Student Sample #1: Hairs Modeling

Lips

My mom says my lips are like my grandpa, her father. My lips are nice and smooth like the skin of a shark or a ground with no cracks in it. Everyone says that I am always looking mad like a mad dog. To me, I feel as if I don't have to smile unless something is funny or I want to. My lips are sad most of the time because I am bored.

My sister says I have a big mouth, which is like saying I have big lips also. Maybe it's because of whatever comes out of it. She says this and the word big reminds me of an ugly fish. My mom says I talk too much and that everything that comes out of my mouth has to be a smart remark. Maybe. But I like my lips. They describe me.

Student Sample #2: Hairs Modeling

Skin

Everyone in my family has different skin colors. Even though we are family, our skin colors are different because we all come from at least three other places: Africa, the Northern Plains, and Europe. Black. Indian. White. That’s why I think my family and I have different skin colors.

My grandmother on my mom’s side is light skinned like a fresh banana, mixed with black, white and Indian. My grandfather on my mom’s side is dark skinned like a dark brown crayon and mixed with black and Indian. Their child, my mom, is also dark like a dark brown crayon. Black, white and Indian.

Both of my parents are mixed with black, white and Indian, which makes me light, lighter than both of them.

Even though we all look different, somehow we are as one. After all the ancestry and the two sides of my family coming together, I was the one. Togetherness.

The color of my skin reveals who I am, where I came from, what I am all about. It is what identifies me. My ancestry. Where it all started.
THE 9/11 DISAPPEAREDS

When 21-year-old Fernando Jimenez Molina failed to return from his job delivering pizzas two blocks from the collapsed twin towers on September 11, his roommates, also undocumented immigrants, made the grim decision to warn his mother, Nora Elsa Molina, in Mexico. Then they headed for Asociacion Tepeyac, a Mexican community organization that emerged as the city's alternative emergency system for the immigrant workers, families and binational communities whose lives and livelihoods lay buried beneath the smoldering rubble.

While these September 11 victims slipped through the cracks in federal relief systems, Tepeyac shifted into crisis mode as soon as the first workers covered with soot and ash stumbled into its office. Arnulfo Chino Rojas “appeared like a ghost, stricken with sadness and pain, frightened and white with dust,” said a staff member. Arnulfo squeezed time from his long hours as a waiter at The World Trade Center to teach Mexican dance classes for the association. He and the other dazed workers who converged on the center soon joined Tepeyac's director, Joel Magallon, a Jesuit priest, in cobbling up an emergency response system.

“Undocumented immigrants are the invisible workers and victims of the disaster,” says Brother Joel. Tepeyac, a network of forty Mexican organizations in the city and upstate New York, has firsthand knowledge of sixty-three desaparecidos, sixty-five small-business closings and 3,095 lost jobs, roughly half of which were held by undocumented workers in and around the trade center. The disappeared came from Mexico and several other countries. Many immigrants worked seventy- and eighty-hour weeks at subminimum wages or off the books for cash in restaurants, cafes, bakeries, hotels, for custodial companies, cleaning shoes, selling flowers and newspapers, and ascending the twin towers to deliver coffee, newspapers, flowers and gifts.

Brother Joel insists, “The only way we can know for sure who is missing is for the employers to cooperate. They are the ones who have lists of who was working for them, documented or undocumented. But the employers are afraid that they will be penalized. We want the INS to waive employer sanctions so companies can come forward.”

Frantic family members and co-workers flooded Tepeyac with local and international calls. As word of the group's good deeds spread, AFL-CIO unions, churches, community organizations, businesses and individuals donated $35,000, which Tepeyac quickly dispensed to victims and their families. The organization is now working with the Red Cross and Safe Horizon to obtain further relief and has dispatched volunteers as far as Guatemala and El Salvador to test relatives with DNA kits so that the remains of loved ones can be identified.
“Jane” who asked that her real name be withheld, turned to Tepeyac after two lengthy visits to the Family Assistance Center on Pier 94 left her empty-handed because she could not produce a pay stub. She worked as a nanny to a 4-year-old before her employers disappeared on September 11. A member of Freedom and Unity Among Pilipina Workers, Jane groaned, “What domestic worker do you know gets a pay stub?” Thanks to Tepeyac's intervention, Jane finally received a $50 grocery voucher and the promise of Red Cross vouchers of $300 for rent and $250 for emergency cash for one month. Joining the tens of thousands of immigrants who have lost their jobs in recent weeks, Jane wonders how she will support herself, her husband and two children back home once the emergency funds run out. Like all undocumented workers, she is not eligible for FEMA assistance or unemployment benefits.

Immigrant communities, hard-hit by recession and lacking the cushion of a safety net, are also gripped with fear as the Bush Administration recasts immigration policy within the framework of national security and the war on terrorism. Before September 11, patient community education, organizing, coalition-building and lobbying for humane immigration policies had begun to bear fruit, especially with the AFL-CIO's shift last year toward opposing employer sanctions and calling for unconditional amnesty for undocumented workers. After Mexican President Vicente Fox's visit Cere this past summer, George W. Bush and Congressional leaders had begun to discuss a limited program of “phased legalization” — although this was coupled with an exploitative guest-worker program without a guarantee of permanent residency — while Congressman Luis Gutierrez had crafted progressive legalization legislation. Now the amnesty debate is on hold in Washington, and community groups are steeling themselves for reversals on hard-fought battles against Border Patrol violence, INS raids and detentions and racial profiling. Catherine Tactaquin, director of the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, says, “We're hit with a revival of historic patterns of fear, hatred, of fingering immigrants as threats to national security.”

By Miriam Ching Louie, Miriam Ching Louie is the author of Sweatshop Warriors: Immigrant Women Workers Take on the Global Factory (South End).

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Item Number: 5678796
1. Choose a vignette to analyze and write the title in the
assigned slot.

2. At the bottom, use your DILS to analyze the vignette:

3. Identify the subject of the work

4. Write a theme for the vignette

5. What overall tone do you get from this

6. Now draw a picture that represents the tone, either a literal scene from the book, or an representational abstract.

picture that shows the feeling of the vignette.

d. Language: And write other poetic devices like similes, metaphors, alliteration, and repetition that add

c. Details: Write the details and small moments of description that make the characters feel real

b. Imagery: Write the sounds/sights/smells that jump out at you

a. Dictionary: Write word choices that seem important

From the pages you've read today, pp. ____________
The House on Mango Street—Open Mind

Directions: Put yourself into Esperanza's place at the end of p. 89. Fill in the open mind diagram below with objects, images, symbols and quotations from the story to provide a picture of what might be going through her mind. Be sure that you follow each quote with the page number on which it appears. You must include at least 2 quotations in your open mind.

Extra Credit: On the back of this sheet write a paragraph explaining what you drew and wrote inside the open mind.
Mango Street Quilt

Because Mango Street is a community, everyone is connected, like many colored squares on a giant quilt. They touch each other in both positive and negative ways. They are stitched together into their neighborhood. So today, I’d like you to create a Mango Street patchwork. You’ll each create two squares of the quilt, and after I grade them, I’ll put them up in the hall outside to create a giant Mango quilt pattern for your period -- Enjoy!

1. Choose two important moments, characters, symbols, or images from the novel. What vignettes do you remember most so far? Which scenes still stick in your head? What pictures from the book do you see in your head? Pick two moments, characters, or images from the book to draw.
2. Choose two different color squares
3. Write your name in the bottom right corner of each square
4. Write a quote on each square that connects to the image/moment/character you have chosen
5. Draw a scene, a person, or an image from the book on each square that connects to your quote.
6. On the back of each square, you should write the name of the vignette your image/moment/character comes from and explain your reasoning for selecting the event or character you portrayed. Why is it important to Esperanza and/or the story?
“In English, my name means hope....It is a muddy color...It is like the number nine....At school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth ” (Cisperos 10).

“My Name”

I drew the way Esperanza views her name, so I drew a muddy number nine, and made her name look sharp so it cuts a mouth.

This vignette seems important to me because I think it shows how Esperanza's name is part of who she is. It shows how she looks down on herself but also how she strives to be more. She wants to be more than a woman by the window but she feels insecure about her name and who she is.
**Mango Street—Double Entry Journal (DEJ)**

**Overview:** A Double Entry Journal (DEJ) is a way to closely read passages from a text, to discover what individual words and sentences reveal about characters, conflicts, themes, etc. In the future, you will be selecting your own “strong lines” and meaningful passages to comment on, but for this first effort three have been chosen for you. Each passage shows something about Esperanza, her relationship to someone else in the neighborhood, and/or her opinion about a particular social issue.

**Directions:** As you read each passage, you have five tasks: First, **identify who is speaking or narrating**. Second, explain **what the context or situation is**—that is, who is involved, where s/he is, at what time, and what is going on, etc., Third, explain **what the quotation means and how it is significant to the novel**. (In other words, why is this quote important?) Keep in mind that quotations rarely tell you why they are important, so you must use the clues given to you and really dig beneath the surface, kind of like “Author and Me” questions. Fourth, note any **stylistic devices** (similes, metaphors, personification, symbols, alliteration, etc.), and finally, what **connections** do you see between this excerpt and other vignettes in the novel? (Ideas of waiting, feeling trapped, making friends, etc.) Before you begin, compare the “weak” and “strong” examples of how to do a DEJ. I know it sounds like a lot, but you are capable!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotation</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Sample:** | **Speaker:** Esperanza is narrating  
*from “Marin”*  
*Marin, under the 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 (27).* |  
**Situation:** (weak) Esperanza watches Marin late at night  
**Situation:** (strong) Esperanza has been watching Marin in the evenings. Her observations help her to get to know Marin and to interpret what her actions might mean. Esperanza has a sense that Marin is waiting for change to happen to her.  
**Significance:** (weak) This means that Marin wants her life to change  
**Significance:** (strong) Esperanza understands that Marin thinks that her life will change when someone comes into her life. That someone will be a man. Marin knows she can use her physical attractiveness to get out of Mango Street, a place she doesn’t like. Esperanza appears to relate to Marin because she says, “I know.” Esperanza also has dreams of changing her life and getting beyond Mango Street. But while Marin is stuck, “singing the same song,” I think that Esperanza would like to make change happen, not just wait for “someone to change her life.”  
**Stylistic devices:** (weak) Cisneros uses sensory details.  
**Stylistic devices:** (strong) A falling star is something you wish upon. It symbolizes Marin’s dependency on something outside herself to bring change. Cisneros also uses alliteration (ex. Same song somewhere) to establish rhythm.  
**Connections:** Marin is like Sally, Rafaela and Minerva, other women on Mango Street. All of them seem trapped in relationships and circumstances that they want out of, but don’t know how to escape. |
from “A Rice Sandwich”

“And then she made me stand up on a box of books and point. That one? she said, pointing to a row of ugly three-flats, the ones even the raggedy men are ashamed to go into. Yes, I nodded even though I knew that wasn’t my house and started to cry. I always cry when nuns yell at me, even if they’re not yelling” (45).

Speaker:
Situation:
Significance:
Stylistic devices:
Connections:

from “Born Bad”

“She listened to every book, every poem I read her. One day I read her one of my own. I came very close. 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. That’s nice. That’s very good, she said in her tired voice. You just remember to keep writing…It will keep you free, and I said yes, but at that time I didn’t know what she meant” (60-61).

Speaker:
Situation:
Significance:
Stylistic devices:
Connections:

From “Four Skinny Trees”

“Let one forget his reason for being, they’d all droop like tulips in a glass, each one with their arms around the other. Keep, keep, keep, trees say while I sleep. They teach. When I am too sad and too skinny to keep keeping, when I am a tiny thing against so many bricks, then it is I look at trees. When there is nothing left to look at on this street. Four who grew despite concrete. Four who reach and do not forget to reach. Four whose only reason is to be and be” (75).

Speaker:
Situation:
Significance:
Stylistic devices:
Connections:
Mango Street Interpretive Essay

Directions: Choose ONE of the thesis statements/interpretive claims listed below then, in AT LEAST THREE well-developed body paragraphs, prove that thesis! Start with an introduction including the point of departure, background, and your interpretive claim/thesis, then work on the evidence. I have listed some page references that might be useful to you. You MUST use direct quotations (lines copied exactly from the book—include page numbers!) or paraphrases (those lines put in your own words) from Mango Street to support your thesis—Remember, a statement from the text should support every major statement you make about the text and vice-versa. Please include a conclusion restating your main points and tying your argument together. BE SURE TO CONSIDER HOW EACH OF THESE QUESTIONS RELATES TO ESPERANZA’S SENSE OF IDENTITY. (Note: These thesis statements are suggestions. Make whatever changes you need to fit what you want to write about! 😊)

1. 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.

2. 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 reactions to them, Cisneros’ shows not only the hardships women face, but also explores their power to overcome them.

3. Both Alicia and Esperanza view education and writing as a way to a better life. Through these and other characters, Cisneros suggests that education offers a kind of freedom.

4. The circle is an important symbol in Mango Street, representing ways that many characters are trapped in a cycle of violence and poverty as well as the ways that community can help break that cycle.
Building an Interpretive Essay—Mango Street

Directions: When you must write an essay in a short amount of time, it is often helpful to make an outline to organize your thoughts and ideas. Once you have chosen the interpretive claim you want to write about, use your notes to fill in the following outline.

Introduction:
Point of departure: ________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Interpretive claim/thesis: (Underline the specific ideas from your thesis that you will need to “prove” in the body of your essay) ______________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Body:
Evidence: Choose one or more quotations from the novel to support each thing that you underlined then explain the quotes and how they support your thesis.

Quotation: __________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Explanation: ________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________