

## **The House on Mango Street Part One Comprehension and Analysis Answer Key**

### **“House on Mango Street”**

1. Who are the people that live with the narrator?

The narrator lives with her mama, her papa, her brothers Carlos and Kiki, and her little sister Nenny.

2. Contrast the house on Mango Street with the narrator’s dream house.

The house on Mango Street is small and red with some crumbling bricks and tight steps out front. It has no front yard, but there are four elm trees near the street and a small back yard. There is one washroom, and everyone shares a bedroom. Alternately, the narrator’s dream house would be large and white with a big grassy yard full of trees, but with no fence. It would have stairs inside, which might lead to the basement, and there would be three washrooms whose plumbing would always work.

3. How long do the narrator’s parents plan to live in the house on Mango Street? How does the narrator feel about this?

The narrator’s parents plan to live on Mango Street until they have enough money to move somewhere else. They rely on the lottery for that money, but the narrator does not believe they will ever move someplace new.

### **“Hairs”**

1. Describe each of the narrator’s family members according to his or her hair.

Her papa’s hair sticks up like a broom. Carlos’s hair is thick and so straight he doesn’t have to comb it. Kiki’s hair is like fur. Nenny’s hair is slippery, so it slides through the hand. The narrator’s hair is lazy and doesn’t stay in hair bands or clips. Her mother’s hair is tightly curled and smells like bread.

2. How does the narrator feel about her mother? Find evidence to support your decision.

The narrator feels secure and loved by her mother. She writes, “when she is holding you, holding you and you feel safe.” She also uses positive words like candy, curly, pretty, sweet, and warm to describe her mother’s hair. Finally, she compares the smell of her mother’s hair to bread, which is commonly considered a comfort food.

## **“Boys and Girls”**

1. According to the narrator, can boys be friends with girls? What experience does she have to support her opinion?

According to the narrator, no, boys cannot be friends with girls in public. She says that her brothers Carlos and Kiki like to talk to her and Nenny inside the house, but they don't talk to girls outside the house.

2. How does the narrator feel about her sister?

The narrator feels that her sister Nenny is her responsibility, but she is not her friend.

3. What does the narrator wish for? Why does she want one?

The narrator wishes for a best friend who is not her sister. She wants someone to tell secrets to, and someone who will laugh at her jokes.

## **“My Name”**

1. What is the narrator's name and what does it mean?

The narrator's name is Esperanza, which means hope in Spanish.

2. Who is she named after? What was that woman like?

She is named after her great-grandmother, who was a wild and strong woman. She was forced into marrying, and she spent the rest of her life looking out the window.

3. What is a woman's role in Mexican society, according to the narrator?

According to the narrator, women in Mexican society should be weak and controlled, and it is expected that they will marry.

## **“Cathy Queen of Cats”**

1. Who is Cathy and why is she the queen of cats?

Cathy is one of Esperanza's neighbors, on one of the upper floors of a nearby apartment building, but she says she is the great-great-grand-cousin of the queen of France. She is the Queen of Cats because cats of every variety live in her home.

2. Why does Cathy's family have to move soon?

Cathy's family has to move on Tuesday because the neighborhood is getting bad.

3. How do you think Esperanza feels about their reason for moving?

Esperanza probably feels hurt, since her family just moved to the neighborhood, which may be part of the reason it's getting bad.

### **“Our Good Day”**

1. What does Esperanza get for five dollars?

For five dollars, Esperanza buys a share of a secondhand bike.

2. How does Cathy react to the purchase? How do you think she feels about Esperanza's new friendship with Rachel and Lucy?

Cathy thinks that Rachel and Lucy are dirty because of how they smell and how they dress, and she probably thinks that Esperanza has made a bad decision. She reacts by leaving without saying goodbye.

3. What do the girls do with their new purchase on the first day? What do they plan to do with it in the future?

On the first day, the girls all ride the bike together around the block and laugh. After that, they plan to share it by rotating who has it each day.

4. Why do Rachel and Lucy seem better friends to Esperanza than Cathy does?

Rachel and Lucy accept Esperanza for who she is and don't make her choose between two things she wants, a friend and a bicycle. They also don't put limits on their friendship with Esperanza, and they don't insult her and suggest that she's making the neighborhood worse.

### **“Laughter”**

1. How are Rachel and Lucy alike? How are Esperanza and Nenny alike?

Rachel and Lucy have the same lips and the same light laughter. Nenny and Esperanza don't look alike but have a big laugh, and they sometimes think the same way.

2. What do the houses remind Esperanza of? Who agrees with her?

The houses remind Esperanza of houses in Mexico, and Nenny agrees.

3. What does the incident with the house suggest about Esperanza and Nenny?

The incident with the house suggests that Esperanza and Nenny see the world the same way. It also suggests that they have the same shared memories from traveling.