

Sandra Cisneros

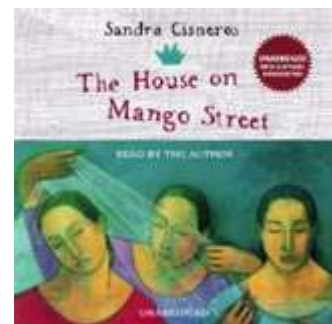
Sandra Cisneros currently lives in San Antonio, Texas, but she was born in Chicago, the third child and only daughter in a family of seven children. It was difficult growing up in the Latino section of Chicago for the Cisneros' family. Money was tight, and there were many of them in a small house, but they were a close-knit family and part of a Latino community that valued family, strength, and dreams.



Sandra has worked with high-school dropouts as a teacher and counselor, has she taught creative writing at every level except first grade and pre-school, has been a college recruiter, an arts administrator, and a visiting writer at several universities, including the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Her books include several books of poetry and short stories, a children's book *Hairs/Pelitos* and two novels, *The House on Mango Street* and *Caramelo*.

The House on Mango Street, published in 1984, won the Before Columbus Foundation's American Book Award in 1985, and is required reading in middle schools, high schools, and universities across the country. It is the story of a young girl, Esperanza Cordero, **and is based on Cisneros' experiences** growing up in the Chicano ghetto of Chicago. It tells the story of a young girl coming into her power, inventing for herself what she will become and her quest for a better life.



In 2003 Cisneros was awarded the Texas Medal of the Arts. Her books have been translated into many languages, including Spanish, French, German, Dutch, Italian, Norwegian, Japanese, Chinese, Turkish, Greek, Iranian, Thai, and Serbo-Croatian.

Cisneros cares about giving back to the community and taking action for just causes. She is a **philanthropist** [a person who gives their time, talent and/or treasure for the common good]. She is the president and founder of the Macondo Foundation, an association of socially engaged writers working to advance creativity, foster generosity, and honor communities; and the Alfredo Cisneros Del Moral Foundation, a grant-giving institution serving Texas writers.



Assignment:

Read the quotes from Sandra Cisneros. Which vocabulary words from the list of self-discipline vocabulary would you associate with each quote. Write the words next to the quote. (You may use words more than one time.) Hint: To do this activity you will need to read the words in the quote and also "read between the lines," or use inference, to connect the quote to what you know about Cisneros.

1. *And the nice thing about writing a novel is you take your time, you sit with the character sometimes nine years, you look very deeply at a situation, unlike in real life when we just kind of snap something out.*
2. *But I deal with this meditating and by understanding I've been put on the planet to serve humanity. I have to remind myself to live simply and not to overindulge, which is a constant battle in a material world.*
3. *I always tell people that I became a writer not because I went to school but because my mother took me to the library. I wanted to become a writer so I could see my name in the card catalog.*
4. *I realize that when I moved out of my father's house I shocked and frightened him because I needed a room of my own, a space of my own to reinvent myself.*
5. *I think my family and closest friends are learning about my need to withdraw, and I am learning how to restore and store my energy to both serve the community to the best of my ability and to serve my writer's heart.*
6. *I try to be as honest about what I see and to speak rather than be silent, especially if it means I can save lives, or serve humanity.*
7. *I was silent as a child, and silenced as a young woman; I am taking my lumps and bumps for being a big mouth, now, but usually from those whose opinion I don't respect.*
8. *Perhaps the greatest challenge has been trying to keep my time to myself and my private life private in order to do my job. Everything that is most mine belongs to everyone now.*
9. *Revenge only engenders violence, not clarity and true peace. I think liberation must come from within.*
10. *Well, I'm Buddhist, and so part of my Buddhism has allowed me to look a little more deeply at people and the events in my life that created me.*

