

## **“My Name”**

**by Sandra Cisneros**

**excerpted from The House on Mango Street**

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. 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.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

*Respond to the following writing prompt with two or more paragraphs. Be sure to use correct grammar and punctuation.*

Explain what your name means. Does it have a special meaning in a foreign language? How did you get your name? Do you have a nickname? How did you arrive at that nickname? If you could change your name, what would you change it to? Would a name change make you feel differently about yourself? Why? Try to include a personal anecdote about your name. Has your name ever gotten you into trouble?

The topic is your name. Your purpose is to inform us about your name, and the audience is your classmates. Before you begin writing, listen to the following questions. You may use these questions, but you don't have to. You can say anything about your name.

Do you know why your parents chose your name? Who chose it? Were you named after a particular person? Why were you named after him or her? Are you like that person or different from him or her? How?

Does your name have a nickname? What is it? How do you feel about it? Do you use it? Why?

Do you use your middle name instead of your first name? If so, explain why.

Has anyone ever commented on your name? What did he or she say? How did that comment make you feel?

Do you think your name causes people to treat you in a particular way? How? Cite an example or two.

Would you change your name if you could? Why or why not? What would you change it to? Why did you select this name? Would changing your name make you feel different than you feel now? How? Why?

Try to add metaphors to your writing; consider what your name would be if it were a color, a day, a car, a tree/flower, animal, or feelings and sounds you associate with it. Review how Cisneros creates a name that conjures up meanings beyond the surface to reveal the character's personality.