*The House on Mango Street* Major Assessment (Character Development Essay) Due: Thursday, October 9th

To assess (measure) your understanding of the novel we have just read as well as your understanding of characterization, **write a short literary analysis essay explaining how Esperanza Cordero from *HOMS* is a dynamic character.** This essay is due on Tuesday, October 7th (Typed in Times New Roman 12 pt. font, double spaced, one page minimum, three page maximum. **Printer emergencies will not excuse you from turning this in on time; you have an entire WEEK to avoid that issue.)**

Please do not let the term “literary analysis essay” intimidate you; essentially, this means **you will write a minimum of three short answer paragraphs.** These short answers need to explain Esperanza’s values or dominant qualities in the beginning, middle and end of the novel (your dialectical journal notes may help). Finally, you also need to **provide a full introduction and conclusion** to frame the three paragraphs. Follow the outline given to you below; a sample essay (on a different novel) is also provided so that you can understand what is expected of you. **If you have any questions, please take the time between now and the due date to come to tutoring.** Lengthy questions will not be taken in class because we are on a tight schedule; however, we will be discussing STAAR essays in class this week, so from time to time, short questions on this assignment may be addressed. Please do not work with someone on this essay or consult study guides; you CAN do this on your own, using your own thoughts (if you read the book, that is, and kept up with dialectical journal responses.) You will be graded on how well you SUPPORT and EXPLAIN your OWN thoughts, which is well within your reach. There’s no need to succumb to plagiarism! You will receive a zero if you do so, and your parents will be notified. This will affect your grade with little chance of recovery. Asking someone to edit or comment on your paper is fine, but it should NOT be another student completing this assignment.

Outline:

I. Introduction paragraph

A. Give a brief summary of the novel (novel title, author, novel setting, main character and conflict).

B. Provide a **thesis** that **answers the prompt** (above, bold) and **previews the main points** that your body paragraphs will explore. Use the sample thesis below; you can mix up the thesis’ structure, as long as it contains the same essential parts (answers the prompt, previews main points.)

Sample thesis: Cisneros’ character Esperanza Cordero is a dynamic character because she shifts from being/valuing (quality or value), to being/valuing (quality or value), to finally being/valuing (quality or value).

OR: Cisnero’s character Esperanza is a dynamic character because she shifts from being/valuing (insert quality or value here) to ultimately being/valuing (insert quality or value here). (Use this thesis if you only see one major change).

II. First body paragraph (1st Short Answer: What was Esperanza’s highest value or most dominant quality in the beginning?)

A. TS: State your main point (the answer to the question)

B. CD: Provide a concrete detail to support your main point. Remember to blend context with quotes. **Yes, you need quotes.** **Yes, you can use more than one CD, but at least one of them needs to refer to a quote.**

C. CM: Comment on how your evidence shows your point from the TS. Explain how you got your inference. Explain the deeper meaning on the quote/make an observation about it (you can even discuss figurative language if it’s relevant).

D. CS: Conclude by stating your main point again, but with more emphasis and perhaps additional insight.

III. Second body paragraph (2nd Short Answer: What was Esperanza’s highest value or most dominant quality in the middle of the novel? (This answer can be a continuation of the idea in the 1st paragraph, but try to find a change, however slight it may seem!))

A. Repeat the same structure as the previous; however, the content should focus on the middle of the novel.

IV. Third body paragraph (3rd Short Answer: What was Esperanza’s highest value or most dominant quality at the end of the novel?)

A. Repeat the same structure as the previous; however, the content should focus on the end of the novel.

V. Conclusion paragraph

A. Restate your thesis and examples

B. End with a thought on how her character change reveals an important theme in the novel, or conclude with any final insight on the importance of the topic in general (in this case, why are dynamic characters important to literature anyway?)

Sample essay (on “The Necklace”)

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Pre-AP English I

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“How You are Changed!”: Mathilde Loisel’s Character Arc in Maupassant’s “The Necklace”

Written in 1884 by the French author Guy de Maupassant, the short story “The Necklace” depicts the tragic life of Madame Mathilde Loisel, a vain, middle class French woman who yearns to be part of French aristocracy, only to be crushed by it. Dealing with issues of class, ambition, and humility, Mathilde Loisel’s ironic downfall makes her tale one of the most highly anthologized short stories in the Western canon. Her downfall proves that Mathilde is an engaging, dynamic character because it shows how she changes from valuing the superficial to appreciating the genuine.

As the story begins, it is clear that Mathilde’s highest value is the superficial, meaning she only cares about immediate impressions; she does not at first notice the deeper value in anything. For example, this is especially clear in the way that she treats her husband; first, when he gives her the invitation to the ball, she only sees it as that—an invitation. She scorns it as one would scorn a simple piece of paper, asking “What do you expect me to do with that?” (334). She does not see that, behind the apparently simple item, was a loving husband who “had a lot of trouble getting [the invitation]” (334). This pattern continues when she asks for an expensive dress worth 400 francs; she does not see that behind the dress was a self-sacrificing husband who gave up the money he was saving for a rifle. This behavior shows that Mathilde’s obsession with outer appearances blinds her to seeing the real value of things that are right before her eyes. Therefore, readers can see how much she values the superficial over the genuine—it is the only thing she can see at this point.

As the story progresses, Mathilde’s value of the superficial is only more inflated. Finally acquiring what she always wanted at the party, “all this homage, all this admiration, all the desires she had stirred up,” she is described as being “carried away, intoxicated…floating in a cloud of happiness” (337). In this quote the author purposely seems to be using extreme language to emphasize how dreamlike and fantastical the experience is. “Floating,” “intoxicated” and “carried away” imply that the best day of Mathilde’s life is, sadly, fake. This is not surprising since it reflects that she values fake, transient things instead of looking for experiences with real substance. Thus, readers can see that her value has not changed at this point—it has only become more pronounced.

However, after the story’s climax, Madame Loisel’s highest value dramatically shifts, as she develops an appreciation of the genuine. After losing the necklace and having to work ten years to pay for its “replacement,” she now had to take on the common chores, including “contesting each sou of her pitiful funds” when buying fruit and meat (341). In this section, she learns to bargain fiercely with the grocer and butcher, which suggests that she can now see the real value of what she buys. No longer does she allow others to fool her and dictate to her what is expensive and worthy—she has learned to see for herself what is worth buying and for how much. Hence, she no longer lives in a dream world and has learned to esteem the genuine things in life—even simple things like quality food.

Thus, Mathilde Loisel’s journey from a shallow, young girl to a discerning, mature woman makes her one of the most memorable dynamic characters in all of literature. Unknowingly, though, Mathilde experienced this change precisely because she was superficial for so long: she foolishly believed the necklace from Madame Forestier was valuable, but only because she let Forestier’s rich exterior fool her. If she had learned to be more discerning from the outset, she might have investigated the necklace’s value before wasting ten years of her life and youth. Thus, her character’s arc is key to understanding one of the story’s main themes: humans need to be aware that appearance and reality are not always in sync.