

Cautionary Tales in Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*

As Esperanza grows into a young woman, she has interactions with three characters—Rafaela, Minerva, and Sally—who all make an impression on her and help shape the person that she becomes at the end of the novel. Consider the excerpts below and provide commentary on what Esperanza learns from each character and how her understanding reflects Cisneros' overall theme and “the meaning of the work as a whole.”

Rafaela
Concrete Detail: Rafaela who drinks and drinks coconut and papaya juice on Tuesdays and wishes there were sweeter drinks, not bitter like an empty room, but sweet sweet like the island, like the dance hall down the street where [. . .] always there is someone offering sweeter drinks, someone promising to keep them on a silver string. (80)
Commentary:

Minerva
Concrete Detail: One day [Minerva] is through and lets him know enough is enough. Out the door he goes. Clothes, records, shoes. Out the window and the door locked. But that night he comes back and sends a big rock through the window. Then he is sorry and she opens the door again. Same story. (85)
Commentary:

Sally
Concrete Detail: [Sally] sits at home because she is afraid to go outside without his permission. She looks at all the things they own: the towels and the toaster, the alarm clock and the drapes. She likes looking at the walls, at how neatly their corners meet, the linoleum roses on the floor, the ceiling smooth as wedding cake. (102)
Commentary: