

Symbolic Settings: The “Four Skinny Trees” in Sandra Cisneros’ *The House on Mango Street*

Consider the “four skinny trees” that Esperanza identifies with at the end of Sandra Cisneros’ *The House on Mango Street* with the “red balloon tied to an anchor” that she identifies with at the beginning. Carefully read the following excerpts and provide commentary on how the change in Esperanza’s conception of herself and her relationship to her community helps convey Cisneros’ theme and the meaning of the work as a whole.

Concrete Detail
Their strength is secret. They send ferocious roots beneath the ground. They grow up and they grow down and grab the earth between their hairy toes and bite the sky with violent teeth and never quit their anger. This is how they keep. (74)
Commentary

Concrete Detail
Let one forget his reason for being, they’d all droop like tulips in a glass, each with their arms around the other. Keep, keep, keep, trees say when I sleep. They teach. (74-75)
Commentary

Concrete Detail
When I am too sad and too skinny to keep keeping, when I am a tiny thing against so many bricks, then it is I look at trees. When there is nothing left to look at on this street. Four who grew despite concrete. Four who reach and do not forget to reach. Four whose only reason is to be and be. (75)
Commentary