

## Before Reading: Narrative Reading and Writing

Genre: Narrative Writing

A narrative is writing that tells a story.

*My Thoughts:* Readers are not just passengers. Narratives are a journey between writer and reader into communication and meaning. So, we should read not only to understand the words and sentences of what the writer is telling, but also the ideas, feelings and personal meaning he/she wants to share.

*Preview:* In this reading from Sandra Cisneros's book *The House on Mango Street*, the narrator explores her identity or who she is by telling the story of her name. **Think about what the author wants to reveal about the identity of the narrator and what meaning or connections you make.**

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### *My Name*

by Sandra Cisneros 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.

I 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.

## QUESTIONS

1. Imagery is descriptive language. Find an example of imagery in “My Name.”
2. Metaphors and similes compare one thing to another. Find an example of metaphor in “My Name.”
3. What does this sentence mean? “I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window.”
4. Tone is the attitude of the author, the way they feel about the topic of their story. Which of the following words could describe the tone of “My Name”? How do you know? Find evidence in the story.

Apologetic: full of regret; repentant; remorseful; acknowledging failure

Bitter: angry; acrimonious; antagonistic; spiteful; nasty

Critical: finding fault; disapproving; scathing; criticizing

Inspirational: encouraging; reassuring

Reflective: thinking about something carefully; thoughtful

## Acrostic

Take the letters of your name and write a story or poem or just list words that describe you.

Example:

Lisa

**L:** lively

**I:** inquisitive

**S:** smart

**A:** artistic