

---

While reading “My Name,” highlight or underline examples of similes or metaphors. Use this box to describe what you think she’s trying to suggest with her use of figurative language, ask questions, and respond to the text.

---

Wray

E9

“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.

---

---

*What aspects of identity does the story address? List at least 3.*

---

---

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.

1. What is the point of view in this story? Why is it an effective type of narration given the story's content and tone?

2. How does the narrator establish a conflict between her Mexican identity and the English-speaking country she lives? (Consider when she mentions Mexicans or Spanish versus when she mentions English, school, and her classmates.) How is her name tied to her cultural and racial identity?

3. According to Chinese Zodiac, these are common traits of people born during the Year of the Horse: stubborn, independent—don't take advice, social, and clever. Where in the story does the narrator show these traits?

4. Esperanza is named after her great-grandmother. In what ways does she admire her great-grandmother? What parts of her great-grandmother's life and personality does Esperanza want to avoid? What does having "a place by the window" mean?

5. Esperanza says she wants to baptize herself with a new name. Why is this more powerful than simply saying she wants to change her name? What other words or ideas do we associate with baptism?

6. Why do you think Esperanza wants to change her name to Zeze the X?

7. Esperanza never directly describes herself in this chapter, yet the reader is still left with a sense of who she is as a character. How would you describe this character as a person? Use examples from the text to explain and support your answer.