The House on Mango Street Part Two Comprehension and Analysis

Directions: To help you understand all aspects of the novel, respond to the following questions or statements. Write your responses on a separate piece of paper using complete sentences.

“Gil’s Furniture Bought & Sold”

1. Describe the item in the store that fascinates Esperanza.
   Esperanza is fascinated with a wooden music box. It has a brass record that has holes in it, and it plays high-pitched notes.

2. Why does Esperanza pretend she does not want it?
   Esperanza pretends she does not want the music box because she is afraid Nenny will think she is stupid.

3. How does Nenny react to the item? What is Esperanza’s opinion of Nenny’s behavior?
   Nenny likes the music box, too, and asks how much it costs while reaching into her pocket for quarters.

“Meme Ortiz”

1. How are Meme and his dog alike?
   Both Meme and his dog have two names, and they both run awkwardly and wildly.

2. Was Meme’s house built well? Cite details from the vignette to support your conclusion.
   Meme’s house was not built well because the floors inside slant, and the stairs out front are crooked. The house also lacks closets (storage areas are important to most people who are looking for a house).

3. Why do you think Esperanza thinks the large tree in his backyard is so memorable?
   Esperanza remembers the tree in the backyard because it is so tall, even taller than her house down the block. She might also remember it because the kids have a Tarzan Jumping Contest using the tree, even though Meme broke both his arms then.

“Louie, His Cousin, & His Other Cousin”

1. Who are Louie’s cousins?
   One of Louie’s cousins is a girl from Puerto Rico, who babysits Louie’s little sisters and sells Avon makeup. Esperanza thinks her name is Maris or Marin. Louie’s other cousin is not described much, but he is caught by the police and arrested because he stole a car.

2. How do you know that the car the other cousin is driving is expensive and luxurious?
   Cadillacs are usually expensive, white-wall tires have to be specially ordered. The white leather seats and carpets are also upgrades in most cars.

3. How did Louie’s other cousin get the car? Why did you make that inference?
   Louie’s other cousin probably stole the car because the police began chasing him when they saw the car. Additionally, when the kids ask where he got the car, he does not answer them.
“Marin”

1. What are Marin’s plans for her future?
Marin plans to get married to her boyfriend when she goes back to Puerto Rico. If she cannot go back right away, she
expects to get a job downtown, where she can wear formal clothes and maybe meet a man on the subway. Then she can
marry him and live with him in a big house.

2. What is Marin’s nightly ritual?
Marin’s nightly ritual begins when her aunt goes to sleep. Marin sits on the front porch steps and listens to the radio while
ignoring the flirty things the boys say to her.

3. What are three words you or Esperanza might use to describe Marin’s personality?
Marin is mature, flirtatious, and hopeful.

“Those Who Don’t”

1. How do strangers feel in Esperanza’s neighborhood? How is that different from the feelings
Esperanza and her neighbors have?
When strangers enter Esperanza’s neighborhood, they think the residents are dangerous and might attack them.
Esperanza and her neighbors do not think it is dangerous, though, because they know the people that strangers are afraid
of.

2. How do people from Esperanza’s neighborhood behave when they are in a different area of town?
Esperanza and her neighbors feel the same way when they go into a new area. When they are the strangers, their knees
shake, they roll up their car windows, and avoid eye contact.

“There Was an Old Woman She Had So Many Children She Didn’t Know What to Do”

1. Who is Rosa Vargas? Describe her life.
Rosa Vargas is a single mother who lives in Esperanza’s neighborhood. She has so many children that she is too tired to
really deal with their bad behavior, and her husband left her a while ago without leaving her any money or a reason for his
absence.

2. What does Esperanza think the Vargas children are missing, aside from their father?
Esperanza thinks the Vargas children do not have respect for living things or self-respect.

3. How do other people in the neighborhood react to the Vargas children?
At first, other people used to tell the children how to behave. But when the kids clearly didn’t listen, the neighbors stopped
watching or protecting the kids.

“Alicia Who Sees Mice”

1. What are Alicia’s responsibilities at home? Why?
Alicia has to wake up early to make tortillas and pack lunches because her mother died.

2. What is Alicia afraid of?
Alicia is afraid of the mice that scurry away from her when she wakes up early each morning. She is also afraid of her
father, but it unclear why.

3. How does Alicia’s father react when she mentions mice? How does he feel about women in general?
Alicia’s father does not care about Alicia’s fears, so he says she should close her eyes or that the mice are just imagined. He
believes women should hold traditional roles, like cooking for the family.