The House on Mango Street Part Three 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.

“Darius & the Clouds”

1. What does Esperanza think there is a shortage of on Mango Street?
   Esperanza thinks there is a shortage of sky, butterflies, and flowers.

2. What does Darius see at the end of the vignette, and where does he see it?
   Darius sees God in a fat, fluffy cloud that looks like popcorn.

3. How are Darius’s comments in this vignette so surprising in comparison to his normal behavior?
   It is surprising that Darius talks about clouds and God, which is such a quiet activity, when he chases girls around with firecrackers, an activity that would be quite loud. It is surprising that Darius talks about God when Esperanza thinks he is so stupid and foolish.

“And Some More”

1. What starts the disagreement between the girls?
   The argument starts when either Rachel or Lucy says that one of the clouds looks like Esperanza’s fat face.

2. Is the name-calling serious, meant to hurt each other’s feelings, or is it just joking? Explain your opinion.
   I think they are serious at first, since breaking up the friendship is threatened, but then it turns into silliness because the girls talk about chicken lips, cockroach jelly, and foot fleas.

3. How is Nenny’s behavior different from the rest of the girls’? Why do you think that is the case?
   Nenny’s behavior is different because she does not get involved in the name-calling and threats. Instead, she is engaged in her own game, listing all the names she can think of to label the clouds she sees in the sky.

“The Family of Little Feet”

1. What do the girls get from the family with little feet? How do the girls react to the gifts?
   The girls get three pairs of used high-heeled shoes: one yellow pair, one red pair, and one pale blue pair. The girls are so excited to get the shoes that they trade them around and feel like Cinderella when they wear them.

2. What discovery do the girls make because of the gifts? Why do you think they just made this discovery now?
   The girls discover that they have legs just like women do when they put on the shoes. They probably did not discover this until now because their tennis shoes and socks were disguising their legs and making them look like little girls’ legs.

3. How does the behavior of the boys and men in the neighborhood change?
   The men and boys start looking at the girls differently as they walk around. Mr. Benny tells the girls the shoes are dangerous and threatens to call the cops, and a little boy on a bike calls something flirty to them. A drunken homeless man
in front of the tavern compliments them and offers a dollar in exchange for a kiss, which bothers Esperanza and Lucy, but not Rachel.

“A Rice Sandwich”

1. Why does Esperanza want to eat in the canteen?
Esperanza wants to eat in the canteen because she thinks the kids are special for eating there. She also feels a bit lonely at lunch and too lazy to walk home.

2. Which reasons does Esperanza use to convince her mother to write a note for her?
Esperanza convinces her mother to write her a note by pointing out that her siblings do not come home for lunch. She offers to make her own sandwiches, and she points out that eating at the canteen would yield fewer dishes for Esperanza’s mother to wash. She mentions how sickly she is, so walking home for lunch is too much work for her. Finally, she suggests that if her mother saw her less, she would miss her and love her more.

3. What was Esperanza’s experience in the canteen?
Esperanza does not think the canteen is very special, the boys and girls are unfriendly to her, and she cries while she eats her cold, greasy sandwich.

“Chanclas”

1. What did Esperanza’s mother forget? How does she react to this mistake?
Esperanza’s mother forgets to bring new dress shoes. Esperanza is very embarrassed that she has to wear her old school shoes, and it makes her feel ugly.

2. How do Esperanza’s feelings change during her dance with her uncle?
At first, Esperanza did not want to dance with her uncle because she was aware of her ugly shoes, so he had to pull her onto the dance floor. However, he compliments her beauty, and then others compliment her dancing, and finally she is comfortable enough to bow at the end of the dance.

3. Who else wants to dance with Esperanza? Why do you think she mentions him watching her dance?
Esperanza’s cousin by marriage is interested in dancing with her, but she is too embarrassed at the beginning, and she turns him down. After dancing with Uncle Nacho, Esperanza is more confident of her beauty and appeal, and then she is flattered to be watched by a boy who is not strictly related to her.

“Hips”

1. What are the girls doing in this vignette while they talk about hips?
The girls are chanting and jumping rope (double dutch) while they talk about hips.

2. Name three things the girls say hips are needed for.
They say hips are needed for holding a baby when cooking, dancing, having babies, and identifying the bone structure of women in contrast to men.

3. Contrast Nenny’s comments with the other girls’ comments. Take a guess at Nenny’s age, and explain your guess.
Nenny’s comments are more innocent. She is not thinking about anything other than the practical uses of hips. When Esperanza, Rachel, and Lucy are all jumping rope to new improvised songs that are sexually suggestive, Nenny is choosing standard, more innocent chants for her turn jumping. (Esperanza is about 12-13 years old).
“The First Job”

1. Why does Esperanza need to get a job?
Esperanza needs to get a job to help pay the tuition for her Catholic high school.

2. What does Esperanza do at her job?
Esperanza works at a photo-finishing store, matching up the negatives with the prints, and then putting the matches in an envelope together.

3. List three moments during her first day that are awkward or uncomfortable for Esperanza.
Esperanza has a very awkward first day on the job. First, she has to lie about her age to be hired. Then, she gets tired while working that she wants to sit, but she does not know if she is permitted. When she finally does sit, the other ladies working there laugh at her for waiting so long. At lunch, she does not know anyone else, so she eats alone in one of the bathroom stalls. On her break, she hides in the coatroom to avoid others. Finally, an older man comes in and asks her for a kiss as a birthday present, but as Esperanza begins to kiss him on the cheek, he forces her to kiss him on the lips, and he holds her face there for some time.