

Four Skinny Trees from *The House on Mango Street*

Sandra Cisneros

About the Author



Sandra Cisneros (b. 1954) was born in Chicago, but her family often traveled to Mexico to live with her grandfather. The frequent moves left Cisneros with few friends, and she remembers that she “retreated inside” herself, reading books and writing. Cisneros has won several awards for her poetry and short stories.

SCAN FOR
MULTIMEDIA



BACKGROUND

This selection is drawn from *The House on Mango Street*, a novel describing a young Latina girl growing up in Chicago, Illinois. Over the course of the novel, which is arranged in a series of short scenes, or vignettes, the main character, Esperanza Cordero, comes to terms with who she is and who she wants to be.

- 1 **T**hey are the only ones who understand me. I am the only one who understands them. Four skinny trees with skinny necks and pointy elbows like mine. Four who do not belong here but are here. Four raggedy excuses planted by the city. From our room we can hear them, but Nenny just sleeps and doesn't appreciate these things.
- 2 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.
- 3 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.

NOTES

- 4 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. 🌳