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Dr. Rosenthal
Women's Literature

English 224: Final Exam

2. The House on Mango Street is written in short vignettes. Write a vignette of your own that might fit into the novel, and then write a second vignette that depicts an event, person, or situation that is significant in your own life.

Mrs. Hair White As Snow

Time heals everything Papa says to my sister and me. There is this neighbor; she's the one at the top of Mango Street, the one with the gray hair that falls like snow in the middle of the summer; her house is filled with clocks. My sister and I believe she is waiting to be healed. They say her son left her one morning. She woke from her sleep to toast, pancakes, and a donut... no son. We laugh and giggle when she walks by because she looks like a crazy woman wearing three watches, checking every minute to see if this is the hour she ought to be healed. Mama says to let her be, but I cannot help but wonder late at night if those clocks keep her awake. Tick Tock Tick Tock Tick Tock, enough to drive you insane. I don't care if she is waiting to be healed, I still think she's one brick shy of the load.

Then there came that especially hot and sticky day that would have frightened snow away when Mama called down to me to deliver Mrs. Hair As White As Snow her mail and a loaf of bread. I went eager to hear the clocks, wondering secretly, never out loud, if maybe I too ought to be healed. I stood on my tipsy toes to reach the doorbell, sweat dripping from the mail. She opened the door and by the way she moved you might have thought that door weighed five tons, slowly and steadily.

“Come in.” Her hair may have looked like snow, but if God should decide one day that snow should have a voice, I would suggest he ask if he may borrow hers.

I stepped through the door, kitchen table in front of me... toast, pancakes, donut untouched. My eyes fall upon the clocks, stovetop, on top of the counter, standing in the hallway, behind me, in front of me, above me. I bend my ear to hear the sounds that have kept me awake many a night inside my imagination... all I hear is silence. The clocks wait as untouched as the breakfast. If snow should have an emotion, I suggest snow come inside here and play.

Potato Chips

Missing Nana is like watching a potato chip break. It happens all in one break, but the crumbs left, never seem to vanish... or want to. They painfully and stubbornly have to be picked up one by one. Although it was months ago, her funeral is still with me. I carry it around inside my pocket, pulling it out every now and then, cupped inside my hands, then only to be placed back inside my pocket. It is heavy in there; a funeral is a brick, not a feather.

Somehow it seems easier to carry that around than be “one of those people” that celebrate the memories instead of the death. For now, her death is all I can touch. I can wrap my mind around the fact that she is no longer here. I can visually confirm inside my heart and head her lying inside her coffin. I can even still see her, as if she is still here, half a person, hooked up to tubes that snatched her beauty away from her. With the

memories there comes the crumby pain, broken neatly with one break into tiny, tiny pieces. With the memories comes the desire to smell her again, to have her look at me, to talk with her. With the memories comes the anger that she, the one that first was proud of my happiness then of my safety, will never see me slip into a white dress, into the role of mother, into the future of my life. I am angry; I should have been warned. Someone should have told me that this touchable love would end and someone should have told me that I would somehow have to be strong enough to be happy that Cancer took her when it did. I am not impressed by the favor Cancer has done her; I want her back.

I never liked potato chips.

3. Dorothy says there are only two or three things she knows for sure. If Molly, Esperanza and Beverly had to pick two of three things they know for sure, what would they pick and why? Details/examples please.

Molly- Two or three things I know for sure are you can take me or leave me. They both tend to sting a little.

Molly was a strong little girl, she was born with the confidence many of die never finding. She fought everyone and everything to be who she wanted to be and the book, *The Rubyfruit Jungle* by Rita Mae Brown, ends with her achieving her goals despite the constant criticism and the need from society for her to change who and what she was.

Molly, through each relationship and through each set back learned that she will never be willing to change who she is, but that does not mean each time she did not hurt or feel the loss. Through each relationship she has in her life, she thinks that maybe she will find a love that will complete and understand her, but each time she was somehow proven wrong. Either she is asked to compromise her values, like she was asked to with Holly, or

someone turns their back on her, as her first lover Leota did. Carl, her father, was the only one that ever had real faith in her and never turned their back on her or criticized her for being different. But even though this love was pure and true, when he died she still felt the pain and the bitter sweetness of his love, as she had to mourn in silence for fear Carrie, her mother, would criticize her. Through her life, Molly learned that she will never change who she is and in the end she will not care if people leave her or if they accept her. She is living her life for her alone, not to impress someone else or find completion in someone else. She has found that whatever someone chooses, to take or leave her, they both have similar outcomes. She still is who she is, regardless if someone has chosen to not accept or accept her.

Esperanza- Two or three things I know for sure is home is neither sweet nor bitter.

Being told to dream about the dream house, the house that all families should live in one day, the house that her and her family would be able to share one day and then in reality being forced to live in a rundown house on the outskirts of a trouble infested neighborhood has greatly effect Esperanza's childhood. She has grown up thinking, no matter, what happens, her and her family will always get second best... never the dream. And also she has almost begun to believe that the dream does not exists, that it never did, that dreams cannot exists because they are too perfect... her reality is *the house on Mango Street*. "I knew then I had to have a house. A real house. One I could point to. But this isn't it. The house on Mango Street isn't it. For the time being, Mama says. Temporary, says Papa. But I know how things go." (p.5)

Although she has begun to learn a bitter lesson at such a young age, she still tells stories of the characters that inhabit Mango Street, as well as of her family. These characters share her troubles, living in a poor neighborhood. They understand that if they want a bike, they will have to share it in order to afford one. These people become family to her. They are all she knows of happiness. Through the people she begins to not hate Mango Street, but appreciate it and respect it as her home more for the lessons she has learned while living there. Esperanza learns that a home is not always the place you want to be, but it is also the place that if you try to escape from you will ruin yourself and your roots.

***Beverly-** Two or three things I know for sure are the more you believe you are right, the more wrong you usually end up being.*

Beverly was one of the most stubborn and immature characters I believe we read about this semester. She had so much to learn, and she really did not even truly mature until the very end of the book. By the end of the book, she has learned a lot, but I still believe she struggles every now and then. Beverly is extremely selfish and this holds her back from truly maturing for a very long time, even after Jason, her son, has been born. Never once in the book, *Riding in Cars with Boys* by Beverly Donofrio, does she admit or accept the responsibility of her actions of having unprotected sex, instead she decided to blame Jason for being born, or the school system for not teaching her about sex ed. Although she spends the majority of the book thinking the world has wronged her by the end she comes to know that she has to accept responsibility for her actions because if she doesn't, she will never accomplish anything. Beverly has high expectations of herself,

and she does have dreams and goals that she strongly wishes to accomplish. She wants to go to college and get a degree in English very strongly. It takes her a while to realize how hard she will have to work to get them done, but she is humbled through the experience. She learns through her mistakes, and there are many that she is not always right. Jason helps her realize that she has to let herself be wrong every once and a while.