

The House on Mango Street Using Literary Criticism

1. Question & Research Task

Sometimes it's hard to understand everything we read. There can be so much going on in a book or a poem that it feels overwhelming. [Literary criticism](#) is a tool to help you focus on and understand parts of a literary work. [Literary criticism](#) is NOT what the writer writes; it's what you, the reader, discover about the writing. Using different critical approaches can help you figure out how to analyze and interpret a text and discover things you may not have noticed on your own.

In this Slam Dunk, you will learn about the different critical approaches and how to use these tools to better analyze and understand *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros.

In this Slam Dunk, you will conduct brief, focused research to respond to the inquiry question:

How can looking through the lens of the critical approaches change our understanding of a text?

SLIDE NAVIGATION

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Click the image above for an introduction to literary criticism.
Image Source: BCPS LIS Cohort XIII

2. Information Sources

Explore the [BCPS Guide to Critical Approaches](#) and the sources and questions below to learn about literary criticism. Each approach provides a different lens to help you understand a text. Think about which lenses you already use when you're reading. Which lenses could be helpful to you when reading?

<p>General Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BCPS Literary Criticism Primer (entire guide) • BCPS Literary Criticism Questions • Summary of The House on Mango Street 	<p>Biographical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview • Read "Straw into Gold" from Adventures in Reading (in many BCPS buildings): What elements from her life did she incorporate into the text? 	<p>Historical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Historicism • Down These City Streets: Exploring Urban Space (via BCPL) • "My Purple House" - "We don't exist." 	<p>Sociological/Marxist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Marxism • The Untranslatability of Experience (via BCPL) • Revisit "A Rice Sandwich." How does her exchange with the nun show economic conflict? 	<p>Feminist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of feminist approach • More Room of Her Own (via BCPL) • The Eroticism of Feet (via BCPL)
<p>Philosophical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the text show "the world is made up of tiny matters?" • In Search of Identities (via BCPL) 	<p>Psychological</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of psychoanalysis • In Search of Identities (via BCPL) 	<p>Archetypal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jung • Literary Continuity (via BCPL) • Remembering to Come Back (via BCPL) 	<p>Formalistic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of formalism • What is the importance of the similarity between the beginning and the end of the story? 	<p>Deconstructionist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview • Derrida • Entering The House on Mango Street (via BCPL) • Look at the order of the vignettes. Is the order significant?

3. Student Activity

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Using the resources on [slide 2](#), complete your assigned approach in your small groups on the [organizer](#). Consider how the approach could be applied to the text. You will be sharing this information with your classmates to complete your assessment activity.



Sandra Cisneros at the 9th Los Angeles Times Festival of Books

Image Source: Discovery Education, by subscription.

4. Assessment Activity

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How can looking through the lens of the critical approaches change our understanding of a text?

Read [one of the excerpts](#) from *The House on Mango Street*.

After you are finished reading, decide which approach best applies to your chosen excerpt by using your notes from the previous slide. Be sure to explain how this literary approach changes your understanding of the text. Remember to cite textual evidence from the story to support your analysis in a well-developed response.

Refer to success criteria on this [rubric](#) which will be used to assess your work.



Sandra Cisneros

Image Source: Explora, by subscription.

5. Enrichment Activities



Image Source: Icons

Click on the picture to the analyze the lyrics from a song (or use another teacher approved song).

Using your notes from the critical approaches, determine which approach best applies to reveal a deeper understanding of the song.

Then, create a multi-media presentation (Voicethread, Powerpoint, etc.) explaining how the critical approach has changed your understanding of the lyrics.

6. Teacher Resources

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Learning Standards Alignment

[Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy](#)

Reading: 1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Writing: 7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

AASL Standards Framework for Learners Inquire: Build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems.

Think: Learners display curiosity and initiative by:

I.A.2 Recalling prior and background knowledge as context for new meaning.

Create: Learners engage with new knowledge by following a process that includes:

I.B.1 Using evidence to investigate questions. I.B.3 Generating products that illustrate learning.

Share: Learners adapt, communicate, and exchange learning products with others in a cycle that includes:

I.C.1 Interacting with content presented by others.

Grow: Learners participate in an ongoing inquiry-based process by:

I.D.2 Engaging in sustained inquiry.

[P21 Framework: 21st Century Student Outcomes](#)

3. Information, Media & Technology Skills: Information Literacy: Access information efficiently and effectively; Use information accurately and creatively for the issue or problem at hand.

ICT Literacy: Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information.

Grade 9 Unit 1

Time Frame: One 90-minute lesson.

Differentiation strategies for this lesson:

- Direct students to use learning tools included in our BCPS-licensed databases, such as: audio read-aloud, labeled reading levels/Lexiles, and embedded dictionaries.
- Have students use learning supports provided in BCPS Digital Content found in the [Apps Portal](#). Refer to [Digital Content Snapshot/Support pages](#) as needed.

Notes to the teacher:

- Collaborate with your school library media specialist to implement this lesson.
- This module assumes that students have familiarity with the plot of *The House on Mango Street*.
- Provide students with login information as needed to authenticate BCPS Digital Content. Login information is on the **BCPS Digital Content** page in the [Apps Portal](#)
- Consider assigning organizers to students as a OneDrive Assignment using the [Schoolology Assignment App](#).