*The aim of these summaries is to assist teachers who teach only isolated chapters each week, who may not be familiar with the book as a whole, and/or could use help in helping students remember what they read since the last time they were together. I tried to highlight some of the characters whose ultimate influence is greater than others in Esperanza’s life, even though their appearances may be few. –JD*

**3-5 The House on Mango Street**

Before living on Mango Street, Esperanza’s (the narrator’s) family lived on Paulina, Keeler, and Loomis Streets. Every time there was a new baby, the family moved. Mango was supposed to be the dream house: white, big, the house they would get when they won the lottery. But this is a cramped row house with a tiny back yard and an unused garage. The children still have to share rooms. Once when they lived on Loomis Street, Esperanza met on the street a nun from her school who wanted to know where she lived. Esperanza pointed to a third floor window with wooden bars and peeling paint. The nun said, “You live *there?”* and made Esperanza feel ashamed.

**6-8 Hairs**

Esperanza uses hair to describe members of her family: Papa’s hair is like a broom, her hair is lazy, Carlos’s is thick and straight, Nenny’s is slippery, Kiki’s is like fur. But **Mother**’s hair is curly and pretty. It smells sweet. When you sleep near her on a rainy night, you hear rain and Papa snoring, but you feel safe. It is like warm bread.

**8-9 Boys & Girls**

Boys and girls live in separate worlds. The boys Carlos and Kiki are best friends. Outside the house they can’t be seen talking to their sisters. Nenny is too young to be Esperanza’s best friend, and she isn’t allowed to play with the Vargas kids, who are bad influences. So Esperanza has to look out for her. One day, however, Esperanza expects to have her own best friend.

**10-11 My Name**

“Esperanza” means hope – too many letters in Spanish, sadness, waiting, the number nine, muddy color, sobbing songs her father plays when he shaves on Sunday mornings. It was the name of her great-grandmother, born in the Chinese year of the horse (bad luck for females, but that’s probably a lie because both Chinese and Mexicans don’t like their women strong). Great-grandmother was strong and wild. She was abducted by her grandfather, who threw a sack over her head. She probably never forgave him because she spent the rest of her life looking out the window. Esperanza wants to be strong and wild, never tamed. English people pronounce *Esperanza* harshly, but in Spanish it is softer. Esperanza would rather be called Zeze the X.

**12-13 Cathy – Queen of Cats**

Cathy says, (1) she is descended from a French queen, (2) stay away from dangerous Joe the baby-grabber, (3) Benny and Bianca own the corner store and are okay if you don’t lean on the candy counter, (4) don’t become friends with the two raggedy girls across the street [Vargas children], (5) Edna owns the building next door, having sold a bigger one, and (6) **Alicia** is stuck-up ever since she went to college. Cathy’s house is full of cats, and she expects to inherit a family house in France someday. Cathy will be Esperanza’s friend until next Tuesday, when her family moves. They have to move north because [more Latinos like Esperanza’s family] keep moving in.

**14-15 Our Good Day**

For five dollars, in spite of Cathy’s disapproval, Esperanza buys friendship with two neighborhood girls and a share in a fifteen-dollar bike that a boy named Tito is selling. The girls are **Rachel** and **Lucy**, and they don’t laugh at Esperanza’s name. The plan is to take turns, but today they all share the bike. Lucy pedals, Esperanza sits on the seat, Rachel sits on the handlebars. People on a bus wave. A fat lady crossing the street says, “You sure got quite a load there.” Rachel, sassy, says that the lady does too. Laughing and wobbling the girls ride home.

**15-16 Laughter**

Even though **Rachel** and **Lucy** are puzzled, Nenny and Esperanza share recognition of a house that reminds them of Mexico. They also share the same loud laugh, unlike Rachel and Lucy’s, which more giggly.

**17-18 Gil’s Furniture Bought and Sold**

This is a dark and crowded junk store. The owner is a black man, so it is hard to see him – except for his gold glasses floating in the dark. Nenny asks more questions than Esperanza and once asked the man about a music box. Esperanza thought she meant a pretty box with flowers and a ballerina, but it was a large, brass-disc-playing box that sounded much different. Nenny started to reach for her money, but the old man said it wasn’t for sale.

*(These pages through page 91 begin a series of vignettes. With few interruptions they are about individuals and places in Esperanza’s neighborhood. Several are stories about powerless women.)*

**19-20 Meme Ortiz**

Meme, or Juan, is a boy who moved into Cathy’s house. He has a big sheepdog that runs, all floppy, like Meme does. The house is wooden, and all crooked, even the front steps. There is dirt and an old garage out back. There is also a big tree from which one can see much of the whole neighborhood. The kids had a Tarzan Jumping Contest. Meme won and broke both arms.

**23-25 Louis, His Cousin & His Other Cousin**

In the basement of Meme’s house is an apartment rented to a Puerto Rican family. Louie is he oldest. He has little sisters plus two cousins, who live somewhere else. The girl cousin, Marin, sells Avon makeup products. Ostensibly she babysits Louie’s sisters, but she also often stands in the doorway, singing.

Louie’s other cousin pulled up in a yellow [stolen] Cadillac one day and gave a ride to all of the children, including Esperanza, six times around the block. When they first heard a siren, Louie’s cousin had every one get out of the car. He sped away but crashed into a lamppost at the end of the alley. The children all waved to him in the back of the police car as he rode away in handcuffs.

**26-27 Marin**

Marin talks about (1) her Puerto Rican boyfriend, (2) saving money from babysitting and selling Avon makeup, so she can get married and go to P. R., (3) getting a job downtown because you get to look beautiful, wear nice clothes, and maybe meet someone who will marry you and take you to a big house far away.

Louie’s parents think she’s too much trouble, but she tells the younger girls about pregnancy, treatment for mustache hair, ways to know if boys like you, etc. Marin is out front evenings, and after her aunt goes to sleep, she smokes, plays a radio, and sometimes dances. What matters, she says, is that boys see you. She isn’t even afraid when boys say stupid [flirtatious] things to her. She’s waiting for someone to change her life.

**28 Those Who Don’t**

People with different skin colors are afraid of each others’ neighborhoods. But within their own communities, everyone has a name and a story.

**29-30 There Was an Old Woman She Had So Many Children She Didn’t Know What to Do**

Rosa Vargas is a single mother with too many children. Her husband left her without an explanation or money. The children are wild. They are always getting hurt. One day Angel Vargas, tried to fly from a roof. He fell and died.

**31-32 Alicia Who Sees Mice** [a counter-balance to Marin]

**Alicia** is afraid of the mice in her apartment. Her mother died, and she has to make her father’s lunch. She takes two trains and a bus to get to the university because she wants a better life. She studies all night. She is also afraid of her father.

**33-34 Darius & the Clouds**

Darius, whom everyone thinks is dumb and who acts like an annoying, “tough” boy says some amazingly wise things.

**35-38 And Some More**

The four girls, Esperanza, Nenny, **Rachel**, and **Lucy**, are talking in this chapter – sometimes all at once. They list people’s names, names of clouds, and “mama” insults. They escalate the insults and maybe get angry – or maybe they are just playing.

**39-42 The Family of Little Feet**

Esperanza describes the feet of the the grandpa, grandma, baby, and mother in a nearby family. The mother gives the girls (Esperanza, Nenny, **Rachel**, and **Lucy**) a bag of used, women’s shoes. The girls wear them, tottering, around the block. They attract a lot of unwanted attention: a warning from Mr. Benny about grown-up shoes being too dangerous; a romantic remark from a boy on a bicycle; stares from some other girls; and an offer from a bum: he’ll give them a dollar for a kiss. Eventually the shoes get thrown away. (“We are tired of being beautiful.”)

**43-45 A Rice Sandwich**

Even though she lives close to her school, Esperanza gets a note from her **mother** asking permission to eat at school. Mother makes her a rice sandwich because she has no lunchmeat. The lunch supervisor makes Esperanza get permission from the principal, who says no, because Esperanza lives only four blocks away. At a window, the principal makes her stand on a box of books at the window, coercing Esperanza to agree that her house is one in a row of really ugly buildings. Esperanza cries; the principal relents for one day only. Alone in the lunchroom, Esperanza, still crying, eats her cold, greasy sandwich while other kids watch.

**46-48 Chanclas**

At a baptism party Esperanza has new clothes, but not new shoes, just her old, clunky school shoes. She turns down an offer to dance with a boy. Finally she dances with her uncle and forgets all about her appearance. At the end Esperanza can’t believe that a boy has watched her dance all night.

**49-52 Hips**

The girls are jumping rope. Nenny chants little-girl songs. The older girls talk about, joke about, sometimes make up chants about women’s hips. What good are hips? Esperanza shares a little bit of scientific information **Alicia** has told her, but one of the main points is that Esperanza is embarrassed because her little sister is still thinks like a baby compared to the other girls’ more “mature” conversation and fun.

**53-55 The First Job**

One afternoon, after Esperanza had “sort of let” Tito push her into an open water fire hydrant, she learns that her aunt Lala has gotten her a job in a photo-finisher’s. The work is easy, but she eats in a washroom rather than be watched in the lunchroom by adults. She takes her break in a coatroom. A nice, “Oriental” man wants a birthday kiss from her. Innocently she starts to kiss him on the cheek, but he grabs her, kisses her hard on the mouth and won’t let go.

**56-57 Papa Who Wakes up Tired in the Dark**

Papa usually goes to work before dawn. One day instead, he sits on Esperanza’s bed and tells her that her grandfather is dead. He cries. She just wants to hold Papa.

**58-61 Born Bad**

**Mother** says Esperanza was born on an evil day. Her aunt Lupe (Guadalupe), had been beautiful and had been a swimmer before she went blind and started to die. Even then, in her small, dark apartment, six blocks away, she listened to the girls’ stories; she let Esperanza read books to her; she listened to the poems Esperanza wrote. Esperanza feels guilty because one day Esperanza and her friends were playing a game, making fun of Lupe. Lupe died that day.

**62-64 Elenita, Cards, Palm, Water**

Elenita reads fortune-telling cards for people in her kitchen. (She takes care of her children at the same time.) She charges Esperanza $5.00 to tell her that her future includes jealousy and a wedding and some other mysterious things. Esperanza wants to know about the house she will live in (Remember chapter 1?), but Elenita says only that she will have “a home in the heart.”

**65-66 Geraldo No Last Name**

Marin went to a dance club and met a boy named Geraldo. Later that night Geraldo died in a car accident. Marin was the last to see him – around 3 a.m. She had to go to the hospital and twice to the police. No one can find any information about Geraldo. He was a “wetback,” an immigrant without papers. If he is like the others, he lived in cheap apartments and sent money home. His family will only know that he went north and never came back.

**67-69 Edna’s Ruthie**

Edna is a mean landlady, always throwing people out of their apartments – except for her daughter Ruthie, who sleeps on a couch in Edna’s apartment. Ruthie, an adult, likes to play with the Esperanza and her friends. She laughs, sings, and dances. She says her husband, who lives in a pretty, suburban house, will come for her one day, but he never does. One day Esperanza recited a long poem from memory for Edna, whose eyes got watery. All she said was that Esperanza had beautiful teeth.

**70-71 The Earl of Tennessee**

Earl works nights and lives in a dark, moldy basement in Edna’s apartment house. Earl is a jukebox repairman with two little, black dogs. He gives old records to the girls. His “wife” comes every once in a while. She comes with him; they stay on a short while inside his locked door; and they leave. No one can agree about what his wife looks like because people see them at different times. Everyone seems to see a different woman.

**72-73 Sire**

Sire is a boy who has been looking at Esperanza He has a girlfriend, Lois, with whom he holds hands and whom he lets ride his bike. Lois is pretty but, according to Esperanza, she doesn’t even know how to tie her shoes. **Mama** and Papa tell Esperanza to ignore Sire, but she daydreams about being held and kissed him -- and about being someone like Marin.

**74-75 Four Skinny Trees**

Esperanza feels like one of the small trees planted by the city outside her house. In spite of their dirty, hopeless, concrete surroundings, they have deep roots; they hold onto each other; they reach to the sky with their anger. They teach her to “keep,” to endure.

**76-78 No Speak English**

Mamacita is a very large woman who moved into a third-floor apartment across the street, where her son already lived. The son had worked two jobs, day and night, to bring her here. She brought a baby boy. She speaks hardly any English, and she may be too big to leave her apartment. Instead she sings homesick songs in Spanish at her window. Sometimes the man yells at her, but she won’t change. The little boy is starting to learn Pepsi commercial songs from the TV.

**79-80 Rafaela Who Drinks Coconut and Papaya Juice on Tuesdays**

Rafaela, who is very beautiful, also sits at her window, especially on Tuesday evenings. That is when her husband keeps her locked up in the apartment while he goes out to play dominoes. He is afraid she will run away. She throws down some money so Esperanza and her friends can buy her some juice. She pulls their paper shopping bag up to her window with a clothesline. Rafaela dreams about dancing with men who will buy her things.

**81-83 Sally**

[**Sally**, like Marin, and **Alicia**, is another potential role model for Esperanza, although not a positive one.]

**Sally**, at school, dresses well and wears makeup. She acts older more glamorous than the others. She got into a fight because another girl called her a bad name. Boys joke about Sally when she can’t hear them. Before she goes home, she rubs off her makeup and changes her appearance; her father is strict and protective. Esperanza imagines that Sally dreams about being free, living in a nice house, and getting the love she is looking for.

**84-85 Minerva**

Minerva is only a little older than Esperanza, but she is raising two children. She and Esperanza let each other read the poems they write. Minerva has a husband who beats her and sometimes leaves home. For some reason Minerva always lets him come back. Esperanza feels helpless about doing anything for Minerva.

**86-87 Bums in the Attic**

Someday, Esperanza believes, she will live in her dream house, up on a hill with the rich people. But she won’t forget who she really is or where she came from. If homeless people (bums) knock on her door, she will let them sleep in the attic because she knows what it is like to be without a house. If she has guests over for dinner and they hear noises overhead, she will simply say, “Bums,” and be happy.

**88-89 Beautiful and Cruel**

Esperanza believes she is ugly. Nenny doesn’t want to wait around for a man to take her away from home, and she doesn’t want babies like Minerva got to liberate her. Esperanza doesn’t want to grow up like the women she sees around her. She doesn’t want to be tamed (like a lion), offer her head (as though on a guillotine), or put in chains (like a prisoner). She wants to be like the beautiful, independent women in movies who drive men crazy and laugh at them. She starts to be rebellious at home.

**90-91 A Smart Cookie**

Esperanza’s **mother** is smart. She is bilingual, she can sing opera melodies, she can fix a TV, she used to draw, she can crochet, she would like to see the ballet and live theater, she listens to opera records from the library. She says some of her friends are like Madame Butterfly (an opera heroine who is ruined by a man). She suddenly gives Esperanza some advice: take care of yourself by yourself; shame is a bad thing. She (Mama) quit school because she was ashamed of her clothes, but she had brains.

**92-93 What Sally Said**

**Sally’**s father beats her, even on the face. At school she says she fell, but no one believes her. Sally even came to stay with Esperanza’s family once, but her father came, weeping and begging for her at their door. Some time later, her father caught Sally talking to a boy, and he went crazy, beating her badly again. Then he cried.

**94-96 The Monkey Garden**

Someone moves away, leaving a large garden, beautiful at first, but then overgrown and transitioning into a junk yard. It becomes a fantasy playground for the children. Esperanza enjoys it too, but Sally stays on the sidewalk flirting with Tito and other boys. **Sally** agrees to kiss boys behind a truck in the garden. When Esperanza, angry, runs to tell Tito’s mother, his mother doesn’t seem to care. Esperanza runs back to try to save Sally, but Sally is gone and the boys just laugh at Esperanza. She goes to the other end of the garden and cries. When she gets up, she feels ashamed of her grass-stained clothes and her old shoes. She doesn’t feel at ease in the garden anymore.

**99-100 Red Clowns** [a climactic chapter]

At a carnival Esperanza. waits by one of the rides for **Sally**, whom she trusts. Sally goes off with an older boy for a long time. Suddenly a boy grabs Esperanza.

Sally lied. Being with a boy was not at all like Sally, storybooks, magazines, or movies said it would be.

**101-102 Linoleum Roses**

**Sally** has married a salesman and has moved to a state where it is legal to marry before eighth grade. Presumably from Sally’s letters, Esperanza learns that sometimes the man gets violently angry. He won’t let her talk on the telephone, look out the window, or have friends. She is afraid to go outside without his permission. She says she is in love.

**103-105 The Three Sisters**

**Rachel** and **Lucy**’s baby sister dies, and among the visitors are **three sisters**. Like supernatural spirits or guardian angels they befriend Esperanza, promising her that she will go far and that her dreams will come true. One says, “When you leave you must . . . come back for the others. . . who cannot leave as easily as you. . . . You will always be Esperanza. You will always be Mango Street. You can’t erase what you know. You can’t forget who you are.”

**106 -107 Alicia & I Talking on Edna’s Steps**

**Alicia** consoles Esperanza and, like the **three sisters**, tells her that her home will always be Mango Street and that one day she will come back. (The suggestion that someday the mayor will make it better makes Esperanza laugh out loud.)

**108- A House of My Own**

Esperanza has a new dream house. It is all her own, with flowers, a porch, her books and her stories. She won’t have to worry about anyone else.

**109-110 Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes**

Esperanza reiterates some of chapter 1 in a new way. She realizes that her stories are valuable and that she will say goodbye to Mango Street only because she will come back someday for the sake of the ones she left behind.