



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1999 Volume I: Women's Voices in Fiction

The Politics of Gender in The House on Mango Street

Guide for Curriculum Unit 99.01.02
by Angela Beasley-Murray

Examining *The House on Mango Street* for the politics of gender provides mystery and suspense. The discovery of secret and underhanded schemes that cause friction within families is at the center of this unit. Are there principles and opinions that prevent communication among individuals in families, particularly across gender? Do the principles and opinions result in covert maneuvers by men or women to get their way?

"The Politics of Gender in the House on Mango Street" is designed to engage students who are in the 10th and 11th grades who have weak reading skills. The unit includes social, moral, and ethical concerns that anyone should and can be concerned about. Students can actively search their own community for information about these issues. The fact that students can have and hold their own unique opinions and express them will contribute to the success of the unit and empower the student.

The House on Mango Street describes experiences in a young girl's life in an urban setting. She begins to understand the world she finds herself in, which includes little financial stability or control over her life. She describes vividly having moved numerous times and the challenges of living on Mango Street.

Reading comprehension skills are the main focus of the unit. There are many topics for oral discussion. The phonetic reading technique of thinking of words in segments is also included in the unit. Encouragement to see words as they break down into root words, prefixes and suffixes slows the reader down to see each syllable. (Students often wrongly associate speed with good reading skills.) This unit will provide students with an opportunity to read with expression, vision, and comprehension.

(Recommended for English and Reading, grades 10-11.)

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