The House on Mango Street
Personal Vignette Project

Assignment Directions: This is an opportunity to develop and showcase your abilities as a creative writer, by writing your own vignettes. These vignettes will be written in the same style Sandra Cisneros uses in The House on Mango Street, but will reveal both the simple and profound aspects of your own life.

Pick four vignettes from The House on Mango Street to model your vignettes on. You can choose whichever you like.

Requirements:
• Each vignette one typed page double spaced.
• Hard copy handed in in class. Do not share it with me.
• Each vignette has an original title that includes the title of the vignette you based your vignette on.
• Due Wednesday, April 8th

Examples

Vignette 1: “Amie, Not Amy” based on “My Name”

What does your name mean to you? In your vignette, discuss the origin and significance of your name. Some other things you might want to consider: Would you change your name, if you had the chance? Why or why not? What would this new name signify about a “new” or “real” you?

Vignette 2: “Only Child Since 1988” based on “Laughter”

Consider a brother or sister of yours (if you are an only child, think about a friend you have known for a long time and are close to). What is something that you both share? How does that element of your personality, appearance, etc. connect you two to each other.

Vignette #3 “My Name is On a Lease” based on “Papa Who Wakes Up Tired in the Dark”

Discuss a time when you had to step up to face an adult responsibility or difficult task. When you are writing this vignette, be very specific about the moment you are discussing. Remember, Esperanza only focuses on the moment when her father speaks to her, and she thinks about the events that will inevitably follow.

Reminder: You need 4 vignettes!!!
It is obvious that my brother and I are related. Even though we are several years apart, adults used to think we were twins, the resemblance was so strong. At times, it was like looking into a distorted mirror... looking into the male version of something I knew so well. He had my eyes, my dark brown hair, my toothy smile, my laugh... Amie and Matthew... two little dolls sharing a childhood.

It should be said that my brother and I are nothing alike. Our shared physical traits are genetic illusions, meant to trick, deceive, and puzzle those who know us. He is outgoing and social no matter the situation, where I am more reserved and awkward. His temper is sharp and quick, while my patience is soothing and calm. There are times when this man, this person I have known for his entire life, is a stranger to me: foreign, unknowable, and alien.

I am sure he feels the same way about me, at times. I am his sister. I am one of the few people he knows that I will be with him throughout the entirety of his life, but I know I am unfamiliar and strange to him too. He knows how little we have in common, yet we both what is funny. He and I share the same twisted and ludicrous sense of humor, and no matter how different our worlds become, the same bits of silliness make us laugh. The same goofy jokes appeal to us in ways that make sense to no one else.

During my brother's most recent birthday, I gave him a card that no one else in the world would find funny. On the cover of the card, is a crude sketch of a monkey which looks like a demented mental patient, with his arms outstretched. He is the birthday hug monkey. When others see the card, they look at it like I have just handed them a dead animal. They don't get it. It creeps them out and they don't understand why it makes me happy.

My brother opened his card, snorted once, and looked at me.
“This is so disturbing. This is just wrong.”

And then he starts to laugh.

**Vignette Example- The Black Hole of Lost Things and Tiny Seeds based on…**

You can not be faint of heart. You need to not have high expectations. You must be wearing shoes. You probably should breathe through your mouth.

Matthew’s bedroom demands many things of its visitors.

It is dark and slightly musty, with windows to be opened only under the pain of death. Sunlight is the enemy. The darkness is not overpowering, but enough of an angst-ridden presence that you must squint to see my brother inside, sprawled across his bed like a lizard basking on a warm rock.

He is my brother: the overlord of lost things and tiny seeds.

His room is small and shared with Billy Bob, the giant blue parrot that screams like a metal rock star reject and mutters to himself with the intensity of an escaped mental patient. The bird’s rants and raves are muffled only by the steady pounding heartbeat of the radio’s bass or the screeching guitar of my brother’s favorite bands.

The floor, originally covered in a simple beige carpet, is consistently littered with small seeds from his bird’s cage. To walk barefoot into the room is almost like walking on the sandy, chunky beach. It’s as if Billy Bob throws secret parrot parties at night, using sunflower seeds as celebratory confetti. One day, I would love for the seeds to take root in his room, grow and blossom into the plants they never get to be… to become a secret garden in my brother’s dim, dark, cavernous abode.

My brother’s secret garden hides many things… items borrowed and never returned: scissors, pens, C.D.s, movies, and other innumerable objects that will never find their way back home. Items he once needed, but do not matter to him anymore. If I did not fear for my
own hygiene and safety, I would sift through the rubble to retrieve my lost items, but I am simply not that brave. Instead, I shrug, and accept that they are lost to the powerful black hole that Matthew’s room.

Vignette Example- Jehann Who Teaches Irregular Verbs and Pirouettes…

Jehann Joy the artistic soul. My friend the dancer. My friend the junior high teacher. My friend, sewn up tight in her safe suburban home of friendly neighbors, little league games, and neatly clipped lawns whose blades of grass are short and ordered like the top of a marine’s head.

Everyday she becomes Mrs. in the classroom. She is the lady to say “yes” and “no” to bathroom requests, the one to correct your grammar and teach you the difference between who and whom. She is the law of the land and the master of language.

She ends her last class for the day, and the teacher inside her gets picked up and folded away in her book bag, like an important note to save for later. She walks to her car, drives home, snacks, and then leaves once again.

It is night time now and she is Jay: choreographer and dance teacher to a different group of students. With ease and sublime attitude, she commands lifts and leaps from her subjects. She sambas, spins, and swings. She shimmies. She shakes. She grabs for the sky and makes gravity temporarily irrelevant and laughable. She is master of the dance floor and the commander of a motley crew of novice dancers.

Jehann who dance, dance, dances to her inner groove. The music sparking and crackling in her mind, like so many firecrackers waiting to be freed. My friend, Jehann,, who is much cooler than her students believe her to be. Jehann who teaches irregular verbs and pirouettes.
The House On Mango Street Vignette Brainstorm Sheet

1. Brainstorm important people/places/things/objects in your life.

2. Beneath the people, places, things you listed, write what they mean to you. Why did you think of them?

3. Pick the ones of the most significant to you.

4. Now you are going to write four vignettes based on vignettes in The House on Mango Street

**Remember, the purpose of a vignette is to use description to provoke feeling within the reader; the feeling should be directly related to your tone since that is what you feel.**

A vignette has to rely on description; therefore, you should NOT TELL, you should SHOW.

**telling:** She went home in a bad mood. [What kind of a bad mood? How did she act or look?]

**showing:** She stomped home, hands jammed in her pockets, angrily kicking rocks, dogs, small children, and anything else that crossed her path