

Sample Symbolism Note Catcher

Houses	
Evidence	Possible Idea the Symbol Represents
<ul style="list-style-type: none">"The house on Mango Street is ours, and we don't have to pay rent to anybody, or share the yard with the people downstairs, or be careful not to make too much noise, and there isn't a landlord banging on the ceiling with a broom." (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Opportunity and freedom
<ul style="list-style-type: none">"But even so, it's not the house we'd thought we'd get." (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Disappointment/reality
<ul style="list-style-type: none">"And our house would have running water and pipes that worked. And inside it would have real stairs, not hallway stairs, but stairs inside like the houses on T.V [...] This was the house Papa talked about when he held up a lottery ticket, and this was the house Mama dreamed up in the stories she told us before we went to bed." (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Dreams and opportunity
<ul style="list-style-type: none">"But the house on Mango Street is not the way they told it at all." (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Disappointment/reality
<ul style="list-style-type: none">"Cathy's father built the house Meme moved into. It is wooden. Inside the floors slant. Some rooms uphill. Some down. And there are no closets. Out front there are twenty-one steps, all lopsided and jutting like crooked teeth (made that way on purpose, Cathy said, so the rain will slide off)." (21–22)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Imperfection and hard work

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Around the back is a yard, mostly dirt, and a greasy bunch of boards that used to be a garage." (22) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imperfection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "What about a house, I say, because that's what I came for. Ah, yes, a home in the heart. I see a home in the heart. Is that <i>it</i>? That's what I see, she says, then gets up because the kids are fighting." (64) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contentment—appreciating that you have
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I want a house on a hill like the ones with the gardens where Papa works." (86) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspiration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "One day I'll own my own house, but I won't forget who I am or where I came from." (86) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contentment—appreciating that you have

Names

Evidence	Possible Idea the Symbol Represents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "In English, my name means hope. In Spanish, it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting. It is like the number nine. A muddy color. It is the Mexican records my father plays on Sunday mornings when he is shaving, songs like sobbing." (10) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed feelings about name
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I wonder if she made the best with what she got, or was she sorry because she couldn't be all the things she wanted to be. Esperanza? I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window." (11) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desires independence, but also values family and culture

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "At school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. But in Spanish my name is made out of a softer something, like silver." (11) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Conflicted about identity</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees, Esperanza as Lisandra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do." (11) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Desire for agency and independence</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Who are you? And I wish my name was Cassandra or Alexis or Maritza—anything but Esperanza—but when I tell them my name, they don't laugh." (15) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Self-consciousness</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "His name isn't really Meme. His name is Juan. But when we asked him what his name was, he said Meme, and that's what everybody calls him except his mother." (21) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Identity</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Geraldo. That's all." (65) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Others have the power to shape our identity</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "His name was Geraldo. And his home is in another country. The ones he left behind are far away, will wonder, shrug, remember. Geraldo—he went north . . . we never heard from him again." (66) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Names are only one small part of one's identity</i>

Feet/Shoes

Evidence	Possible Idea the Symbol Represents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Hurray! Today we are Cinderella because our feet fit exactly, and we laugh at Rachels' one foot with a girl's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Self-conscious</i>

<p>grey sock and a lady's high heel. Do you like these shoes? But the truth is it is scary to look down at your foot that is no longer yours and see attached a long leg." (40)</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "They are dangerous, he says. You girls too young to be wearing shoes like that." (41) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-conscious
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Do you like these shoes? Rachel says yes, and Lucy says yes, and I say, these are the best shoes. We will never go back to wearing the other kind again." (41) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coming of age/growing up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Lucy hides the lemon shoes and the red shoes and the shoes that used to be white but are not pale blue under a powerful bushel basket on the back porch, until one Tuesday her mother, who is very clean, throws them away. But no one complains." (42) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coming of age/growing up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "...and the old saddle shoes I wear to school, brown and white, the kind I get every September because they last long and they do. My feet scuffed and round, and the heels all crooked that look dumb with this dress, so I just sit." (47) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coming of age/growing up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "My feet growing bigger and bigger." (47) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coming of age/growing up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ". . . and everyone says, wow, who are those two who dance like in the movies, until I forget that I am wearing only ordinary shoes, brown and white, the kind my mother buys each year for school." (47) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire not to grow up too quickly, maintain innocence of youth

Trees

Evidence	Possible Idea the Symbol Represents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "But what you remember most is this tree, huge, with fat arms and mighty families of squirrels in the higher branches. All around, the neighborhood of roofs, black-tarred and A-framed, and in their gutters, the balls that never came back down to earth. Down at the base of the tree, the dog with two names barks into the empty air." (22) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hope and opportunity</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Four who do not belong here but are here." (74) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Resilience</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Their strength is secret. They send ferocious roots beneath the ground. They grow up and they grown down and grab the earth between their hairy toes and bit the sky with violent teeth and never quite their anger." (74) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Resilience and determination</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Four who grew despite concrete. Four who reach and do not forget to reach. Four whose only reason is to be and be." (75) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Resilience and determination</i>