

**“I Was a Skinny Tomboy Kid”**

By Alma Luz Villanueva

I was a skinny tomboy kid  
who walked down the streets  
with my fists clenched into  
tight balls.

I knew all the roofs  
And back yard fences,  
I liked traveling that way  
sometimes  
not touching  
the sidewalks  
for blocks and blocks  
it made  
me feel

victorious  
somehow  
over the streets.  
I liked to fly  
from roof  
to roof  
the gravel  
falling  
away  
beneath my feet,  
I liked  
the edge  
of almost  
not making it.

And the freedom  
of riding  
my bike  
to the ocean  
and smelling it  
long before  
I could see it,  
and I traveled disguised  
as a boy  
(I thought)  
in an old army jacket  
carrying my  
fishing tackle  
to the piers, and  
bumming bait  
and a couple of cokes

Annotations to Make:

- Evidence of figurative language used
- Evidence of sound devices used
- Margin notes containing both questions that you have about the text as well as clarifying your understanding by summarizing or inferring what various portions of the text mean (i.e., think about the text on a deeper level)

and catching crabs  
                  sometimes and  
          selling them  
to some Chinese guys  
          and I'd give  
          the fish away,  
I didn't like fish  
  I just liked to fish—  
          and I vowed  
          to never  
                  grow up  
          to be a woman  
and be helpless  
          like my mother,  
but then I didn't realize  
          the kind of guts  
          it often took  
          for her to just keep  
          standing  
where she was.

I grew like a thin, stubborn weed  
watering myself whatever way I could  
believing in my own myth  
          transforming my reality  
          and creating a  
                  legendary/self  
every once in a while  
          late at night  
          in the deep  
          darkness of my sleep  
          I wake  
          with a tenseness  
in my arms  
          and I follow  
          it from my elbow to  
          my wrist  
and realize  
          my fists are tightly clenched  
and the streets come grinning  
          and I forget who I'm protecting  
and I coil up  
          in a self-mothering fashion  
          and tell myself  
it's o.k.

## **“My Name”**

**by Sandra Cisneros**

**excerpted from The House on Mango Street**

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.

It was my great-grandmother's name and now it is mine. She was a horse woman too, born like me in the Chinese year of the horse--which is supposed to be bad luck if you're born female-but I think this is a Chinese lie because the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don't like their women strong.

My great-grandmother. I would've liked to have known her, a wild, horse of a woman, so wild she wouldn't marry. Until my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off. Just like that, as if she were a fancy chandelier. That's the way he did it.

And the story goes she never forgave him. She looked out the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow. 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.

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, not quite as thick as sister's name Magdalena--which is uglier than mine. Magdalena who at least- -can come home and become Nenny. But I am always Esperanza. 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.