

Hardo Baker  
HCOM 197  
Independent Studies  
Journal  
(Woman Hollering Creek and other stories)  
(By Sandra Cisneros)  
Chapter One  
Section One  
My Friend Lucy

Upon opening the book and reading the first paragraph I noticed a strangeness in the writing. I said to myself that these are run-on sentences. I had to go back and read the first paragraph all over because it did not make sense to me at first. As I read on, I thought to myself that either this individual is illiterate or she wrote in this style on purpose. Consequent to finishing the first section in chapter one I realized that she did the run on sentences on purpose. One of the reasons was that she wanted to sound like a small child and perhaps the other was to link one thought to the next as perhaps a hyper child might. It was also interesting how in the first paragraph she started out with "Lucy Anguiano, Texas girl who smells like corn" and ends the paragraph "like the yellow blood of butterflies." Notice that corn is yellow and how she links the blood of butterflies that is also yellow to Lucy. Sandra describes things in great detail in this first section. Notice how she describes things once again, "giant cat-eye with a grasshopper green spiral center" that is a marble. Again in this passage with, "only a pink tongue rolling around in there like a blind worm" that is the inside of Lucy's mouth that she relates to animals or bugs (1). She mentions animals in one form or another throughout this section.

I get the sense that the young girl who is telling the story is an only child who longs to have sisters like her friend Lucy. Wishing she was dark skinned like her friend's family longing to be one of them. The young girl also has a strange personality. She wants to scratch off her Lucy's mosquito bites, look under the house where rats hide, peel a scab from her knee and eat it and sneeze on a cat. Yet, she also has a very charming side to her also. The unnamed girl wants to share a popsicle, saved three M & M's for Lucy, wants to comb and braid her hair, and wave to an unknown woman on the bus.

Section Two  
Eleven

Sandra continues to use run on sentences. Yet, they are not quite as long as in the first section of chapter one. Yet, she keeps the character talking in the same manner as before. Though, I notice that it is just the same when Rachel starts crying. One can see that the child's speech is peculiar. I would have expected her to talk with the run on sentences when she is crying and trying to explain something to someone, all the while sniffing and hyper-ventilating. Sandra makes the reader feel that Rachel is an insecure child. Strangely, Sandra does not indent the first paragraph yet she indents the rest. I have no reasoning why she might have done this. I saw the same thing in the first section when the story first began however I did not expect it to continue.

I see that Rachel's birthday is here and she finally is getting wiser. The older one gets one never feels older just because your birthday has just arrived. The feeling of being a little older is a gradual process as Rachel stated. "You don't feel eleven. Not right away. It takes a few days, weeks even, sometimes even months. . ." (7). I can relate to Rachel when she says, "Like some days you might say something stupid, and that's the part of you that's still ten"(6). When visiting my parents, they tell me to grow up or act my age when horsing around, joking trying to have fun. Though, to me this is the child within, which everyone still has in them. Some people have become so serious in life that they have forgotten that life is supposed to be enjoyable. I really can feel what Rachel is feeling when Mrs. Price puts Rachel on the spot with that dirty stretched out

raggedy sweater. When I was a child, at the age of eleven, my family experienced hard times for a year. I only had two pairs of pants. In school, a classmate of mine commented on my pants in front of my friends. The embarrassment was overwhelming. Nevertheless, a teacher embarrassed Rachel and when she found out that the sweater did not belong to Rachel she should have apologized instead of acting as it was no big deal. It was interesting that Mrs. Price forced the child to put on the old musty sweater. It was also very cold of the teacher not have given in when Rachel started bawling. This should have signaled the teacher that perhaps the child was right when she said the sweater did not belong to her. Why the child wished she was one hundred and two does not make sense to me. Rather, I would have expected something a little more realistic such as her saying fifty.

### Section Three

#### Salvador Late or Early

Again I noticed that Sandra uses either animals or items related to animals (like caterpillar and feathers) to give us a better picture in her descriptions of items in this section. She compares Salvador's eyes with the color of a caterpillar. She describes his wispy thin arms to being stuffed with feathers. Yet, I also notice that she uses other objects to describe things suddenly. Here are a few examples:

" . . . hundred little fingers of red, green, yellow, blue and nub of black sticks" to describe crayons

"the forty pound body of boy with its geography of scars" to describe his appearance

"the hundred balloons of happiness the single guitar of grief" showing us his feelings

"flutters in the air before disappearing like a memory of kites" explaining the way it looks as Salvador and his brothers are running across the school yard (10-11).

I get the feeling that Sandra had remember a young boy in her class that she felt sorry for yet, she did not like. First of all, I say this because she is writing a small section here in chapter one. Secondly, by the way she describes him. Thirdly, is due to the fact she explains his living conditions and his family. Perhaps her dislike for Salvador was because he was nobody's friend and even his teacher could not remember his name.

### Section Four

#### Mexican Movies

Interestingly, I did not notice Ms. Cisneros use colors or animals to describe things in this section. She tells us how the speaker (which is a young girl) likes the Mexican movies. This is especially true when the sex scenes start because that is when they get quarters to spend on what they want in the lobby. I don't however think it is as much of the movies themselves as it is the playing in the theater; the money they get to spend; and the loving feeling when her parents carry them upstairs and put them to bed. I believe that it is more of what is going on in the theater also. She says how she likes the actor Pedro Infante the best. However, that is probably because of the women throwing the flowers from the balcony and because he ends his movies with a happy song. She doesn't tell us any real reason why she likes the Mexican movies over American movies themselves. She is being entertained by the audience when they are having a good time laughing and carrying on when a child is on stage and his image is reflecting in with the images on the screen.

### Section Five

#### Barbie-Q

Once again Sandra does not use colors or animals to describe things. However, she does describe their Barbies' in detail. Their physical appearance and their clothing are old, worn out, smoke damaged from a fire, and half melted. Yet, to these children they are the best things in the world. The joy of having the Barbies' is tremendous. To the children it does not matter whether the dolls were brand new or not. When children are without and know that they will never be able to have certain things because of the lack of money, they will be content on the

simple things they have and receive. Nobody knows that these dolls were fire rejects and the girls couldn't care less. Having the toys that children who are better off have captivates the girls. Before going to flea market they had to play with the two Barbie dolls they had. They had an old sock for a dress and had to have a make believe Ken, which usually caused them to argue in the end. Once they saw all the Barbies' and accessories for sale at the flea market, the girls pleadingly asked their parents to buy some of the toys for them. They now had the makings of a less arguable time when they will be playing with the Barbies'.

#### Section Six

##### Mericans

As I read this section, I noticed that the person who is telling the story is not the same in all of these sections. One would not have realized this until one gets to where the grandmother in the church says, "Micaela, you may wait outside with Alfredito and Enrique"(19). Sandra never gave the characters' names until I reached the second section where she gave us the name Rachel. I used the name Rachel, up until now, causing me to go back and edit where I thought Rachel was speaking. Realizing my mistake went back and I plugged in the term young girl or unnamed girl instead of using Rachel's name. This really surprised me and yet it confused me. I had thought that these sections were just different experiences and moments in the same little girls' life. Micaela does not like her grandmother. She feels she is too strict, a stern person of character. She tells us about the experience of going to church. None of her parents, aunts or uncles go with them. So grandmother must pray for them all. I get the feeling that the young girl does not like to go to church either. I remember when I was a child I did not like having to go. I would rather have been outside playing with my friends that did not have to go to church. I can tell that Micaela is the only girl in the family and her brothers tease her and don't really enjoy playing with girls. Yet, she does not let her feelings of sorrow and pains show when she is being teased and when the boys make insults about girls. The funny thing is that the children are outside and not inside of church. Micaela's brother Keeks is talking to a lady and man outside of the entrance to the church apparently in Spanish. The couple are from out of town because their appearance told one so. The town probably consists of mostly people who are Mexicans sue to the fact that the lady is wearing pants and the man is wearing shorts. In most other places in the U.S. this would be normal attire. The lady offers Keeks some gum. Yet, when he accepts the gum she becomes surprised when he turns around and speaks English to his brother and sister. She thought that just because he was Mexican that he could not speak English. This just goes to show the ignorance, stupidity and stereotyping people do just because they see people who are from another culture. They were born here and they are proud to be "Mericans." I see this same type of behavior is the east side of Salinas. Gringos will come up and ask a Hispanic if they speak English assuming right off the bat that they only speak Spanish.

#### Section Seven

##### Tepeyac

From my interpretation, Tepeyac is a town somewhere deep in Mexico. Looking up the word Tepeyac, I find that there is no such word in the Spanish dictionary. The story starts out with "When the sky of Tepeyac opens its first thin stars. . ." is a sure indication of the fact (21). This time Sandra writes not only in the past tense from a child's view, but also from an adult's view. Both views are of a town the narrator grew up in and then returned to at a later time. Once again Sandra uses color in her descriptions in the story. She explains how the darkness of night is the color of Japanese blue. This is an odd thing to say. I did not know that there was such a color as Japanese blue. I never heard of this particular shade of blue. Perhaps it was something she threw in for curiosities' sake. The way she describes the town reminds me of the town where my spouse is from in Mexico. She talks about a person going to the borrowed country, which he will not remember. I assume Sandra meant the U.S. The narrator is looking back upon the times when life was much simpler and people cared for each other and their homes and community. Upon returning to Tepeyac, the narrator notices how small the

house she lived in was. It was large to her as a child. Looking at it now in comparison to where she has been living in the U.S. it is very tiny. It saddens her to see how run down things have become in the town she grew up in. I sense a feeling of disgust of not only strangers living in the house she once had lived in, but also in the changes of the shop that has turned into a pharmacy. Even the dilapidated looks of the basilica with its closed doors and the cars fuming from the pollution they are producing are giving her a sickening feeling. Time and technology have set upon this once quaint town that have produced these feelings. The way things were in the past can not be the same today.. It is the same for me. When I return to Marina (the town I grew up in) I look around at all the changes since childhood times that I don't seem to like either. I remember when there were open pastures, horses roaming around on them, children hunting and exploring trails that once were simple times, and will no longer be. I think this is the same for everyone. Their childhood times were good memories and people wish that when they returned to these places they could actually go back in time to the way things used to be. I get the impression that it is supposed to be the older folks who lived and who used to live in this town are supposed to remember how things were. Yet, it is usually a child who remembers these things, for they were important and everlasting moments that were photographed to their young minds.

Chapter Two

Section One

One Holy Night

The main character in this story, a female, was actually taken advantage of by an elderly man. Her name once again is never given to us as are the other characters in this story. The thing I noticed the most about this story however, was that Sandra did not use run on sentences as much. This particular story was excellent. To me I pictured my spouse who was married once before. She was only sixteen when she was married to a man ten years her elder. This kind of thing bothers me because I see it as a wolf preying upon a young innocent girl. There are a lot of men in the Mexican culture that seem to go after young girls. I see it all the time in Salinas, around the middle schools, guys pull up in their cars around a corner and the young girls hurriedly hop in. Then they zoom off. Strange that such a young girl in the eighth grade would actually fall for a man that is thirty seven years old.

I thought it was especially interesting that the young girl's belly is being rubbed with jade by a witch woman. The old superstitions that people actually still believe in, in such a modern time as ours. What I did not really understand is that it she is in Mexico, having this old witch woman take care of her yet, she is with her grandmother when she is in labor. It had a real strange twist once I found out that Chaq was actually a murderer of eleven females in the last seven years. I also wonder, since Chaq came from a real poor family and it was found out that he wasn't really Mayan what language he was speaking in or if he really was using a real language, when he was speaking to the young girl. I wonder why her family blamed her condition of becoming pregnant of the fact that it was because they were in the U.S. Girls in Mexico seem to leave the nest at a early age. However, it is also true that down there girls are not as likely to fool around out of wedlock due to humiliation and respect for family values. When Chaq showed the young girl all the guns and told her he wanted her to know what he really did, I got the impression that he was probably a gun runner or a robber. In the end of this section, she said that she was going to have five children, two girls, two boys, and one baby whom will be named Alegre. Since Chaq was called Baby Boy I get the instinct impression that she says that she will have one baby is the son/daughter of Chaq (baby Boy). When I looked up the word Alegre it meant "happy" but it also meant "reckless, thoughtless" and "fast, immoral"; and I assume that the later two is what the name means in this case since this was how the father was.

My Tocaya

Once again Sandra Cisneros does not write in the style she was using earlier. The sentences are constructed of proper grammar that one would be used to reading.

It was peculiar that Sandra used the title My Tocaya. Patricia could not stand Trish. The only reason she had anything to even do with her was because a cute guy that Trish knew liked her. Tocaya means friend in Spanish. I would not call her me friend. Sandra gets the reader caught up into the story and then she has an abrupt ending. She leaves one hanging. I wanted to know where Trish was when suddenly she appeared at the police station. I also wanted to know whom everyone had mis-identified Trish for. If even her parents thought the dead girl was Trish then who was this girl who resembled her so much? I thought it bizarre that Patricia would say in the end that Trish could not even die right. Patricia also stated that she never even got to meet Max Lucas Luna Luna. I wonder why if Trish never did die and she came back. What was the reason of never encountering this young man who adorned Trish so much? I would also like to have known what the reason was that Trish had run away. In the story they talk about how the girls were segregated from the boys in two different catholic schools. I was in the same situation as I was growing up. I can relate to this story very well. I went to Palma High School in Salinas, an all boys' school. The girls went to Notre Dame, an all girls school. We exchanged some of the girls for the boys for certain situations or special classes. The girls' school was about a block away. They did not want us together for fear that the boys would try seducing the girls.

### Chapter Three

There Was a Man, There Was a Woman

#### Section One

##### Woman Hollering Creek

This story is the title of the book. It was a real sad story about a Mexican woman that married a man from Texas. He brought her back to the town of Seguin. She did not really pay attention to her father when she was getting married and he told her that he would never abandon her. In other words, he would always be there if she needed him. However, the blinding of love causes many people to not here what someone who loves or cares for us says to us.

No one actually knew how the creek got its name. Though rumor has it, that the creek was the weeping woman because La Llorona had drowned her children there. Cleofilas (the Mexican woman in this story) thought that Woman Hollering Creek was a funny name for a creek the first time she heard it as she first crossed the creek. She just laughed. No one knew if the creek, which was considered a woman, hollered from pain or anger.

Shortly after Cleofilas was married and arrived at her new home she was beaten by her spouse. She had always thought that if she was ever in such a predicament that she would fight back and or run away. Consequently, this was not her recourse. She only consoled her husband while he cried in remorse. This would continue on and her husband would not come home many a night only to be out drinking and perhaps carousing. [How familiar this setting is for many women here in the U.S. and in many other parts of the world]. Cleofilas felt she could not go back to her father's house because the town she came from would look down upon her for coming home with a child and one in the oven. Shame would be brought on her and her family for being without her husband. She would sit beside the creek many a day for this was her place of serenity. Finally, near her expectancy date she pleaded with her husband, to take her to the doctor for the sake of the unborn child. She was afraid that perhaps the child might be turned around inside of her. This was a tough job in persuading him since she was black and blue from one of his most recent beatings he bestowed upon her. She told him she would tell the doctor that she had fallen down the stairs.

Once Cleofilas was in the doctor's office, the assistant who was going to perform the ultrasound perceived the marks all over Cleofilas, who would only weep every time she neared her. Ultimately, the technician called a friend of hers, because Cleofilas agreed, and asked her to pick up Cleofilas in two days while her husband was at work. She was to take her to the bus station in San Antonio so Cleofilas could escape the abuse she has been receiving. As the lady, Felice, picked her up and they drove across the creek, the woman let out a very loud hollering sound. This scared Cleofilas and her son who were riding along, feeling

very scared that her husband might show up any moment. Felice apologized and told her she does that every time she crosses the creek, because of the name. Suddenly, Cleofilas heard Felice laughing again. However, it was not Felice, realizing that it was a gurgling sound coming from her own throat.

I think that the noise that was coming out of Cleofilas let out of her throat was maybe a little bit of pain and anger from the abuse she was suffering. Yet, I think it was more a relief. I think the creek symbolized the anger, pain, and most of all the relief from tyrants like the abusive men that beat their women and get away with such a sick dastardly deed. I would also like to point out the the name Felice implies happiness. Felice always gives a happy howl when ever she crosses the creek. The noise that Came out of Cleofilas would be related to the happy Felice who just made Cleofilas happy by releasing her from her pain and anger.

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