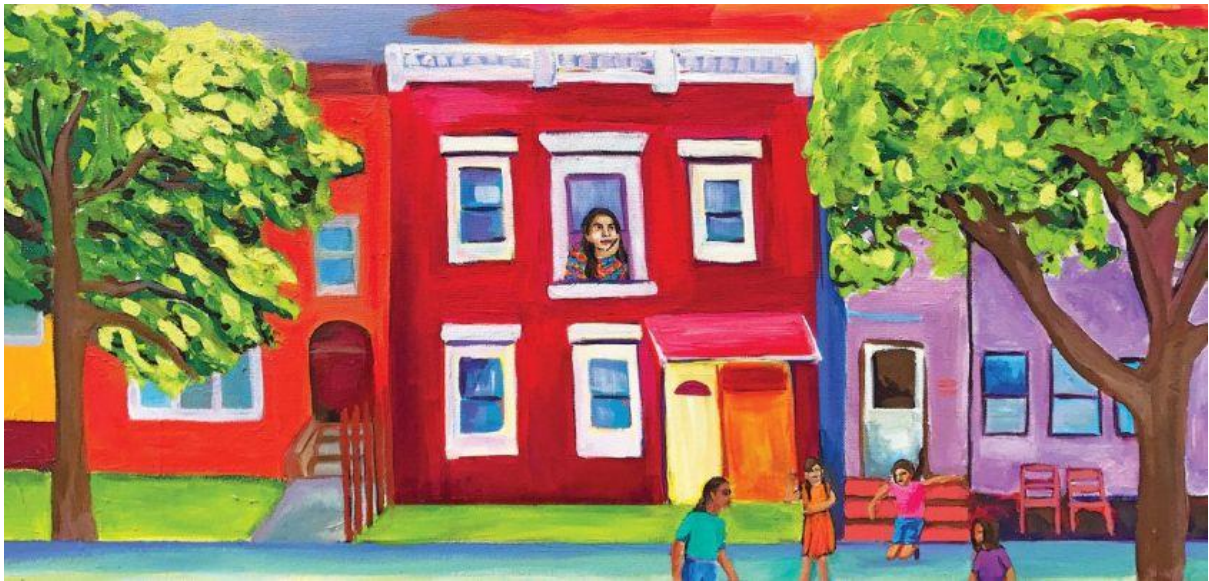


## Textual Transformation 2

### PEOPLE IN PLACES



5

Elizabeth Sainsbury

Second semester 2023-24

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2. Voice exercises
3. Warm-up and improvisation exercises

### B DIARIES AND PLACES TO WRITE

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### C ONE AND MANY VOICES

'Come and Go' by Samuel Beckett

Extracts from *Under Milk Wood* by Dylan Thomas

### D CHARACTERS AND PLACES IN TEXTS

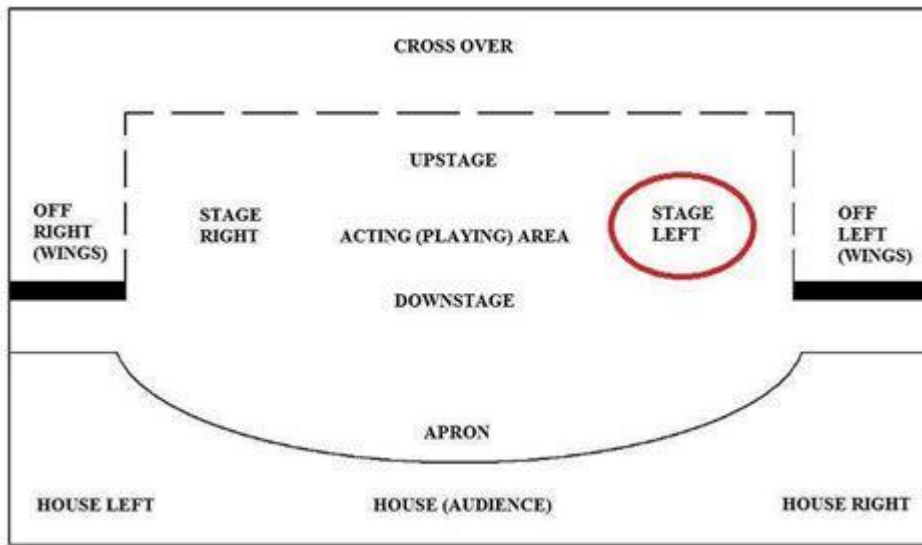
Extracts from 'The House on Mango Street' by Sandra Cisneros

## STAGE DIRECTIONS

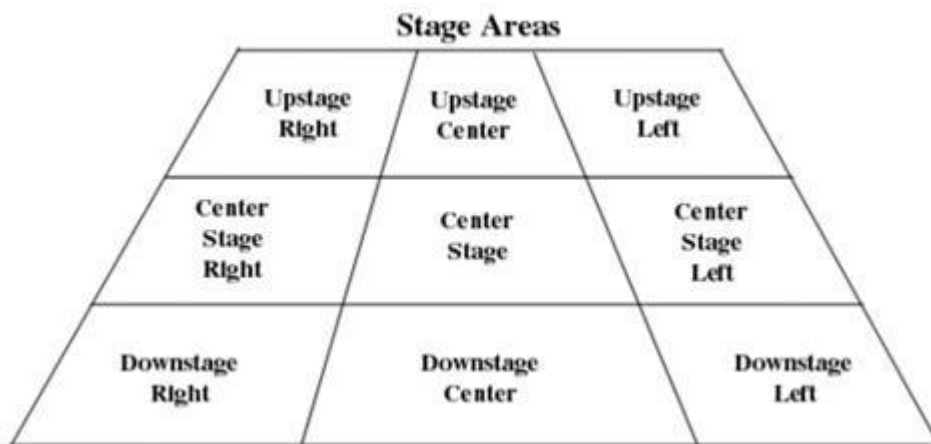
Stage directions help performers situate themselves on stage. Movements on stage are referred to as **blocking**.

During rehearsal, a grid can be overlaid on the stage, dividing it into 9 - 15 areas (see diagrams below).

- 5 Notations in the script, in brackets, indicate where to sit, stand, move about, and enter and exit. The directions are written from the perspective of the performer facing **downstage**, or toward the audience (also referred to as the **house**). The rear of the stage, called **upstage**, is behind the performer's back. A performer who turns to his right is moving stage right. A performer who turns left is moving stage left.



10



15

## WARM-UP EXERCISES

### POSTURE

The best voice is produced when body posture is erect yet relaxed. Throughout breathing and voice exercises, the spine should be straight, the head facing forward and the crown of the head parallel to the ceiling. This posture supports the body's respiratory system so that it can function smoothly.

### VOICE AND BODY WARM-UPS

Before beginning improvisation or performance, a good warm-up routine is essential.

#### 1. **Neck**

Massage the muscles of the jaw and face to further reduce tension.

Stretch the neck lightly by leaning to the sides, front and back.

#### 2. **Tongue**

Stick the tongue out, point up and down.

Brace the tongue behind the front bottom teeth and push the centre out.

Pant like a dog.

#### 3. **Lips and Jaws**

Flap your lips by blowing air and producing a "BEE" or "BRR" sound.

Yawn widely to stretch the jaw. Smile while you are yawning.

Make a sighing sound for as long as you can.

#### 4. **Whole body**

Bend at the waist and let your arms hang freely.

Shake your arms while making the "AH" /a:/ sound. Gradually straighten up.

Repeat with other long vowel sounds. /i:/ /u:/ /ɜ:/ /ɔ:/

Make a "mmm" /m/sound with your lips closed. Maintain the "mmm" sound steadily for as long as you can.

#### 5. **Projecting sounds**

Open your mouth and release an /æ/ Think of shooting the /æ/ across the room like an arrow.

Repeat with all the short vowel sounds /ɪ/ /e/ /ʌ/ /ɒ/ /ʊ/

## IMPROVISATION EXERCISES

### Activity 1

Sit, as if on centre stage, for a full minute, without speaking, as if you are deciding whether or at what moment to speak. Be conscious of the way you are sitting and of any movements you make (fiddling with your hair, biting your finger, jiggling your legs etc). These actions should probably be slow. Maintain eye contact with your audience for at least part of the minute.

If you are asked to do this in character, you should make sure that your posture and movements belong to your character and are not your own.

At the end of the minute, you can say something but don't say your name.

### Activity 2

Experiment at home with a brief monologue:

- a) sitting in a comfy chair
- b) standing
- c) standing, wearing a blindfold
- e) in front of the bathroom mirror

**Observe what changes in the different contexts.**

### Activity 3

In pairs, stand opposite one another. One person leads, making slow movements with arms, legs, head, body and changing facial expression. The other person must mirror exactly the movements and expressions of their partner.

### Activity 4

Everyone sits on a line of chairs immobile, impassive and silent. At a signal from one person outside the group everyone starts to communicate with the audience. You each have something very important and urgent to communicate. You are desperate to be heard. Gesticulate, speak as loudly as you like, get up.

Continue until the person in control makes a second signal. Repeat.

This can also be done without sound.

### Activity 5

Put on a piece of recorded sound or music. Move in response to the music.

Do this as yourself and as a character you want to play. Observe the different way you move.

### **Activity 6**

#### **A) Numbers**

a) singly b) in twos c) in threes d) the whole group

#### **B) Actions**

- a) move diagonally across the room
- b) sit on the floor, put your head in your hands, then stand up
- c) run, climb over a chair, jump in the air

#### **C) Responses**

- a) completely absorbed in yourself, no response to other people
- b) responsive and aware of other actor(s) on stage
- c) responsive and aware of audience

#### **D) Emotions:**

a) anger b) anxiety c) joy d) depression e) confusion f) serenity g) horror

### **Activity 7 THE HOT SEAT**

This is a warm-up that helps you get into a character which you have to play.

Sit in front of a group of people. Remember to sit and move in character.

The people in front of you will bombard you with questions.

Your aim is to answer as quickly and as spontaneously as possible and never lapse into your own self.

## B DIARIES AND PLACES TO WRITE

What sort of diary should I like mine to be? Something loose knit and yet not slovenly, so elastic that it will embrace anything, solemn, slight or beautiful that comes into my mind. I should like it to resemble some deep old desk, or capacious hold-all, in which one flings a mass of odds and ends without looking them through. I should like to come back, after a year or two, and find that the collection had sorted itself and refined itself and coalesced, as such deposits so mysteriously do, into a mould, transparent enough to reflect the light of our life, and yet steady, tranquil compounds with the aloofness of a work of art. The main requisite, I think on re-reading my old volumes, is not to play the part of censor, but to write as the mood comes or of anything whatever; since I was curious to find how I went for things put in haphazard, and found the significance to lie where I never saw it at the time.”

Virginia Woolf , from a diary entry dated April 20th, 1919, as printed in *A Writer's Diary*.

*Didion has defined a writer as “a person whose most absorbed and passionate hours are spent arranging words on pieces of paper. I write entirely to find out what’s on my mind, what I’m thinking, what I’m looking at, what I’m seeing and what it means, what I want and what I’m afraid of.” She has also said that “all writing is an attempt to find out what matters, to find the pattern in disorder, to find the grammar in the shimmer. Actually I don’t know whether you find the grammar in the shimmer or you impose a grammar on the shimmer, but I am quite specific about the grammar—I mean it literally. The scene that you see in your mind finds its own structure; the structure dictates the arrangement of the words. . . . All the writer has to do really is to find the words.” However, she warns, “You have to be alone to do this.”*

Joan Didion, [On Keeping a Notebook](#)

### **Keeping your own writer/actor/reader/performer’s diary or notebook**

1. Make short entries as often as possible.
2. Your main focus should be research, thoughts, experiments and experiences **outside** the classroom rather than on what happens in class although you may reflect on what we have done.
3. Include information about where you are when you write. Try to give us a picture of yourself as a writer/student/actor.
4. At the end of the course you will select the most interesting entries to hand in a log that is a personal record of your work on the course.
4. You can include images, texts that you find etc

N.B. **Don’t** write ‘Dear Diary’ . **Don’t** report everything we did in class.





## A House of My Own

The young woman in this photograph is me when I was writing *The House on Mango Street*. She's in her office, a room that had probably been a child's bedroom when families lived in this apartment. It has no door and is only slightly wider than the walk-in pantry. But it has great light and sits above the hallway door downstairs, so she can hear her neighbors come and go. She's posed as if she's just looked up from her work for a moment, but in real life she never writes in this office. She writes in the kitchen, the only room with a heater.

The young woman fills her "office" with things she drags home from the flea market at Maxwell Street. Antique typewriters, alphabet blocks, asparagus ferns, bookshelves, ceramic figurines from Occupied Japan, wicker baskets, birdcages, hand-painted photos. Things she likes to look at. It's important to have this space to look and think. When she lived at home, the things she looked at scolded her and made her feel sad and depressed. They said, "Wash me." They said, "Lazy." They said, "You ought." But the things in her office are magical and invite her to play. They fill her with light. It's the room where she can be quiet and still and listen to the voices inside herself. She likes being alone in the daytime.

As a girl, she dreamed about having a silent home, just to herself, the way other women dreamed of their weddings. Instead of collecting lace and linen for her trousseau, the young woman buys old things from the thrift stores on grimy Milwaukee Avenue for her future house-of-her-own—faded quilts, cracked vases, chipped saucers, lamps in need of love.



## PART C ONE AND MANY

On the stage, a **monologue** is a long speech delivered to other characters while a **soliloquy** is a long speech in which a character talks to themselves or voices their thoughts aloud for the benefit of the audience. Despite this differentiation, it is actually very common to refer to soliloquies as monologues.

The *Dramaticule* by Samuel Beckett is, in some ways, more like a trio of soliloquies rather than a real dialogue, although there is some interaction between the speakers.

We will have a quick look at Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood* as an example of a text which brings together the voices of a whole village. Another example is *Spoon River* by Edgar Lee Masters.

We will try to create Duets, Trios, Quartets and Multi-voice pieces based on the texts examined.

### **Discussion.**

1. **Think of all the communities you are or have been part of in your life. Family, condominium, village, class, school, hall of residence, association etc. This could include communities that only existed for a short space of time: a holiday camp, course etc.**
2. **Which of these would you choose as interesting material for a performance of single voices or multi-voice pieces? What influences your choice?**
3. **How important is the setting, room, building, geographical place in fixing the distinctive character of these places?**
4. **What are the variables in each community: age, social class, role, nationality etc.**
5. **What particular circumstances can make a community more united or divided? Think of the conflict or changes that took place in the communities you thought of and the most interesting moment to focus on for a performance.**

COME AND GO a dramaticule by Samuel Beckett

Characters FLO VI RU Age undeterminable. Sitting centre side by side, very erect, facing front, hands clasped in laps, stage right to left FLO, VI and RU.  
Silence.

VI Ru.

RU Yes.

VI Flo.

FLO Yes.

VI When did we three last meet?

RU Let us not speak.

Silence.

Exit VI right.

Silence.

FLO Ru.

RU Yes.

FLO What do you think of Vi?

RU I see little change. (FLO moves to centre seat, whispers in Ru's ear.

Appalled.) Oh! (They look at each other. FLO puts her finger to her lips.) Does she not realize?

FLO God grant not.

Enter VI. FLO and RU turn back front, resume pose. VI sits right.

Silence.

FLO Just sit together as we used to, in the playground at Miss Wade's.

RU On the log.

Silence.

Exit FLO left.

Silence.

RU Vi.

VI Yes.

RU How do you find Flo?

VI She seems much the same. (RU moves to centre seat, whispers in Vi's ear. Appalled.) Oh! (They look at each other. RU puts her finger to

her lips.) Has she not been told?

RU God forbid.

Enter FLO. RU and VI turn back front, resume pose. FLO sits left.

Silence.

RU Holding hands ... that way.

FLO Dreaming ... of love.

Silence.

Exit RU right.

Silence.

VI Flo.

FLO Yes.

VI How do you think Ru is looking?

FLO One sees little in this light. (VI moves to centre seat, whispers in Flo's

ear. Appalled.) Oh! (They look at each other. VI puts her finger to

her lips.) Does she not know?

VI Please God not.

Enter RU. VI and FLO turn back front, resume pose. RU sits right.

Silence.

VI May we not speak of the old days? (Silence.) Of what came after?

(Silence.) Shall we hold hands in the old way?

After a moment they join hands as follows: Vi's right hand with Ru's right

hand in Ru's lap, Vi's left hand with Flo's left hand in Flo's lap, Flo's

right hand with Ru's left hand in Vi's lap, Vi's arms resting on Ru's

left arm and Flo's right arm.

Silence.

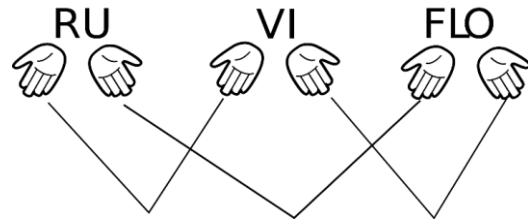
FLO Ru. (Silence.) Vi. (Silence.) I can feel the rings.

Silence.

Curtain

Successive positions<sup>[2]</sup>

1	FLO	VI	RU
2	FLO		RU
		FLO	RU
3	VI	FLO	RU
4	VI		RU
	VI	RU	
5	VI	RU	FLO
6	VI		FLO
		VI	FLO
7	RU	VI	FLO



**Lighting.** Soft, from above only and concentrated on seat. Rest of stage as dark as possible.

**Costume.** Full-length coats, buttoned high, dull violet (RU), dull red (VI), dull yellow (FLO). Drab nondescript hats with enough brim to shade faces. Apart from colour differentiation three figures as alike as possible. Light shoes with rubber soles.

**Hands** made up to be as visible as possible. No rings apparent.

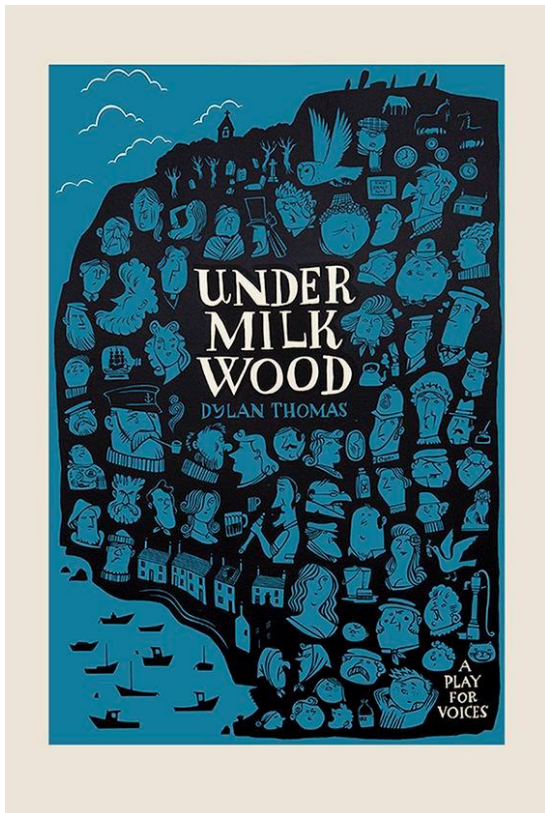
**Seat.** Narrow benchlike seat, without back, just long enough to accommodate three figures almost touching. As little visible as possible. It should not be clear what they are sitting on.

**Exits and entrances.** The figures are not seen to go off or come back on stage. They should disappear - and reappear - a few steps from lit area. If dark not sufficient to allow this, recourse should be had to screens or drapes as little visible as possible. Exits and entrances slow, without sound of feet.

**Voices.** As low as compatible with audibility and colourless except for three "ohs" and two following lines.

# Under Milk Wood: A Play for Voices

Dylan Thomas, (1954)



[Silence]

5 FIRST VOICE (Very softly)

1

To begin at the beginning:

It is spring, moonless night in the small town, starless  
and bible-black, the cobblestreets silent and the hunched,  
10 courters'-and-rabbits' wood limping invisible down to the  
sloeblack, slow, black, crowblack, fishingboatbobbing sea.

2

The houses are blind as moles (though moles see fine to-night  
in the snouting, velvet dingles) or blind as Captain Cat  
15 there in the muffled middle by the pump and the town clock,  
the shops in mourning, the Welfare Hall in widows' weeds.

3

And all the people of the lulled and dumbfound town are  
sleeping now.

**4**

Hush, the babies are sleeping, the farmers, the fishers,  
5 the tradesmen and pensioners, cobbler, schoolteacher,  
postman and publican, the undertaker and the fancy woman,  
drunkard, dressmaker, preacher, policeman, the webfoot  
cocklewomen and the tidy wives. **5** Young girls lie bedded soft  
or glide in their dreams, with rings and trousseaux,  
10 bridesmaided by glowworms down the aisles of the  
organplaying wood. The boys are dreaming wicked or of the  
bucking ranches of the night and the jollyrodgered sea. **6** And  
the anthracite statues of the horses sleep in the fields,  
and the cows in the byres, and the dogs in the wetnosed  
15 yards; and the cats nap in the slant corners or lope sly,  
streaking and needling, on the one cloud of the roofs. **7**  
You can hear the dew falling, and the hushed town breathing.  
**8** Only your eyes are unclosed to see the black and folded  
town fast, and slow, asleep. **9** And you alone can hear the  
20 invisible starfall, the darkest-before-dawn minutely dewgrazed  
stir of the black, dab-filled sea where the Arethusa, the  
Curlew, and the Skylark, Zanzibar, Rhiannon, the Rover,  
the Cormorant, and the Star of Wales tilt and ride.  
**10** Listen. It is night moving in the streets, the processional  
25 salt slow musical wind in Coronation Street and Cackle Row,  
it is the grass growing on Llaregyb Hill, dewfall, starfall,  
the sleep of birds in Milk Wood.  
**11** Listen. It is night in the chill, squat chapel, hymning in  
bonnet and brooch and bombazine black, butterfly choker and  
30 bootlace bow, coughing like nannygoats, sucking mintoes,  
fortywinking hallelujah; night in the four-ale, quiet as a

domino; in Ocky Milkman's lofts like a mouse with gloves;  
in Dai Bread's bakery flying like black flour. **12** It is to-night  
in Donkey Street, trotting silent, With seaweed on its  
hooves, along the cockled cobbles, past curtained fernpot,  
5 text and trinket, harmonium, holy dresser, watercolours  
done by hand, china dog and rosy tin teacaddy.**13** It is night  
neddyng among the snuggeries of babies.

**14** Look. It is night, dumbly, royally winding through the  
Coronation cherry trees; going through the graveyard of  
10 Bethesda with winds gloved and folded, and dew doffed;  
tumbling by the Sailors Arms.

**15** Time passes. Listen. Time passes.  
Come closer now.

**16** Only you can hear the houses sleeping in the streets in the  
15 slow deep salt and silent black, bandaged night. **17** Only you  
can see, in the blinded bedrooms, the coms. and petticoats  
over the chairs, the jugs and basins, the glasses of teeth,  
Thou Shalt Not on the wall, and the yellowing dickybird-watching  
pictures of the dead. **18** Only you can hear and see, behind the  
20 eyes of the sleepers, the movements and countries and mazes  
and colours and dismays and rainbows and tunes and wishes  
and flight and fall and despairs and big seas of their dreams.

**19** From where you are, you can hear their dreams.

**20** Captain Cat, the retired blind sea-captain, asleep in his  
25 bunk in the seashelled, ship-in-bottled, shipshape best  
cabin of Schooner House dreams of

SECOND VOICE

**21** never such seas as any that swamped the decks of his S.S.  
Kidwelly bellying over the bedclothes and jellyfish-slippery  
30 sucking him down salt deep into the Davy dark where the fish  
come biting out and nibble him down to his wishbone, and



the long drowned nuzzle up to him.

**22 FIRST DROWNED**

Remember me, Captain?

**23 CAPTAIN CAT**

5 You're Dancing Williams!

FIRST DROWNED

I lost my step in Nantucket.

**24 SECOND DROWNED**

Do you see me, Captain? the white bone talking? I'm Tom-Fred

10 the donkeyman...we shared the same girl once...her name was

Mrs Probert...

**25 WOMAN'S VOICE**

Rosie Probert, thirty three Duck Lane. Come on up, boys,

I'm dead.

15 **26 THIRD DROWNED**

Hold me, Captain, I'm Jonah Jarvis, come to a bad end, very enjoyable.

**27 FOURTH DROWNED**

Alfred Pomeroy Jones, sea-lawyer, born in Mumbles, sung

20 like a linnet, crowned you with a flagon, tattooed with

mermaids, thirst like a dredger, died of blisters.

FIRST DROWNED

This skull at your earhole is

**28 FIFTH DROWNED**

25 Curly Bevan. Tell my auntie it was me that pawned her ormolu clock.

CAPTAIN CAT

Aye, aye, Curly.

SECOND DROWNED

Tell my missus no I never

30 **THIRD DROWNED**

I never done what she said I never.

FOURTH DROWNED

Yes they did. And who brings coconuts and shawls and parrots to \_my\_

Gwen now?

FIRST DROWNED

5 How's it above?

SECOND DROWNED

Is there rum and laverbread?

THIRD DROWNED

Bosoms and robins?

10 FOURTH DROWNED

Concertinas?

FIFTH DROWNED

Ebenezer's bell?

FIRST DROWNED

15 Fighting and onions?

SECOND DROWNED

And sparrows and daisies?

THIRD DROWNED

Tiddlers in a jamjar?

20 FOURTH DROWNED

Buttermilk and whippets?

FIFTH DROWNED

Rock-a-bye baby?

FIRST DROWNED

25 Washing on the line?

SECOND DROWNED

And old girls in the snug?

THIRD DROWNED

How's the tenors in Dowlais?

30 FOURTH DROWNED

Who milks the cows in Maesgwyn?

FIFTH DROWNED

When she smiles, is there dimples?

FIRST DROWNED

What's the smell of parsley?

5 CAPTAIN CAT

Oh, my dead dears!

FIRST VOICE

**29** From where you are you can hear in Cockle Row in the spring,  
moonless night, Miss Price, dressmaker and sweetshop-keeper,

10 dream of

SECOND VOICE

**30** her lover, tall as the town clock tower, Samsonsyrup-gold-maned,  
whacking thighed and piping hot, thunderbolt-bass'd and  
barnacle-breasted, flailing up the cockles with his eyes

15 like blowlamps and scooping low over her lonely loving

hotwaterbottled body.

**31 Mr Edwards**

**32 Myfanwy Price (mi'vaen wi)**

MR EDWARDS

Myfanwy Price!

MISS PRICE

Mr Mog Edwards!

MR EDWARDS

I am a draper mad with love. I love you more than all the flannelette and calico, candlewick, dimity, crash and merino, tussore, cretonne, crepon, muslin, poplin, ticking and twill in the whole Cloth Hall of the

world. I have come to take you away to my Emporium on the hill, where the change hums on wires. Throw away your little bedsocks and your Welsh wool knitted jacket, I will warm the sheets like an electric toaster, I will lie by your side like the Sunday roast.

MISS PRICE

I will knit you a wallet of forget-me-not blue, for the money to be comfy. I will warm your heart by the fire so that you can slip it in under your vest when the shop is closed.

MR EDWARDS

Myfanwy, Myfanwy, before the mice gnaw at your bottom drawer will you say

MISS PRICE

Yes, Mog, yes, Mog, yes, yes, yes.

MR EDWARDS

And all the bells of the tills of the town shall ring for our wedding. *[Noise of money-tills and chapel bells*

33

Come now, drift up the dark, come up the drifting sea-dark street now in the dark night seesawing like the sea, to the bible-black airless attic over Jack Black the cobbler's shop where alone and savagely Jack Black sleeps in a nightshirt tied to his ankles with elastic and dreams of

5 34

chasing the naughty couples down the grassgreen gooseberried double bed of the wood, flogging the tosspots in the spit-and-sawdust, driving out the bare bold girls from the sixpenny hops of his nightmares.

10

35

FIRST VOICE

Evans the Death, the undertaker,

SECOND VOICE

laughs high and aloud in his sleep and curls up his toes as he sees, upon waking fifty years ago, snow lie deep on the goosefield behind the sleeping house; and he runs out into the field where his mother is making welsh-cakes in the snow, and steals a fistful of snowflakes and currants and climbs back to bed to eat them cold and sweet under the warm, white clothes while his mother dances in the snow kitchen crying out for her lost currants.

36

And in the little pink-eyed cottage next to the undertaker's, lie, alone, the seventeen snoring gentle stone of Mister Waldo, rabbitcatcher, barber, herbalist, catdoctor, quack, his fat pink hands, palms up, over the edge of the patchwork quilt, his black boots neat and tidy in the washing-basin, his bowler on a nail above the bed, a milk stout and a slice of cold bread pudding under the pillow; and, dripping in the dark, he dreams of

MOTHER

This little piggy went to market  
This little piggy stayed at home  
This little piggy had roast beef  
This little piggy had none  
And this little piggy went

wee wee wee wee wee

5

## PART D CHARACTERS AND PLACES IN TEXTS

Skim read the extracts from *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros and take short notes about:

### FAMILY

- a) Sandra
- b) Papa
- c) Mother
- d) Nenny

When you can divide your notes into past and present (Sandra as a child/Sandra as a woman, mother as a young woman/mother older)

### NEIGHBOURS AND FRIENDS

- a) Ruthie
- b) Earl
- c) Mamacita
- d) Minerva
- e) Sally
- f) Marin

### PLACES

Mango Street

Sandra's own house