"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.

Accessed online (18.08.2026) : https://www.scribd.com/document/1065683382/Five-My-Name-Poems-and-Story-Examples

THE SHAME OF TĀNEROA BY MAREWA GLOVER

Jack is a young Māori boy of seven.
He lives in the child cancer unit in Hamilton.
He's a happy child despite his condition
'cause his mother full of aroha
visits him often.
One day the social worker Wendy
overheard the mother talking with her son
she was saying, 'You'll be home soon, Tāne,
we'll all be together again,
don't you worry Tān.'
Wendy thought, that was strange
the mother called him Tān
so she called her aside and asked
'What is his name?'
The mother replied
'Tāneroa is his name, Tāneroa.'
Wendy looked at the chart
at the foot of the bed and said
'But here it says his name is Jack.'
The mother shook her head
'No. What happened is that
when Tāne was admitted
they couldn't say his name
so they called him Jack.'
Wendy was furious
'This is outrageous' she said
'We'll just have to change it back.'
This happened in 1990
in New Zealand
the 150th year of the signing of
the Treaty of Waitangi
a year of celebrations.
This happened in a country
that prides itself
on its race relations.
(1991)

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