"My Name"

An excerpt from The House on Mango Street

By Sandra Cisneros

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.

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.
“My Name” Questions

Directions: After reading the selection, please answer the following questions in **complete sentences** on a **separate sheet of paper**. You may discuss the questions and the possible responses with your classmates, but the question sheet will contain your own answers. Please staple your answers to this sheet before turning it in.

1. Think about how Esperanza describes her name in the first paragraph. Give an example of one simile that she uses. Give an example of one metaphor. (Hint: Similes use the words "like" or "as" to make a comparison).

2. How does Esperanza describe her great-grandmother in the second paragraph? How does this description make you feel about her great-grandmother?

3. There are several sentence fragments in the third paragraph. Find one and write it below. Why do you suppose the writer used such a device? (Hint: A fragment is an incomplete sentence).

4. The writer gives several reasons that she would like to be like her great-grandmother and several that she would not like to be like her. Give one of each below.

5. What is the difference between speaking so that the sound is like tin as contrasted to silver?

6. What do you think of her choices for new names?