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## Only daughter by sandra cisneros analysis

Melissa Cohen Professor Kristina Lucenko WRT 102.21 3/10/11 Essay #2: Text Analysis Only Daughter Text Analysis Growing Up, Did You Ever Feel Isolated or Unacceptable in Your Family? As children, we all want our parents to feel proud of us and accept us for who we are. It's a basic human instinct to want to feel love and acceptance from those we admire most. The essay, *Only Daughter*, by Sandra Cisneros, shows how a parent's lack of acceptance and encouragement can shape a person's life. Cisneros uses literary terms such as pathos, word selection, and irony to demonstrate how her provocative and isolated upbringing affected her in many ways. Sandra Cisneros grew up as one of the seven children of a national Mexican family. She was the only daughter surrounded by six siblings who looked at her because she was the only girl in the family. They isolated her because they were ashamed to play with a girl in public. Cisneros had to struggle to be perceived in her household. From an early age, he understood the meaning of loneliness. Cisneros stresses throughout the story how isolated her family made her feel. Her father would go around telling people, I have seven sons (496). Even if that wasn't meant to hurt her, those words still affect her. Cisneros says, he didn't mean anything by that mis translation, I'm sure. But somehow I could feel myself being erased (496). To understand what Cisneros means here, the reader must understand what he means when he says it was a mis translation. In Spanish, the term, hijos, can mean children or sons. When Cisneros's father said, siete hijos (496), he apparently meant seven children, but Cisneros was sensitive to the feeling he stayed out and got offended by the mis translation. Although this upset her, Cisneros used her loneliness to her advantage. Cisneros uses her isolation as a time to thrive as a writer and creative thinker. Cisneros also highlights the impact Mexican culture has had on her. Cisneros grew up in different houses that alternated between America and Mexico. Her father kept telling Cisneros that he wanted to grow up according to Mexican culture. Mexican culture did not support working women. In Cisneros's culture, a woman's place was at home. According to her father, the purpose of her life was to be someone's wife. Cisneros' father shook his head in frustration when he realized that his daughter went to college to get an education and a job instead of going to college in search of a husband. Cisneros writes, After years in college and two more in graduate school, and still no husband, my father shakes his head even now and says he wasted all that education (496). Despite the fact that limited view of women's social roles, Cisneros knows that her college education did not go to a waste. Cisneros often shows feelings of isolation and despair to feel good enough in her father's eyes, using the literary device, pathos. Throughout the essay, the reader often feels sympathy for Cisneros' situation. Although she had so much potential to become a brilliant writer, her father, her siblings, and culture clearly tried to stifle her. When Cisneros mentioned going to college in order to become a writer, her siblings laughed and mocked her efforts. Her father only wanted his daughter to go to college to find a good husband. In one part of the essay, Cisneros shows how her father's opinion really affected her. He writes, in a sense, everything I've ever written was about him, to win his approval (496). This makes the reader feel sad about Cisneros. The reader sympathizes with Cisneros and her countless attempts to make her father proud. All her attempts at becoming a successful writer were to make her father proud and we can see that she never really gets that satisfaction. We can see the despair in her words as she begs for her father's approval. Even towards the end of the essay, when Cisneros's father finally begins to show a glimmer of acceptance of his daughter, we can see her hanging by his every word. Cisneros goes home for Christmas and brings with her a copy of a story published in an anthology of Chicano writing. She sees him reading her story and anxiously awaits an answer. We can see that Cisneros was worried about what her father would think, not knowing if he would respond positively or negatively to her writing. He says, when it was finally over, after what seemed like hours... (497). This shows how worried she must have been. The few minutes she waited to finish reading her story seemed like hours because she was so concerned about his opinion of her story and validating her abilities as a writer. The reader can also see that Cisneros' father's pride in his daughter is not unconditional. Cisneros writes, I'm not sure if it was because my story was translated into Spanish, or because it was published in Mexico, or perhaps because the story dealt with Topeyac, the colonia my father grew up in and the house he grew up in, but in any case, my father punched the mute button on his remote control and read my story (497). Even if Cisneros didn't want to admit it, part of her knew that if her story wasn't in Spanish and it wasn't relatable, her father, maybe she hadn't read the story. Despite this knowledge, Cisneros was proud to be recognized by her father even in the smallest way. In addition to the pathos, Cisneros also uses its original choice to highlight how her father degraded her and did not accept her ambitions in life. Throughout the essay, Cisneros introduces several Spanish words in her essay to highlight certain points in her story. For example, when talking about being a teacher, Cisneros uses the words, maestra and profesora. He says, I wanted my father to understand what it was that was scribbling, to introduce me as my only daughter, the writer. Not like she's just my daughter. Teaches. Es maestra-teacher. Not even profesora (496). Although both words mean teacher in Spanish, the term profesora has greater recognition as a more educated, respected teacher. The term profesora, is most often used to describe a college or higher education teacher as opposed to maestra, which teaches lower levels of school education. Referring to Cisneros as maestra instead of profesora was humiliating for her and her achievements. Cisneros' Spanish word choice helps the reader better understand why she is so upset by her father's words. The use of both Spanish and English words by Cisneros could also be chosen to appeal to its Mexican audience. At one point during the essay, Cisneros tries to explain that her purpose for writing was for her father and people similar to her father. Cisneros says, so my father represents the public majority. An audience that is not interested in reading, and yet one that I write about and for, and privately tries to woo (496). Cisneros tries to educate its culture while also trying to prove them wrong. Cisneros talks about how her father is not educated. He can't read English words and spent his whole life working with his hands instead of his head. She wants to make her father, and people like her father, understand that education is necessary for everyone. While trying to educate her culture, she is also trying to prove them wrong. Part of what held her back was the low expectations Mexican culture had for women. Everyone thought college was for men. College was insignificant for women unless they were looking for a husband. Writing this essay and many of her other stories, Cisneros proves her culture wrong. It proves that women can be successful too. Its culture should celebrate this event, not discourage it. Cisneros also uses irony to portray the complicated relationship she had with her father, which affected her upbringing. It's ironic that throughout the essay, Cisneros goes to such great lengths to put herself except for the one person she really craves approval from. Cisneros tries to be different from her father in many different ways. For example, while her father never learned English and spent his days working hard manual labor, Cisneros were the opposite. He learned English and wrote stories to you English and Spanish. He wanted to go to college and get educated. She wanted to escape her cultural norms, instead of being like her father, who suffered periods of nostalgia (496). It was also ironic that Cisneros' father insisted that his children spend their lives using their heads, not their hands when he insisted that college was not the place for his daughter. He shook his head when he wanted to go to school to get an education, but insisted that his daughter should use her head. Cisneros writes, Use this, my father said, banging his head, and not this, showing us these hands (497). Finally, it is ironic that, despite the fact that everyone is pushing Cisneros to find a husband, she never writes anything about a man in her life. Her father, the man who seems most disappointed that his daughter cannot find a mate, seems to be the only main male in Cisneros' life. Her lack of acceptance and approval could have long-lasting devastating consequences for Cisneros. Cisneros clearly explains the importance that a parent's love and acceptance has for a young child. This lack of emotions can affect a person, not only in the short term, but also in the long run. Although Cisneros used isolation and lack of acceptance to her advantage to write many award-winning stories, not everyone deals with these feelings in the same way. Cisneros shows her audience how to deal with issues similar to her news in a healthy, constructive way. The use of Cisneros' rhetorical strategies of passion, word and irony helped build an effective convincing argument. She effectively got her point throughout the use of these three rhetorical strategies. These strategies were successful for the intended Cisneros audience and effectively conveyed its main purpose of the essay. Works Mentioned Cisneros, Sandra. *Only daughter*. 75 Readings Plus. 7th ed. Santi V. Buscemi and Charlotte Smith. New York: McGraw Hill, 2004. 495-497. Printing. Print.

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