EXCERPT FROM “Born Bad” from *The House on Mango Street*

This document provides an example of text dependent questions for a passage from *The House on Mango Street*. Questions should always be driven by key understandings or themes in the document and the Common Core State Standards. Years of research in reading continues to support the observation that vocabulary and syntax are two of the primary obstacles to comprehension. Document study in any classroom should always include these two areas.

1. Most likely I will go to hell and most likely I deserve to be there. My mother says I was born on an evil day and prays for me. Lucy and Rachel pray too. For ourselves and for each other…because of what we did to Aunt Lupe.  

   **What cultural myths are discussed in the first paragraph?**

   **Why did the author use an ellipsis in the last sentence of the first paragraph?**

2. Her name was Guadalupe and she was pretty like my mother. Dark. Good to look at. In her Joan Crawford dress and swimmer’s legs. Aunt Lupe of the photographs.  

   **Identify all of the incomplete sentences in paragraph 2. Why did Cisneros use a series of fragments here?**

3. But I knew her sick from the disease that would not go, her legs bunched under yellow sheets, the bones gone limp as worms. The yellow pillow, the yellow smell, the bottles and spoons. Her head thrown back like a thirsty lady. My aunt, the swimmer.  

   **How does the description of her aunt’s body wasting away show Esperanza’s awareness of her aunt’s suffering? What similes and metaphors are used to describe it?**

4. Hard to imagine her legs once strong, the bones hard and parting water, clean sharp strokes, not bent and wrinkled like a baby, not drowning under the sticky yellow light. Second-floor rear apartment. The naked light bulb. The high ceilings. The light always burning.  

5. I don’t know who decides who deserves to go bad. There was no evil in her birth. No wicked curse. One day I believe she was swimming, and the next day she was sick. It might have been the day that gray photograph was taken. It might have been the day she was holding cousin Totchy and baby Frank. It might have been the moment she pointed to the camera for the kids to look and they wouldn’t.  

   **Why do you think Cisneros described the photograph as “gray?”**
6 Maybe the sky didn’t look the day she fell down. Maybe God was busy. It could be true she didn’t dive right one day and hurt her spine. Or maybe the story that she feel very hard from a high step stool, like Totchy said, is true.

7 But I think disease has no eyes. They pick with a dizzy finger anyone, just anyone. Like my aunt who happened to be walking down the street one day in her Joan

8 Sometimes you get used to the sick and sometimes the sickness, if it is there too long, gets to seem normal. This is how it was with her, and maybe this is why we chose her.

9 It was a game, that’s all. It was the game we played every afternoon ever since that day one of us invented it – I can’t remember who – I think it was me.

10 You had to pick somebody. You had to think of someone everybody knew. Someone you could imitate and everyone else would have to guess who it was. It started out with famous people: Wonder Woman, the Beatles, Marilyn Monroe…But then somebody thought it’d be better if we changed the game a little, if we pretended we were Mr. Benny, or his wife Blanca, or Ruthie, or anybody we knew.

11 I don’t know why we picked her. Maybe we were bored that day. Maybe we got tired. We liked my aunt. She listened to our stories. She always asked us to come back. Lucy, me, and Rachel. I hated to go there alone. The six blocks to the dark apartment, second-floor rear building where sunlight never came, and what did it matter? My aunt was blind by then. She never saw the dirty dishes in the sink. She couldn’t

Paragraphs five through eight Esperanza is explaining why Aunt Lupe got sick. What did she believe?

God is mentioned in paragraph 6. Are there other religious references? Explain.

How does Esperanza's perspective change about the reason for her aunt's illness from paragraph nine to twelve? What do you predict will happen?

Circle the famous people mentioned. Why do you think the rule was to use people that everyone knew?
See the ceiling dusty with flies, the ugly maroon walls, the bottles and the sticky spoons. I can’t forget the smell. Like sticky capsules filled with jelly. My aunt, a little oyster, filled with meat on an open shell for us to look at. Hello, hello. As if she had fallen into a well.

Why is Aunt Lupe compared to an oyster? Explain.

Review the passage and mark all references to light with a ‘L.’
Light is used as a metaphor. What does it represent?

Journal #7 –

Light is used as a metaphor in “Born Bad.” What does it represent?

AND

The narrator is Esperanza Cordero. In early vignettes, the narration focuses on her observations and personal feelings. As the novel progresses, how does Esperanza’s perspective change? Cite specific examples to support your answer.