

# Esperanza Rising

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Question and Discussion Guide

## **Aguascalientes, Mexico 1924**

Draw a picture of the setting including everything the text mentioned. Also, add any details you think could possibly be in the setting, knowing where they are and what the climate is.

Esperanza's papa says the land is alive - it breathes and has a heartbeat. When they lay on the ground for Esperanza to feel it for the first time, what do you think she really feels?

## **Las Uvas, Grapes - Six Years Later**

Vocabulary - scythe p. 4, vicious p. 8, premonition p. 9, serenade p. 9, capricious p. 13, propriety p. 13, resurrected p. 16

What is the significance of Esperanza cutting the grapes before the workers go into the fields for the harvest? How do you know?

How does Esperanza feel about her life and her family? Give details from the story to back up your opinion.

How do the people on the ranch (her family and the workers) feel about her? Give details from the book that helped you form your opinion.

On page 11, there is a description of Esperanza. Can you draw a picture of her? Put her in the same clothes she wore when she cut the grapes at harvest.

Make a T-chart for Abuelita's personality. On one side, list the personality traits that are reserved and on the other, list the things that are more vibrant, surprising and outgoing.

On page 14, Abuelita says, "There is no rose without thorns," and the author goes on to explain the saying. Can you list three wonderful things about life that come with a "thorn"? For example, swimming in the ocean is an amazing experience, even though there are sharks.

On page 18, tell more about the "river" that Esperanza describes is between her and Miguel. What do you think is the bigger picture?

## **Las Papayas, Papayas**

Vocabulary - anguish, p. 23, indignation p. 30

On page 29, there is a reference made about "wearing black all year." What custom is Tio Luis referring to?

On page 37, Miguel adds the words, "In Mexico," to Esperanza's statement about the river between them. In context with the conversation they are in, how does this alter her statement?

### **Los Higos, Figs**

Vocabulary - waif p. 54

On page 43, it describes, "a thick skin that nothing could penetrate." What does this mean?

On page 50, why does everyone laugh?

On page 51, what are the "mountains and valleys" that Abuelita refers to? (Hint: It's doesn't really have anything to do with crocheting.)

How do you think Esperanza feels when she learns that the clothes from the poor box are for her and Mama?

### **Las Guayabas, Guavas**

Vocabulary - alms p. 66, monotonous p. 72

On page 68, why do *you* think Esperanza's mama is crocheting lace doilies?

On the train, Esperanza makes yet another comment about the peasants, this time about a child who wants to touch her doll. Mama seems to have a different understanding of people who aren't necessarily in the same social class. Do you think this comes from age and having more experience, or do you think it is something else?

Besides growing up together, what is the most important thing Esperanza and Miguel have in common?

The woman on the train with a dead husband, eight children, and only eggs to sell for money says she is rich. Why? Do you think Mama feels rich? Why? Do you think Esperanza feels rich? Why?

Esperanza wonders have, "all of Mama's rules changed since they had boarded this train?" Have they? What has happened to "the rules"?

### **Los Melones, Cantaloupes**

Vocabulary - disembarked p. 81, panorama p. 81, barren p. 81, stagnant p. 81

Why does Esperanza not let go of Miguel's hand?

What is the unfamiliar feeling Esperanza speaks about as they approach the Mexican camp?

### **Las Cebollas, Onions**

What is the first thing Esperanza is thankful for in her new situation at the camp?

Esperanza makes many comments about what would make her father proud and how he would feel about their situation. What do *you* think would make him proud and how do *you* think he would feel?

Esperanza is embarrassed to tell Isabel all the things she cannot do. How is Esperanza's attitude towards "servants" changing? How do you know?

What is it about Miguel's help with the broom that has a deep affect on Esperanza?

She feels stupid for not knowing how to wash clothes or sweep. What do you think about it?

This chapter ends with Esperanza saying, "It is not easy for me." What does this tell you about her internal struggle with her new life?

### **Las Almendras, Almonds**

Why did Esperanza rush to get water for Hortensia's bath before anyone else could?

Esperanza makes a comment about not needing her dresses in their new home. Do you think this statement might have a deeper meaning?

### **Las Ciruelas, Plums**

Many different foods are grown in an area that is prone to dirt storms. What would be a smart thing for a farmer to do when choosing what to plant?

If Esperanza's mother dies, what do you think will happen to Esperanza? Make your answer more valid by giving information from the story that lead you to your conclusion.

### **Las Papas, Potatoes**

Esperanza doesn't feel as if anything she is doing is helping her mother get better. She even comments on the possibility that her mother is giving up. What do you think?

Every time Miguel calls Esperanza "mi reina," she says he is teasing. What do *you* think he means by it? What makes you think this?

### **Las Aguacates, Avocados**

In the beginning, Esperanza remembered, parties and presents, feasts and friends. What kinds of "things" is she remembering now?

On page 188, what does it mean that Mr. Yakota is "getting rich on other people's bad manners"?

What emotions do you think Esperanza is feeling for Miguel and his new job?

### **Los Esparragos, Asparagus**

On page 204, Josefina says, "How could anyone starve here with so much food around us?" What does she mean?

If Esperanza didn't have to earn money for Mama and Abuelita, do you think she would join the strike?

### **Los Duraznos, Peaches**

What are the similarities and differences between Esperanza's and Miguel's lives when they lived in Mexico? What are the similarities and differences between their lives in California?

Hint: In Mexico, they both knew the roles in life they would always play. Miguel could never become more than a peasant, and Esperanza would marry only a man who could let her maintain her status.

Esperanza has learned so much and worked so hard during Mama's absence. How do you think things will be when Mama returns to the camp?

### **Las Uvas, Grapes**

How do you think Esperanza looks back on her life in Mexico during this season of the grapes?

Do you think Esperanza and Miguel will ever marry?

Tell anything you think will happen in the future for any of the characters in the book.