



Esperanza Rising Discussion Guide

GRADES 6 - 8

Before Reading: to activate schema, build background knowledge, and set a purpose.

- Have students complete the [Anticipation Guide](#) to prepare for understanding and connecting with the deeper themes and messages of the story.
- Frontload vocabulary with the [Vocabulary Guide](#).

During Reading: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.

Mexico - Papayas

- When Papa teaches Esperanza to lie on the ground and feel the earth's heartbeat, what does that moment tell you about their relationship? Return to it later.
- After Papa's death, the uncles offer Mama a "solution." What clues in her response tell you what she values more than comfort or safety?
- Esperanza looks down on people she calls "peasants" at the start. Point to one line that shows this attitude before you see it begin to crack.

Figs - Cantaloupes

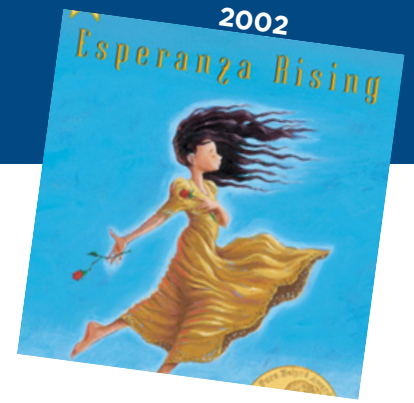
- On the train, Esperanza is embarrassed to sit near a poor woman with chickens. What does she learn from Carmen, and how is it different from what Papa's world taught her?
- When Esperanza first sees the labor camp, compare what she expected to what she finds. What clues show she still thinks of herself as different from the others?

Onions - Potatoes

- Esperanza cannot sweep a floor or tie a baby's diaper at first. What does the text show about why — and what does it take for her to change?
- Marta pushes the workers to strike; Mama and others hesitate. Using evidence from both sides, explain what each character is afraid of.
- When the dust storm hits and Mama falls ill, how does Esperanza's role in the family shift? Find the moment the change begins.

Avocados - Grapes

- The strikers are rounded up and sent to Mexico. What does Esperanza understand about power and fairness that she did not understand in Mexico?
- Esperanza is furious when Miguel disappears with her savings. When you learn what he actually did with the money, how does it change your reading of his character?
- At the very end, Papa's lesson about the earth's heartbeat returns. Explain what Esperanza can now feel that she couldn't at the start of the book.



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After Reading: to summarize, question, and reflect.

- The title is *Esperanza Rising*, and *esperanza* means "hope" in Spanish. Using three moments from the book, explain what "rising" means for her.
- Abuelita's zigzag blanket says: go up, come down, start over, don't be afraid. Which character best lives out that lesson, and how?
- What is one thing Esperanza believed on page one that she no longer believes at the end? What changed her mind?

If your students enjoyed this book...

- Encourage them to continue to discuss it and refer to it in other lessons and conversations.
- Let them explore more about the topic by reading other books with similar themes, structure, characters, or content.