A Study Guide
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Edited by Joyce Friedland and Rikki Kessler
For the Teacher

This reproducible study guide consists of lessons to use in conjunction with the novel *Esperanza Rising*. Written in chapter-by-chapter format, the guide contains a synopsis, pre-reading activities, vocabulary and comprehension exercises, as well as extension activities to be used as follow-up to the novel.

In a homogeneous classroom, whole class instruction with one title is appropriate. In a heterogeneous classroom, reading groups should be formed: each group works on a different novel at its reading level. Depending upon the length of time devoted to reading in the classroom, each novel, with its guide and accompanying lessons, may be completed in three to six weeks.

Begin using NOVEL-TIES for guided reading by distributing the novel and a folder to each child. Distribute duplicated pages of the study guide for students to place in their folders. After examining the cover and glancing through the book, students can participate in several pre-reading activities. Vocabulary questions should be considered prior to reading a chapter or group of chapters; all other work should be done after the chapter has been read. Comprehension questions can be answered orally or in writing. The classroom teacher should determine the amount of work to be assigned, always keeping in mind that readers must be nurtured and that the ultimate goal is encouraging students’ love of reading.

The benefits of using NOVEL-TIES are numerous. Students read good literature in the original, rather than in abridged or edited form. The good reading habits will be transferred to the books students read independently. Passive readers become active, avid readers.
Thirteen-year-old Esperanza has a wonderful life with Mama, Papa, and her grandmother Abuelita on their ranch in Mexico. Even though it is 1930 and most of the world is suffering in the grip of the Great Depression, the family is wealthy enough to employ servants; Esperanza is always beautifully dressed. She and her best friend Marisol Rodríguez are looking forward to their presentation parties when they become fifteen.

All this is changed when Papa and some of his workers are ambushed and killed. Tío Luis, Esperanza’s unscrupulous uncle, wants to marry Mama, take over the ranch, and send Esperanza away. As a way of threatening Esperanza and Mama, he sets the ranch on fire. Mama and Esperanza, along with their servants Hortensia and Alfonso, and their son Miguel, escape to California. Abuelita is too ill to accompany them.

With few choices available to them, Mama and Esperanza join Hortensia’s family and other Mexican immigrants as farm laborers, subsisting on extremely low wages and living in poor and crowded conditions. Esperanza struggles to adapt to her new life despite crippling difficulties. There is a strike which causes disagreements and hard feelings among the workers and a terrible and destructive dust storm. Mama develops a serious lung disease, causing her to be hospitalized for five months. Esperanza also comes face to face with the Americans’ prejudice against Mexicans when she discovers that not all migrant workers are treated in the same way.

Although life around her becomes extremely bleak, Esperanza has positive experiences. She makes friends with Isabel. She also develops many skills, such as taking care of babies and doing household chores. Finally, with the help of Miguel, Abuelita is reunited with her family. Through the losses she suffers and the new experiences she has, Esperanza becomes a different person. She matures into a courageous, generous, optimistic, and determined young woman, ready to face the challenges and joys of the future.
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Mexican Revolution of 1910

For most of Mexico's history, a small minority of the population controlled the country's power and wealth, while the majority of the country lived in poverty. The gulf between the rich and poor grew wider under the leadership of General Porfirio Diaz. He was challenged by Francisco Madero who led a series of strikes throughout Mexico.

Although Diaz was pressured into holding an election in 1910, in which Madero was able to gather a significant number of votes, he imprisoned Madero and maintained control of the government. The insurgency continued, however, and Diaz resigned in 1911. Madero was elected president and hoped to implement land reforms in which some land owned by the wealthy would be redistributed to the poor. Impatient for land reform to begin, Emiliano Zapata usurped Madero and immediately chased out estate owners and divided their lands among the peasants.

During this time, Mexico remained in great disorder. The country broke into many factions and guerrilla units roamed across the country, destroying and burning large haciendas and ranchos. Madero was taken prisoner and executed while different factions fought for presidential control.

In 1917, Venustiano Carranza rose to the presidency and organized an important convention whose attendees drafted a constitution that is still in effect. It established a farm cooperative program that redistributed much of the country’s land from the wealthy land holders to the peasants.

November 20th is celebrated as a national holiday in Mexico, commemorating the day when Madero denounced President Diaz, declared himself president of Mexico, and called for a national insurrection.

The Great Depression

The prosperity and the economic policies of the 1920s in the United States surprisingly led to the crash of the stock market in 1929 and the Great Depression that followed. Since the wages of farmers and unskilled workers had not grown during the time of prosperity, there were more goods on the market than could be bought. Europe, still in debt following World War I, could not buy America's goods. When there are more goods on the market than can be consumed, prices fall. Also, easy lending policies allowed people to borrow money for homes, household goods, and stocks well beyond their means.

The collapse of the stock market in the United States had a domino effect on the economy. Farmers in Texas, the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Missouri, unable to invest money in their land, which was suffering from drought conditions, were forced to abandon their farms to become part of the migrant labor force that moved to the west coast of the United States. Willing to accept lower wages and poorer working conditions than their Mexican and Mexican-American counterparts, they successfully competed for existing jobs on the cotton and fruit farms in California and Oregon. Poverty and unemployment lasted until 1941, the year America entered World War II and began to spend heavily on national defense.

During the height of the depression, there were sixteen million people unemployed in America. This was about one-third of the labor force at that time. Since federal programs for unemployment insurance and social security did not yet exist, the effects of the Great Depression were devastating.
GLOSSARY OF SPANISH WORDS

abuelita  grandmother
aguacate  avocado
almendra  almond
arroz  rice
buena suerte  good luck
burro  donkey
calabaza  squash plant
campesinos  peasants
cebolla  onion
ciruela  plum
compañero  close friend and companion
cosecha  harvest
dedos  fingers
durazno  peach
espárragos  asparagus
fantasma  ghost
gata  cat
gayaba  guava
higo  fig
jefe  boss
mano  hand
melon  melon
milagro  miracle
nieta  granddaughter
papas  potatoes
Quinceañeras  presentation party for a 15-year-old girl
rebozo  blanket shawl
reina  queen
sala  drawing room
tormenta de polvo  dust storm
uvas  grapes
vaqueros  cowboys
PRE-READING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Preview the book by reading the title and the author’s name and by looking at the illustration on the cover. Also, read the chapter titles. What do you think the book will be about? When and where do you think it takes place? Will it be a story about real life or a fantasy?

2. Read the Background Information on the Mexican Revolution on page two of this study guide and do some additional research to learn about the political climate in Mexico from 1900 to 1930. As you read the book, notice how political events in Mexico affected the lives of the characters.

3. Read the Background Information on the Great Depression on page two of this study guide and do some additional research about this period in American history. As you read the book, notice how Esperanza and the Mexican farm workers were affected by the Great Depression.

4. Although all of the Spanish words in the book are defined in context, spend a moment before you begin the book to become familiar with the Glossary of Spanish Words on page three of this study guide. Work with a partner to memorize these words and pronounce them aloud. Add other Spanish words and phrases to the list.

5. Imagine yourself moving permanently to a foreign country with your family. What are some of the problems you would face? How would you go about overcoming these problems?

6. We often say that life has its ups and downs. Divide a piece of paper into two columns. On the left side make a list of the “ups” in your life—the good and positive things that have happened to you. On the right side make a list of “downs”—the negative and bad things that have happened to you. As you read the book, record the “ups” and “downs” in Esperanza’s life.

7. In this novel Esperanza has to make some difficult decisions. Have you ever had to make an important decision? What were your choices? How did you go about making up your mind?

8. Several characters in this novel show courage. What is your definition of courage? Think of someone you have either read or heard about who had great courage. What difficulties did the person face, and how did the person’s courage help him or her to overcome them? As you read the book, notice the characters who displayed courage.

9. Do some research to learn about current economic conditions in Mexico and the status of Mexicans who come to America as farm workers. As you read, compare current conditions to those described in the book.

10. On the following page you will find a chart that shows important events that affected Mexicans who immigrated to America and the year the event occurred. As you read the book fill in the third column with events in the book that reflected the history of the time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Events in History</th>
<th>Events in Book</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>In Mexico, the long dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz comes to an end when he is forced to resign in a revolt led by Francisco Madero.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>The first of two national origin quota acts is passed to curtail immigration from eastern and southern Europe. As a result, Mexico becomes a major source of American farm workers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>With the onset of the Great Depression, Mexican immigration to the United States slows down and many workers return to Mexico.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1930–1940</td>
<td>Many Mexican workers are displaced by the dominant southern whites and blacks of the migrant agricultural labor force.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Mexican farm workers in the Central Valley, California cotton industry go on strike, supported by several groups of independent Mexican union organizers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AGUASCALIENTES, MEXICO; LAS UVAS; LAS PAPAYAS; LOS HIGOS

Vocabulary: Draw a line from each word on the left to its definition on the right. Then use the numbered words to fill in the blanks in the sentences below.

1. venom a. warm and friendly
2. propriety b. anger
3. forlorn c. politeness; good manners
4. resurrected d. feeling of anxiety over a future event; foreboding
5. cordial e. poison
6. premonition f. sad
7. composure g. brought back to life
8. indignation h. calmness

1. The teacher asked the class to give the new students a(n) ____________________ welcome so they would feel at home in their new country.

2. Even though the baseball fans were yelling and shouting insults, the pitcher kept his ________________ and won the game for the team.

3. By cutting back the overgrown bushes and removing weeds, the Smiths ________________ the garden in their new home.

4. The child expressed great ________________ when his parents blamed him for something he had not done.

5. As Kim looked back at the house that had been her birthplace, her heart filled with ________________ thinking about the landlord who had forced her to leave.

6. Jon felt ________________ when his best friend moved to another state.

7. Mother taught us that ________________ was important in life, especially saying “please” and “thank you.”

8. When a black cat crossed my path, I had a(n) ________________ that bad luck would come my way.

Read to find out why Mexico becomes unsafe for Mama and Esperanza.
Aguascalientes, Mexico; Las Uvas; Las Papayas; Los Higos (cont.)

Questions:
1. How does Papa express his love for his land?
2. What evidence suggests that Esperanza’s family is wealthy?
3. Why had Papa been warned about going out to work the cattle?
4. Why had Esperanza’s relationship with Miguel come to an end?
5. How does Papa’s death affect Esperanza and her family?
6. Why does Tio Luis want to marry Mama?
7. Why don’t Mama and Esperanza discuss the cause of the fire?
8. How does Mama trick Tio Luis?

Questions for Discussion:
1. What is “the deep river” between Esperanza and Miguel? Are you aware of similar deep rivers in your own world?
2. Do you think Papa was guilty of causing the difficulties that his family faced after his death?
3. Do you think Mama makes the right decision? Can you think of other options she might consider?
4. Should Mama and Esperanza be hopeful about the life they will face in America?

Literary Elements:
1. Foreshadowing—Foreshadowing refers to the hints or clues that an author provides that suggest what will take place later in the story. For example:

   [Esperanza]…pricked her finger on a vicious thorn. Big pearls of blood pulsed from the tip of her thumb and she automatically thought, ‘bad luck.’

   What does this foreshadow?

II. Symbolism—A symbol in literature is a person, object, or event that represents an idea or a set of ideas. What did Esperanza’s trunk symbolize? What did its destruction symbolize?
Aguascalientes, Mexico; Las Uvas; Las Papayas; Los Higos (cont.)

III. Simile—A simile is a figure of speech in which two unlike objects are compared using the words “like” or “as.” For example:

The flames ran along the deliberate rows of the vines, like long curved fingers reaching for the horizon, lighting the night sky.

What is being compared?

__________________________________________________________________________________

What mental image does this create?

__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________

IV. Metaphor—A metaphor is a suggested or implied comparison. For example:

Her [Esperanza’s] smile faded, her chest tightened, and a heavy blanket of anguish smothered her smallest joy.

What is being compared?

__________________________________________________________________________________

Why is this an apt comparison?

__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________

V. Personification—Personification in literature refers to human qualities that an author grants to nonhuman objects. For example:

He gently touched a wild tendril that reached into the row, as if it had been waiting to shake hands.

What is being personified?

__________________________________________________________________________________

How does it convey Papa’s feelings about his vineyard?

__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________

Writing Activities:

1. Pretend you are Esperanza and that you are preparing to leave your home in Mexico for the United States. Write a farewell letter to your best friend Marisol Rodríguez explaining the reasons for your departure and how you feel about it.

2. Esperanza’s Papa shares with her his love for the land. Think of an object or a person that you love. Describe that person or object by using words that will create a picture in the reader’s mind. Tell why this person or object is important to you.
LAS GUAYABAS; LOS MELONES

**Vocabulary:** Antonyms are words with opposite meanings. Draw a line from each word in Column A to its antonym in Column B. Then use the words in Column A to fill in the blanks in the sentences below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. frail</td>
<td>a. unfamiliar</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. peasants</td>
<td>b. fresh</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. monotonous</td>
<td>c. changing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. irritable</td>
<td>d. plentiful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. intimate</td>
<td>e. fertile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. barren</td>
<td>f. robust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. stagnant</td>
<td>g. aristocrats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. sparse</td>
<td>h. patient</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1. To avoid gossip, Jodi shared her secrets only with her most ________________ friends.

2. Getting caught in traffic often makes people ________________.

3. The Mexican ________________ worked long hours in the fields yet received very low wages.

4. The grass on the front lawn became ________________ because it was not given sufficient water and fertilizer.

5. After being hospitalized for a month with a severe illness, the patient appeared ________________.

6. The moon is a(n) ________________ place where no trees, grass, or flowers can be found.

7. It is not safe to drink the water from a(n) ________________ pool.

8. The ________________ voice of the speaker caused many people in the audience to fall asleep.

Read to find out how Mama and Esperanza face the drastic changes in their lives.
Las Guayabas; Los Melones (cont.)

Questions:
1. Why do Mama, Esperanza, and Hortensia have to leave at night hidden in a wagon?
2. During the wagon ride, why does Hortensia recall the story of a train journey that Esperanza made with Miguel and Papa?
3. Why does Mama make a yarn doll for the little girl on the train?
4. How did Papa’s death change Miguel’s life?
5. Why does Esperanza’s mother say, “Now we are peasants, too.”
6. How does Mama convince the officials to let her cross the border?
7. Why does Miguel apologize to Esperanza for her cousin Isabel’s comments?
8. How will Esperanza and her mother earn their living in California?
9. Why does Esperanza dislike Marta?
10. According to Isabel why do the farm workers of different nationalities live in separate camps?

Questions for Discussion:
1. Do you think Esperanza’s reaction to the people on the train is justified? Can you understand her feelings?
2. What does Esperanza learn from the new people she meets—the little girl, Carmen, and Isabel?
3. In what ways was Esperanza becoming more aware of class distinctions?
4. How do you think Esperanza and her mother will be able to endure their new life?

Literary Devices:
I. Symbolism—What was the symbolic importance of Esperanza’s inability to hear the earth’s “heartbeat” once she arrived in California?
Las Guayabas; Los Melones (cont.)

II. *Simile*—What is being compared in the following simile?

As they rounded a curve, it appeared as if the mountains pulled away from each other, like a curtain opening on a stage, revealing the San Joaquin Valley beyond.

What visual image does this create?

Literary Elements:

I. *Sensory Details*—A writer uses words that appeal to our five senses to make a story more vivid. Esperanza experiences new sights, smells, and sounds as she leaves her familiar life in Mexico and travels to California. Fill in the chart below with appropriate words and expressions from the chapters you have just read.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sights</th>
<th>Smells</th>
<th>Sounds</th>
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</table>

II. *Characterization*—We may learn a great deal about a character from his or her actions. Reread the section of the story that tells about Miguel and the thieves. Then fill in the chart below.

| Miguel |
|--------|--------|--------|
| Action | Character trait |
|        |                  |
|        |                  |
|        |                  |
|        |                  |

LEARNING LINKS INC.
Las Guayabas; Los Melones (cont.)

Social Studies Connection:

Do some research on migrant workers in the United States during the years of the Great Depression. Use a social studies textbook, an encyclopedia, or the Internet. What were some of the hardships in the lives of migrant workers? Be prepared to share your information with the class. [If you use the Internet, try www.google.com using the keywords "migrant workers great depression" in the Search box.] Then do some additional research to learn about the life of farm workers today. What problems still exist in the lives of migrant workers?

Writing Activities:

1. Doing something important for the first time can be challenging, exciting, and sometimes scary. Think of the first time you did something important, such as the first day you attended school, the first time you went away to camp, or the first time you tried to swim. When and where did the experience take place? How did you feel? What did you learn from the experience?

2. Imagine you are Esperanza or Miguel and write a journal entry describing your thoughts and feelings about the trip from Mexico and your arrival in California.
LAS CEBOLLAS; LAS ALMENDRAS

Vocabulary: Analogies are equations in which the first pair of words has the same relationship as the second pair of words. For example, DARK is to LIGHT as MERRY is to GLUM. Both pairs of words are opposites. Choose the best word from the Word Box to complete each of the analogies below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORD BOX</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>awkward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>humiliation</td>
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<tr>
<td>obvious</td>
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<tr>
<td>swaddle</td>
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<tr>
<td>debris</td>
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<tr>
<td>moat</td>
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<tr>
<td>ridicule</td>
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<tr>
<td>temporary</td>
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1. DULL is to EXCITING as ________________ is to GRACEFUL.
2. WRAP is to PRESENT as ________________ is to INFANT.
3. ________________ is to NOTICEABLE as ELDERLY is to OLD.
4. SWIMMING POOL is to RECREATION as ________________ is to PROTECTION.
5. OCEAN is to SEA as EMBARRASSMENT is to ________________.
6. GARBAGE is to ________________ as PLAYTHING is to TOY.
7. PRAISE is to ________________ as BUILD is to DESTROY.
8. ________________ is to PERMANENT as COMMON is to UNUSUAL.

Read to find out why it is so hard for Esperanza to adjust to her new life.

Questions:
1. Why does Esperanza feel like a misfit?
2. Why does Mama believe that she and Esperanza are fortunate?
3. How has Mama’s appearance changed since she left Mexico?
4. Why is it difficult for Esperanza to do the jobs she is assigned?
5. How does Miguel help Esperanza?
6. Why does Miguel decide to work in the fields instead of working on the railroad?
7. How is the mystery of the bundle that Miguel and Alfonso had to water at each train stop solved?
8. Why does Esperanza feel humiliated at bath time?
9. Why does Marta come to the jamaica?
10. Why aren’t many of the workers at Isabel’s camp eager to strike?
Las Cebollas; Las Almendras (cont.)

Questions for Discussion:
1. Why do you think Esperanza tells Isabel that her current situation is temporary?
2. Why are Mama and Esperanza so emotionally affected by the rose bushes that Miguel and Alfonso plant?
3. What do you think Mama means when she tells Esperanza, “Do you know I am so proud of you? For all you are learning”? What is Esperanza learning?
4. Do you think the workers should strike?

Literary Device: Symbolism

What do the roses symbolize?

______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

What does the kitten that Marta holds symbolize?

______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

Writing Activity:

Write about an object you possess, such as a photograph, a souvenir, a letter, a piece of jewelry, or a toy or game from your early childhood. Tell about the memories this object brings forth. What feelings do you associate with it? Who or what does the object symbolize?
LAS CIRUELAS; LAS PAPAS

**Vocabulary:** Use the words from the Word Box and the clues below to complete the crossword puzzle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORD BOX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>amber</td>
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<tr>
<td>atrocious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bereft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contagious</td>
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<tr>
<td>intent</td>
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<td>listless</td>
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<td>musty</td>
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<td>nimble</td>
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<tr>
<td>propagated</td>
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<tr>
<td>regimented</td>
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<tr>
<td>ritual</td>
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<td>roil</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Across**
4. ceremony
5. very unpleasant
7. too tired to care about anything
8. deprived of something
10. uniform
11. having a damp, moldy smell

**Down**
1. light and quick
2. drove forward
3. disturb
5. yellowish-brown
6. tending to spread from person to person, as an illness
9. having the attention fixed upon

Read to find out what happens as a result of a dust storm.
Las Ciruelas; Las Papas (cont.)

Questions:
1. Why is Esperanza left alone to care for the two babies?
2. Why do the babies become ill under Esperanza’s care?
3. Why doesn’t the strike take place?
4. Why is the dust storm so destructive?
5. How does Mama become ill? Why is Esperanza fearful after hearing the doctor’s diagnosis?
6. Why does Esperanza continue working on the crocheted blanket that Abuelita had begun?
7. Why is Mama taken to the hospital?
8. Why does Esperanza decide to work in the sheds?

Questions for Discussion:
1. How would you assess Esperanza’s first day caring for Lupe and Pepe? Do you think the babies should have been left in her care?
2. What is happening to Esperanza’s memories about life in Mexico? Has this ever happened to you?
3. What does Esperanza mean when she says that Isabel has nothing but she has everything? Do you know anyone who is like Isabel? Do you know anyone who has everything, but has nothing?
4. Do you think that Esperanza will succeed in being strong for Mama?

Science Connection:
Do some research on infectious diseases to learn why Mama in 1930 received so little medical help for her lung disease. Find out when the first antibiotics were used to treat diseases.

Literary Devices:
1. *Simile*—What is being compared in the following simile?

   It [the dust] had settled on the world, covering everything like a suede blanket.

   Why is this better than saying “Dust was everywhere”? 
Las Ciruelas; Las Papas (cont.)

II. Metaphor—What is being compared in the following metaphor?

Would she [Esperanza] ever escape this valley she was living in? This valley of Mama being sick?

__________________________________________________________________________________

What mood does this create?

__________________________________________________________________________________

Writing Activity:

Return to the pages in which the dust storm is described. Notice the details and descriptive language that the author uses. Write about a dramatic natural event that you have experienced. Use language that will help the reader relive your experience.
Vocabulary: Use the context to determine the meaning of the underlined word in each of the following sentences. Then compare your definition with a dictionary definition.

1. The cotton sheet was pulled taut over the mattress so that it would be free of wrinkles on the bed.
   
   Your definition: ____________________________________________________________________
   
   Dictionary definition: ____________________________________________________________________

2. As part of the wedding ceremony, rose petals from the flower girl's basket were strewn all along the aisle.

   Your definition: ____________________________________________________________________
   
   Dictionary definition: ____________________________________________________________________

3. Although she had a closet full of clothes, Sophie impulsively bought a dress she saw in a store window.

   Your definition: ____________________________________________________________________
   
   Dictionary definition: ____________________________________________________________________

4. When the wind blew Mr. Brown's hat off his head, he ran down the street trying to retrieve it.

   Your definition: ____________________________________________________________________
   
   Dictionary definition: ____________________________________________________________________

5. The boys enjoyed playing softball in the vacant lot so that traffic would not interrupt their game.

   Your definition: ____________________________________________________________________
   
   Dictionary definition: ____________________________________________________________________

6. Your recuperation from knee surgery will be faster if you do special exercises.

   Your definition: ____________________________________________________________________
   
   Dictionary definition: ____________________________________________________________________

7. When the watchdog let out a menacing growl, the intruder became frightened and ran away.

   Your definition: ____________________________________________________________________
   
   Dictionary definition: ____________________________________________________________________
Los Aguacates; Los Espárragos (cont.)

Questions:
1. What evidence reveals that Esperanza did good work in the shed cutting potatoes for planting?
2. Why is Esperanza told that she may not visit her mother in the hospital for one month?
3. Why doesn’t Miguel shop for groceries at the store closest to camp?
4. Why are Marta and her mother living in conditions that are worse than those at Esperanza’s camp?
5. How does Esperanza help a starving family?
6. Why does the strike become a time of opportunity for Miguel?
7. How does the strike present Esperanza with a difficult conflict?
8. Why does Miguel disagree with his father and insist that “things will get worse” for the workers?
9. What tactic does the government use to stop the strike?
10. How does Esperanza help Marta?

Questions for Discussion:
1. In what ways did people of Mexican origin face prejudice in 1930? Does this prejudice still exist in the United States?
2. Do you sympathize more with the strikers or those that cross the picket lines to go to work? Do you think the farm workers could improve their lives without striking?
3. Why do you think the government chooses such drastic measures to end the strike? Are there any other options to employ? Could such an action take place today?
4. Do you think Esperanza should have risked her own safety to help Marta? What does this reveal about Esperanza’s character?

Literary Devices:
I. Symbolism—What does the change in Esperanza’s hands symbolize?

What does the damaged piñata on the tree symbolize?
Los Aguacates; Los Espárragos (cont.)

II. *Simile*—What is being compared in the following simile?

The picket signs lay on the ground, discarded, and like a mass of marbles that had already been hit, the strikers scattered into the fields...

__________________________________________________________________________________

Why is this an apt comparison?

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

*Science Connection:*

Do some research to learn about the disease of pneumonia. Find out why it is considered a dangerous illness and why it was even more dangerous in 1930 when Mama became ill.

*Writing Activity:*

Imagine you are a reporter and write a news article about the striking farm workers. Remember that a reporter must be fair and present all sides in an issue. Your article should include a headline, a byline (your name), a dateline (date and place), a lead paragraph that tells the *who, what, when, where, and why* about the story, and one or two body paragraphs that contain other important details.
LOS DURAZNOS; LAS UVAS

Vocabulary: Synonyms are words with similar meanings. Draw a line from each word in Column A to its synonym in Column B. Then use the words in Column A to fill in the blanks in the sentences below.

A                      B
1. optimism             a. full-grown
2. primly               b. endless
3. mature               c. doubtfully
4. antiseptic           d. hopefulness
5. skeptically          e. cheered
6. buoyed               f. formally
7. infinite             g. germ-free

1. The walls and floors were scrubbed and the doctors' instruments were sterilized so that everything in the operating room was ____________________.

2. My parents promised me a dog when I was ____________________ enough to care for it on my own.

3. The teacher regarded her student ____________________ when he gave her a lame excuse for not doing his homework.

4. Lisa ____________________ called her babysitter “Miss Wallace” instead of calling her “Cindy.”

5. You have a greater chance of success if you face a new challenge with ____________________.

6. As a talented writer, scientist, and musician, Paul was assured by his guidance counselor that he would have ____________________ choices for his future profession.

7. The hopes of the stranded victims of a boating accident were ____________________ when they saw the Coast Guard coming to their rescue.
Los Duraznos; Las Uvas (cont.)

Questions:

1. Why does Esperanza know that Isabel’s wish to be la reina will not come true?
2. How does the arrival of the families from Oklahoma affect Esperanza and the other Mexicans at the camp?
3. In what ways does Esperanza reveal that her feelings about the inequalities in American life are becoming stronger?
4. Why does Esperanza give Isabel her porcelain doll and a bag of peaches?
5. How does Esperanza and Hortensia’s family prepare for Mama’s return from the hospital?
6. Why did Miguel take Esperanza’s money?
7. Why is Abuelita amused when she sees the blanket she started and Esperanza has almost finished?
8. Why was it risky for Miguel to take Abuelita out of Mexico?

Questions for Discussion:

1. Do you think Esperanza or Miguel is more realistic about the future of Mexicans in America?
2. Do you think Esperanza should feel guilty about Miguel’s departure?
3. Why do you think the small homemade shrine inspires deep feelings in many of the people who come to Esperanza’s cabin?
4. Why doesn’t Esperanza understand and speak English? Do you think she will learn the language one day?
5. Why do you think the chapters of this book are given the names of fruits and vegetables instead of the months of the year? Why do you think two different chapters in the book are called “Las Uvas”?
6. Why is Esperanza once again able to hear the earth’s heartbeat?

Literary Devices:

1. Cliffhanger—A cliffhanger is a device borrowed from serialized silent films in which an episode ends at a moment of suspense or heightened tension. In a book it usually appears at the end of a chapter to encourage the reader to continue on in the book. What is the cliffhanger at the end of the chapter entitled “Los Duraznos”?
Los Duraznos; Las Uvas (cont.)

II. *Simile*—What is being compared in the following simile?

Then, like the irrigation pipes in the fields when the water is first turned on, her [Esperanza's] anger burst forth.

Why is this an apt comparison?

Literary Element: Theme

Theme in literature refers to the statement(s) about life the author is trying to get across to the reader. Often the theme is repeated in different parts of the book. For example: Papa says in Chapter One, “Wait a little while and the fruit will fall into your hand.” Toward the end of the book, this quote is repeated by both Miguel and Esperanza.

What does this quote mean?

How does this quote apply to Esperanza's life?

How may it apply to other people’s lives?

Writing Activity:

Write a letter to yourself and put today’s date on it. In the letter write about your hopes and dreams for the year to come. What are your goals? What do you want to accomplish? What do you hope will happen to you, your family, and your friends? When your letter is finished, put it in a safe place. Reread it one year from now to see if you have come closer to your goals.
CLOZE ACTIVITY

The following passage has been taken from the chapter entitled “Las Papas.” Read it through completely and then go back and fill in each blank with a word that makes sense. Then, you may compare your language with that of the author.

What had Abuelita told her when she’d given her the bundle of crocheting? And then she remembered. She had said, “_________________ 1 this for me, Esperanza…and promise me ____________ 2 take care of Mama.”

After Mama fell ______________ 3 Esperanza picked up the needlework and began ______________ 4 Abuelita had left off. Ten stitches up ______________ 5 the top of the mountain. Add one ______________ 6 Nine stitches down to the bottom of ______________ 7 valley, skip one. Her fingers were more ______________ 8 now and her stitches were more even. ______________ 9 mountains and valleys in the blanket were ______________.10 But as soon as she reached a ______________,11 she was headed back down into a ______________ 12 again. Would she ever escape this valley ______________ 13 was living in? This valley of Mama ______________ 14 sick?

What else had Abuelita said? After ______________ 15 had lived many mountains and valleys they ______________ 16 be together again. She bent over her ______________,17 intent, and when her hair fell into ______________ 18 lap, she picked it up and wove ______________ 19 into the blanket. She cried when she ______________ 20 of the wishes that would go into ______________ 21 blanket forever.

Because she was wishing that ______________ 22 would not die.

The blanket grew longer. ______________ 23 Mama grew more pale. Women in the ______________ 24 brought her extra skeins of yarn and ______________ 25 didn’t care that they didn’t match. Each night when she went to bed, she put the growing blanket back over Mama, covering her in hopeful color.
POST-READING ACTIVITIES

1. Return to the chart of historical events that you began in the Pre-Reading Activities on page five of this study guide. Fill in the column with any events in the novel that reflect the historical events noted in the second column. Compare your responses with those of your classmates.

2. Return to the Pre-Reading Activity in which you defined “courage.” Work with a partner to list all of the characters who exhibited courage and give examples of behavior that showed courage. Compare your responses with those of your classmates.

3. Prejudice refers to an unfavorable opinion about a person, group of people, or object that is formed without prior knowledge, thought, or reason. How were Esperanza and her family and friends affected by prejudice? Was there anything they could do to change the feelings of prejudice that were leveled against Mexicans and Mexican Americans? Have you ever observed or been the object of prejudice?

4. In a chart, such as the one below, compare Esperanza at the beginning and the end of the novel. One comparison has been done for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Esperanza at the Beginning</th>
<th>Esperanza at the End</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Esperanza lived a privileged life in Mexico with her loving family.</td>
<td>Esperanza lived in poverty on a California farm laborers’ camp with her mother and loving friends.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Imagine that Esperanza Rising is made into a film. Who might play the role of Esperanza? What scenes might be best shown in a film version of the story? Which scenes might be too difficult or inappropriate to show in a film? Would any scenes need to be changed or omitted?

6. In fiction, as in real life, all problems may not be solved. At the end of Esperanza Rising, which problems remain unresolved? In an imaginary sequel to this novel, what do you think will happen to Esperanza, her family, and her friends? Do you think the title of the book suggests what Esperanza’s future will be?

7. Use the recipe for flan on the next page to share Esperanza’s favorite dessert with your classmates.
Post-Reading Activities (cont.)

Coconut Flan

What you need:
1 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk
1 1/3 cups whole milk
2 large eggs
2 large egg yolks
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
3/4 cup sweetened flaked coconut

What you do:
1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Arrange six 3/4-cup custard cups in a 13 × 9 × 2-inch baking pan.
4. Divide mixture among cups. Pour enough hot water into pan to come halfway up sides of cups.
5. Bake flans until just set in center, about 30 minutes.
6. Remove flans from pan and refrigerate until cold, about 2 hours. (Can be prepared 1 day ahead. Cover and keep refrigerated.)

8. Literature Circle: Have a literature circle discussion in which you tell your personal reactions to Esperanza Rising. Here are some questions and sentence starters to help your literature circle begin a discussion.

- How are you like Esperanza? How are you different?
- Do you find the characters in the novel realistic? Why or why not?
- Which character did you like the most? The least?
- Who else would you like to read this novel? Why?
- What did you learn about the conditions of life among Mexican farm workers in the United States in the 1930s?
- What questions would you like to ask the author about this novel?
- It was not fair when. . .
- I would have liked to see. . .
- I wonder. . .
- Esperanza learned that. . .
SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Anaya, Rudolfo A. *Bless Me, Ultima*. Warner Books.

____________. *Farolitos for Abuelo*. Hyperion Books.


Some Other Books by Pam Muñoz Ryan

* Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride*. Scholastic.

* Becoming Naomi Leon*. Scholastic.

* California, Here We Come!*. Charlesbridge.

* The Flag We Love*. Charlesbridge.

* Hello, Ocean*. Charlesbridge.

* Mice and Beans*. Scholastic.

* One Hundred is a Family*. Hyperion Books.

* Riding Freedom*. Scholastic.

*NOVEL-TIES Study Guides are available for these titles.
Aguascalientes, Mexico; Las Uvas; Las Papayas; Los Higos


Questions: 1. When Esperanza was a little girl, her father would take her for walks and express his deep love for his land. He would encourage her to touch the soil and lie down to feel the “earth’s heart beat.” 2. It is clear that Esperanza’s family is wealthy because at the age of fifteen, Esperanza will have a “presentation” party, wear a white gown, dance with all the wealthy boys, and receive many wonderful birthday gifts from Papa. Her family owns a large vineyard and oversees many servants. 3. Papa had been warned about going out to work the cattle because he could become the target of bandits or people who resented the inequality of wealth in Mexico even after the Revolution had been won. 4. Although Esperanza and Miguel, the son of the family’s servants, had been close friends while growing up, the social disparity between them mitigated against a friendship or romantic liaison, particularly after Esperanza pointed out the social barriers. 5. When Papa dies, Esperanza and Mama grieve while Esperanza’s unscrupulous uncles threaten to take away their house and land and to send Esperanza away to boarding school. 6. Tio Luis wants to marry Mama because her beauty and esteemed position among the people will advance his political goals. 7. Mama and Esperanza do not need to discuss the cause of the fire because it is assumed that the uncles were to blame. 8. Mama tricks Tio Luis by “accepting” his proposal but actually planning to escape to the United States with Esperanza.

Las Guayabas; Los Melones


Questions: 1. Mama, Esperanza, and Hortensia have to leave at night well hidden in a wagon because they fear being attacked by bandits and noticed by Tio Luis’s spies. 2. Hortensia recalls the train journey in order to distract Esperanza from the discomforts of the wagon ride. 3. Mama makes a yarn doll for the peasant girl on the train as a gift and as a way of apologizing for Esperanza’s rudeness in not allowing her to touch her special doll. 4. If Papa had lived, Miguel could have trusted in his love for him and his influence to help him reach his goal of working on the railroad in Mexico. With Papa gone, Miguel must leave Mexico in order to reach beyond his lowly social status. 5. Mama says, “Now we are peasants, too” because they will now be migrant workers; their life of luxury is over. Actions which once seemed socially incorrect, such as engaging in intimate conversation with a stranger, are to be considered normal now that they are poor and uprooted. 6. So that the officials will let her cross the border, Mama stands straight and tall and looks directly into the official’s eyes. She speaks in a way that assures them that her work papers are to be trusted. 7. Miguel apologizes to Esperanza because Isabel’s remarks suggested that he had once criticized Esperanza for being rich and spoiled. 8. To earn a living, Mama and Esperanza will work on a large farm in California picking crops. 9. Esperanza dislikes Marta because she is the object of her insults. Marta sarcastically calls her a “princess,” and she expresses deep resentment toward landowners like Papa. 10. According to Isabel the farm workers of different nationalities are housed in separate camps so that they will not communicate with each other and not compare working conditions. The conditions are so bad that the land owners fear the workers will organize and strike.

Las Cebellas; Las Almendras


Questions: 1. Esperanza feels like a misfit because she does not speak English, and she is not accustomed to the poor living conditions in the camp. She also feels a pang of envy whenever she sees children running to their fathers. 2. Mama tells Esperanza that they are fortunate because they are together and have gotten a job and a place to live immediately while others have to wait months. 3. Since she left Mexico, Mama appears older and more dowdy. She now wears a long cotton dress with an apron tied over it instead of the elegant dresses she used to wear in Mexico. She wears her hair in a long braid instead of a beautiful plaited bun so that she can wear a hat while she works. 4. Accustomed to servants doing all of the household work, Esperanza does not know how to wash clothes or even how to sweep. She needs to be taught the skills that every young girl in the camps already knows. 5. Miguel helps Esperanza by teaching her the correct way to sweep with a broom and by being sympathetic with her lack of knowledge. 6. Although Miguel has great mechanical skills, he is
only offered menial jobs on the railroad because of prejudice directed against Mexicans. Disillusioned, Miguel decides to do field work, instead. 7. The mystery of the bundle is solved when Miguel and Alfonso reveal the rose plants which they had rescued from the fire at Rancho de las Rosas, carried all the way from Mexico, and planted near their cabin. 8. Esperanza is humiliated at bath time because she forgets her new situation in life and expects Hortensia to undress and bathe her, as all the women and girls look on. 9. Marta comes to the jamaica because it is a gathering for hundreds of farm workers, a place where she hopes to organize workers to join together to strike. 10. The workers at Isabel's camp are more comfortable than those at migrant camps and are not eager to strike. Unlike the migrant camps, the workers can stay in one place and have better sanitary conditions. If they strike, the owners may replace them with former dust bowl farmers who are desperate to work.

Las Ciruelas; Las Papas
Questions: 1. Esperanza is the only one who can care for the babies because Isabel is going to school and everyone else is working. 2. The babies become ill because Esperanza is too inexperienced to know that uncooked fruit cannot be digested by infants. 3. The strike does not take place because those workers who are against it are afraid of being unable to feed their families and themselves, and those workers in favor of it are prevented from striking by the dust storm. 4. The dust from the storm destroys the entire cotton crop, leaving the migrant cotton workers without jobs. People’s lungs are filled with dust and their faces and bodies become encrusted with the dust. 5. Mama develops Valley Fever, a lung infection from the dust spores she inhaled during the storm. Esperanza is fearful after hearing the doctor say that her mother’s recuperation could take six months if she survives the initial infection. Esperanza is afraid her only living parent will die. 6. Esperanza continues working on Abuelita’s blanket because she wants to fulfill her grandmother’s parting concerns, particularly now that Mama is ill. Esperanza also believes superstitiously that the mountains and valleys she crochets in the zig-zag pattern will speed Abuelita’s arrival in California. 7. Mama is taken to the hospital so that she may receive the care that she needs to recover from the lung illness and also come out of a state of depression into which she has fallen. 8. Esperanza decides to work in the sheds in order to earn money to bring Abuelita to California. Esperanza is sure that her presence will make Mama well.

Los Aguacates; Los Espárragos
Questions: 1. It is clear that Esperanza did a good job cutting out eyes in potatoes because she is about to start on another job—tying grapevines. Miguel had told her that if she did well at one job, another would be offered to her. 2. Esperanza is told that she may not visit her mother for one month because she has contracted pneumonia, an illness that would make her weak and susceptible to other infections that could be fatal. 3. Miguel doesn’t shop at the closest store because he prefers to travel farther to Mr. Yakota’s store in order to be treated without prejudice. 4. Marta and her mother have moved to a camp that is even worse than any other because all of the strikers were evicted from the migrant worker camp. They now live together in a makeshift camp with no facilities and are guarded for their own protection. 5. Esperanza helps a starving family by giving them some of the beans she had just bought and by giving the children a donkey piñata filled with sweets. 6. Since many railroad workers joined the strike, Miguel, who is willing to work, has an opportunity to get a job as a mechanic on the railroad. 7. When the strike begins, Esperanza is faced with the conflict between her sympathies for the needs of striking workers and her personal need to earn money for her family. She is faced with threats from strikers as she crosses the picket lines. 8. Miguel insists that “things will get worse” because the Valley is being flooded by more and more people who are desperate enough to pick cotton for very low wages. 9. To stop the strike, the government sends in immigration officials to deport only the farm workers who are on strike. Even striking workers who are citizens are deported. 10. Esperanza protects Marta from Immigration by giving her an apron and some asparagus so that she looks like a worker instead of a striker.
Los Duraznos; Las Uvas

Vocabulary: 1. d  2. f  3. a  4. g  5. c  6. e  7. b; 1. antiseptic  2. mature  3. skeptically  4. primly  5. optimism  6. infinite  7. buoyed

Questions: 1. Esperanza knows that the school officials, who have shown prejudice against Mexicans and Asians in the past, will choose a blonde, blue-eyed child to be la reina, instead of Isabel, their best third-grade student. 2. The arrival of the families from Oklahoma has a devastating effect upon Esperanza and the other Mexicans at her camp. Miguel loses his mechanic's job at the railroad and must do a menial railroad job or return to the fields. The Mexican farm workers fear that they will ultimately have to accept lower wages and they chafe at the new, better appointed living quarters being offered the Oklahomans. 3. It is clear that Esperanza's feelings about the inequities in American life are stronger when her temper flares upon hearing that Miguel was fired. She also argues passionately with Miguel about discrimination against Mexicans and the hopelessness of expecting to improve their lives. 4. Esperanza gives Isabel the porcelain doll and the peaches because she sympathizes with her young friend's disappointment over not being chosen Queen of the May. 5. To prepare for Mama's homecoming, Esperanza and Hortensia clean the cabin until it is antiseptically clean. Alfonso fashions cushions for a chair that Mama can place outside in the shade. 6. Miguel took the money Esperanza had been saving to unite Abuelita with Mama. He returns to Mexico, helps Abuelita escape from Tio Luis, and brings her to California. 7. Abuelita is amused and delighted to see the blanket she had started almost finished by her granddaughter: it is long enough to fit three beds because Esperanza knit for the five months that her mother was ill. 8. It was dangerous for Miguel to take Abuelita out of Mexico because she was being spied upon by Tio Luis who was so powerful and evil that he might have caused them harm.