Esperanza Rising
by Pam Muñoz Ryan

It is 1930, and Esperanza is watching the workers on her father’s huge ranch, El Rancho de las Rosas, harvest the grapes. Esperanza doesn’t realize it, but before long she, too, will be working as hard as the campesinos. Her life is torn apart when her father is killed, and her devious uncle plots to marry her mother and take over the ranch. Driven from their beautiful home in Mexico, Esperanza and her mother start over in a camp for farm workers in California. Here, Esperanza must learn to rise again.

Selected Awards
- Pura Belpre Award Winner
- Jane Addams Children’s Book Award Winner

About the Author

Esperanza’s story is based on events in the life of Pam Muñoz Ryan’s grandmother. While Muñoz Ryan used her grandmother’s recollections as the foundation for her story, she also researched local history, interviewed people who had lived in the same camp with her grandmother, visited the places where her grandmother had lived and worked, and used her imagination. From these sources, Esperanza Rising was born. Muñoz Ryan has also told the stories of other women who overcame society’s limitations in her books When Marian Sang, Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride, and Riding Freedom.
Think About What You Know

Change  At the beginning of this novel, Esperanza is a pampered rich girl. By the end of the story, she has grown into a strong person who can deal with problems. To give students insight into why and how people change:

- Have them brainstorm reasons that cause people to change and record them on a cluster. Then discuss how people become different when they change.

They get sick or hurt.

A friend or family member dies.

They meet new people.

- Have students use Student Journal, page 3 to tell about a time when they or someone they know changed.

Preview and Predict

Have students look at the front cover, read the title, and then read the summary on the back cover. Say:

- Esperanza’s life is going to change a lot, isn’t it? What do you think will happen to her? Look at the cover. What clue does the picture give?

Then point out The Exchange question on the title page: Can people truly change? How? Explain that when they finish reading, they’ll share their ideas about this and other questions with a group.

Next, have students complete Student Journal, page 3 to preview the book and make predictions about Esperanza and her mother.

As students page through the book, call their attention to the chapter titles. Explain that each title is the name of a fruit, vegetable, or other crop that has special meaning in that chapter. Encourage students to look for the special meanings as they read.
Use a Reading Strategy

**Problem and Solution Chart** Preview the graphic organizer on Student Journal, page 4 with students. Explain that as they read *Esperanza Rising*, they can complete the Chart to show the problems and solutions in the book. Have students add to their Charts after they finish reading each section.

### Use a Reading Strategy

**Use a Problem and Solution Chart**

As you read each chapter of *Esperanza Rising*, use a Problem and Solution Chart to show how Esperanza and her family and friends solve their problems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapters</th>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Papa was missing.</td>
<td>Everyone tried to help each other stay calm.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Las Uvas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Las Papayas</td>
<td>Tío Luis wanted to marry Mama.</td>
<td>Mama refused.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Los Higos</td>
<td>The uncles burned the house.</td>
<td>Mama and Esperanza left Mexico.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Las Guayabas</td>
<td>Esperanza’s life changed and she had to be around poor people.</td>
<td>She started to understand poor people.</td>
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<td>Los Melones</td>
<td>Esperanza missed Papa.</td>
<td>Miguel comforted her.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Las Cebollas</td>
<td>People laughed at Esperanza because she couldn’t sweep.</td>
<td>Miguel taught Esperanza how to sweep.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Las Almendras</td>
<td>Marta tried to get the workers to strike.</td>
<td>The workers told her to leave the camp.</td>
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<td>Las Ciruelas</td>
<td>Mama got sick.</td>
<td>The doctor came.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Las Papas</td>
<td>Mama needed Abuelita.</td>
<td>Esperanza started to earn money to bring Abuelita to the U.S.</td>
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<td>Los Aguacates</td>
<td>A strike would have ruined everything for Esperanza.</td>
<td>She decided not to strike.</td>
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<td>Los Espárragos</td>
<td>Immigration was searching for strikers.</td>
<td>Esperanza helped Marta escape.</td>
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<td>Los Duraznos</td>
<td>Esperanza caused Miguel to leave.</td>
<td>She prayed for Miguel at Papa’s roses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las Uvas</td>
<td>Abuelita was still not with them.</td>
<td>Miguel brought Abuelita to the U.S.</td>
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Read the Book

Form the group that will read *Esperanza Rising*. Plan how the group will read and respond. Some options are:

- **Read with a Group** Group members read an agreed-upon number of pages, complete the corresponding *Student Journal* page(s), and meet to discuss. When they finish the book, they meet again for The Exchange. The group can use the planner on *Student Journal, page 2* to establish meeting times.

- **Read Independently** Group members read the book on their own and then meet for The Exchange. The group can use the planner on *Student Journal, page 2* to establish the meeting time.

- **Guided Reading** Read aloud the summary at the beginning of each chapter to give students an overview of the chapter. Use the **Before You Move On** questions to check comprehension as students read. Use **Look Ahead** to set a focus for reading the next set of pages. At the end of each section, assign the appropriate *Student Journal* page. Discuss the page before starting the next section. Establish a date for The Exchange and record it on the planner.

Whichever option you choose, use pages 5–15 for an at-a-glance view of *Student Journal* pages, as well as answers to the **Before You Move On** questions.

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**Plan Your Schedule**

My group members are: ________________________________________________________________

We plan to read *Esperanza Rising* and meet on these dates:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapters</th>
<th>Date We Will Finish Reading</th>
<th>Date We Will Discuss</th>
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<tr>
<td>1924</td>
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Our Exchange meeting will be on this date: ______________
1924 and Las Uvas

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 9

1. Setting  Describe Agua scalientes.
   It is a beautiful valley where fruit grows.

2. Character  How do you know that Papa loved the land?
   He could hear its heartbeat; he could feel it breathing.

PAGE 18

1. Character’s Point of View  Reread page 17. Why did Esperanza want to scold Papa?
   The neighbors had warned him about bandits.

2. Cause and Effect  Reread pages 17–18. Why might bandits attack Papa?
   Papa was a rich landowner; the bandits were poor people who resented Papa’s wealth.

PAGE 24

1. Character  Reread pages 20–21. What two lessons did Abuelita teach Esperanza about life?
   There is no life without difficulties, and do not be afraid to start over.

2. Character’s Motive  Reread pages 23–24. Why did Miguel stop talking to Esperanza?
   She told him that they could never understand each other because she was rich and he was poor.

PAGE 28

1. Foreshadowing  Tio Luis brought back Papa’s belt buckle. What did this foreshadow?
   Papa lost his belt buckle, so something bad had happened; something was wrong.

2. Inference  Reread page 28. What probably happened to Papa?
   He was attacked and killed by bandits.

Respond to 1924 and Las Uvas

Problem and Solution Chart

Think It Over
Think about what you read and answer these questions.

1. Personal Response  What surprised you most in this part of the story?

2. Comparisons  How is Hortensia like Mama? How is she different?
   Hortensia and Mama are both sweet and kind. Hortensia is a servant; she is short and heavy. Mama is the wife of a rich man; she is tall and beautiful.

3. Character  What words would you use to describe Esperanza before Papa died?
   Happy, carefree, proud, and spoiled.
Las Papayas

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 34

1. Inference Esperanza got many birthday gifts, but she only wanted the doll. Why?
The doll was from Papa.

2. Setting Reread pages 32–33. What was the house like every night after Papa died?
Empty and sad. It seemed too big without Papa.

PAGE 39

1. Inference Reread pages 35–36. When Tío Luis and Tío Marco “took care of family business,” what were they really doing?
They were trying to take all of Papa’s things.

2. Conflict What did Tío Luis want? What did Mama want?
Tío Luis wanted to marry Mama and take over the ranch. Mama wanted him to go away.

PAGE 44

1. Comparisons Reread page 42. According to Miguel, how was the United States different from Mexico?
In Mexico, Miguel and his father would always be servants. They could become more than servants in the United States.

2. Character’s Point of View Reread page 42. How did Esperanza feel about Miguel when he touched her hand?
She liked him very much, but she thought that she should not like a servant.
Los Higos

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 48
1. Inference How do you think the fire started?  
   Tío Luis and Tío Marco set it.  
2. Author’s Style Reread page 45. How did the author use Esperanza’s dream to show there was a fire?  
   The bear in the dream smothered Esperanza; she couldn’t breathe.

PAGE 55
1. Character’s Motive Why did Mama say that she would think about Tío Luis’s proposal?  
   She thought that he would continue to hurt the family if she said no.  
2. Cause and Effect Reread page 55. Why did everyone laugh when Esperanza said that she could work, too?  
   She had never done any work in her life.

PAGE 61
1. Character’s Motive Why did Mama lie to Tío Luis when she said she would marry him?  
   She wanted him to leave them alone; she wanted time to plan the escape.  
2. Sequence On pages 60–61, Esperanza and Mama reached the fig orchard. What did they do next?  
   They looked back at El Rancho de las Rosas.
Las Guayabas

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 69
1. **Character**  Reread page 63. How did Esperanza feel when she first saw the wagon?
   Scared, nervous, and uncomfortable.

2. **Flashback**  Reread page 65. Why did Hortensia tell the story about the bandits?
   She wanted Esperanza to be brave again.

PAGE 76
1. **Comparisons**  Think about what Esperanza experienced on the train. How had Esperanza’s life changed?
   She was poor; she could no longer stay away from peasants.

2. **Character’s Feelings**  Why was Esperanza glad when the little girl got off the train?
   The little girl made her feel guilty for being selfish.

PAGE 84
1. **Character**  Mama told a poor woman about her problems.
   What did this show about Mama?
   Mama was ready to adjust to a new life.

2. **Comparisons**  Reread page 78. How was the journey different for Miguel and Esperanza?
   Esperanza was bored and unhappy. Miguel was busy and happy; he was interested in the train.

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Respond to Las Guayabas

Problem and Solution Chart


Think It Over

Think about what you read and answer these questions.

1. **Personal Response**  How did you feel when Mama, Esperanza, and Hortensia were hiding in the wagon? Have you ever had a tense experience like that? Explain.

2. **Paraphrase**  What did Carmen mean when she said on page 80, “I am poor, but I am rich”?
   She did not have much money, but she loved her family and was happy.

3. **Inference**  What did Miguel say about the color of a person’s skin? Why do you think Esperanza had never noticed this before?
   People with light skin, or of Spanish descent, were rich; people with dark skin were poor. Esperanza’s family was rich, so she did not think about how life was for others.
Los Melones

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 89
1. Inference  Reread page 86. Why do you think the official seemed angry at Mama?
   He did not trust poor people.

2. Character’s Motive  Why was Esperanza so angry at Alfonso and Miguel for getting on the train at the last minute?
   She was afraid they would miss the train; she wanted everyone together.

PAGE 98
1. Sequence  On pages 95–96, Esperanza thought about the heartbeat of the earth. What happened after she tried to hear it?
   She felt as if she were floating upward; everything went black.

2. Character  Describe Miguel’s personality.
   Sweet, kind, helpful, and understanding.

PAGE 104
1. Character’s Feelings  Reread page 104. Why was Esperanza angry when Miguel talked to Marta?
   She was jealous of Marta; she thought Marta was rude.

2. Conflict  Reread pages 102–103. According to Marta, why should the workers stop working?
   To force the owners to give them higher wages and better housing.
Las Cebollas

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 110
1. Setting Reread page 105. Why did the cabins remind Esperanza of the horse stalls on Papa’s ranch? They were small and simple; they were all the same.

2. Inference Reread pages 109–110. Why did Esperanza tell Isabel that she would leave the camp soon? She hoped that it would be true; she didn’t want to admit she was poor.

PAGE 117
1. Comparisons Reread page 113. How did Mama change her hair? Why? She put it in a long braid like a peasant. She had to wear it like that for work.

2. Character’s Motive On page 116, Esperanza was nice to Silvia. Why? She wanted to be nicer to peasant people, like Mama was. She didn’t want Silvia to cry.

PAGE 124
1. Conclusions Marta said mean things and laughed at Esperanza when she tried to sweep. What did this show about Marta? That she was mean; she was not nice.

2. Character’s Motive Reread pages 122–123. Why do you think Miguel taught Esperanza how to sweep? He cared about her.
Las Almendras

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 133
1. **Plot** On pages 126–127, Alfonso and Miguel had a surprise for Esperanza and Mama. What was it?
   They had planted Papa’s roses around a shrine in the camp.

2. **Cause and Effect** Why didn’t Esperanza want to go to the jamaica at first? What made her decide to go?
   She was afraid people would tease her. The flan made her go.

PAGE 141
1. **Sequence** Reread page 137. What did the workers do after Marta tried to get them to strike?
   They told her to leave the camp.

2. **Inference** Reread page 139. Do you think Esperanza understood Marta better? Why?
   Yes. She realized that Marta’s life had been hard.

Las Ciruelas

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 146
1. **Cause and Effect** Why did the babies get sick?
   Esperanza fed them raw plums.

2. **Summarize** What was the one thing Esperanza did right? How did she know how to do this?
   She gave the babies rice water. Hortensia had given it to her when she was young.

PAGE 155
1. **Character’s Point of View** Did Esperanza agree with the workers in her camp about the strike? How do you know?
   Yes, because they didn’t strike, and she and Mama didn’t want to go on strike.

2. **Inference** Why did Mama keep coughing?
   The dust storm had made her sick.

PAGE 160
1. **Summarize** Reread page 158. How did the doctor describe Valley Fever?
   It is a lung disease caused by dust spores.

2. **Conflict** On pages 159–160, Esperanza had to face another terrible problem. What was it?
   Mama might die.
Las Papas

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 167
1. Character’s Motive  Esperanza began to crochet the blanket. What else had she promised Abuelita she would do? She promised to finish the blanket and to take care of Mama.

2. Cause and Effect  Why did Hortensia tell Esperanza not to send a letter to Abuelita? Her uncles were watching the convent and the post office.

PAGE 175
1. Plot  Why did Esperanza start working in the sheds? She needed money to bring Abuelita to the United States.

2. Character’s Motive  Why did Marta’s aunt say that Marta could not live with her family? She could make trouble for them; they could be asked to leave the camp; they could lose their jobs.

PAGE 180
1. Comparisons  Reread page 179. What did Isabel have? What did Esperanza want? Isabel had a simple life; everything made her happy. Esperanza wanted fewer worries, like Isabel.

2. Inference  Why did Esperanza call herself la patrona, or the head of the family? Papa was dead; Mama was sick; Esperanza had to be in charge.

Respond to Las Papas

Problem and Solution Chart

Think It Over
Think about what you read and answer these questions.

1. Personal Response  Have you ever protested against something? What was it? What happened?

2. Character  How did Esperanza feel about her old life? It was like a fairy tale; she did not know her old self.

3. Theme  How do you think this chapter relates to the theme “Making It Through Tough Times”? This chapter shows how Esperanza is making it through the tough time of her mother’s sickness.
Los Aguacates

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 186

   Mama had pneumonia and was weak; she might have gotten another infection that someone brought into the hospital.

2. Inference Reread page 186. When Mama said “No matter what happens,” what do you think she meant? 
   She meant that she could get worse or die.

PAGE 194

1. Summarize Reread pages 188–189. What did some Americans think about Mexicans? 
   They thought they were dirty and poor, and they had no education or skills.

2. Character Compare the way Marta acted on page 193 to the way she acted on page 104. Why did she change? 
   She was nicer to Esperanza; she knew that Esperanza could work like the other people.

PAGE 199

1. Inference Reread page 197. Why did Marta warn Esperanza and Miguel to be careful if they did not join the strike? 
   The strikers might harm workers who did not join them.

2. Cause and Effect How did the strike help Miguel get a job? 
   Many railroad workers joined the strike, so the railroads needed new workers.
Los Espárragos

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 205
1. Details The strikers were willing to hurt other people for their cause. Find three examples.
   A striker threw a rock at a woman; they hid razor blades and glass; they hid a rattlesnake.
2. Character’s Point of View Reread page 201. What did the strikers believe?
   The owners would make people work for less and less money. People would starve.

PAGE 211
1. Cause and Effect Why was Marta hiding?
   Immigration was looking for strikers.
2. Character’s Motive Why did Esperanza help Marta?
   She felt sorry for her; she wanted Marta and her mother to be together.

PAGE 215
1. Sequence On page 213, Esperanza worried about Marta.
   What did she and Miguel do the next day?
   They went to Marta’s camp to see how she was.
2. Comparisons Reread pages 213–214. How was Marta’s camp different this time? Why?
   Immigration had been there. No one was there.

Los Duraznos

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 226
1. Cause and Effect Reread pages 220–221. Why did Miguel dig ditches?
   He lost his job; he had to earn money another way.
2. Character Reread page 223. Miguel was happy with just a chance in the United States. Why?
   He had no hope in Mexico; nothing would ever change there.

PAGE 234
1. Plot What happened after Miguel and Esperanza argued?
   Miguel left.
2. Inference Who do you think took the money orders? Give two reasons.
   Miguel. He needed money; he was gone.
Las Uvas

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 241
1. Character When Alfonso came to the sheds, Esperanza worried about Mama. What did this show about Esperanza? 
   It showed that she always thought and worried about Mama.

2. Character’s Motive Reread page 239. Why did Miguel bring Abuelita to Esperanza? 
   He wanted to show her that things would get better; that there was hope.

PAGE 248
1. Summarize Reread pages 243–244. What happened when Mama recognized Abuelita? How did Esperanza and Isabel feel? 
   Mama and Abuelita spoke in secret words; they cried and hugged; Esperanza and Isabel were bursting with joy.

2. Author’s Style Reread pages 245–246. The author included a description of the zigzag stitches during Abuelita’s story. Why? 
   To show the mountains and valleys of life; the ups and downs of life. To make the story more colorful.

PAGE 254
1. Theme Reread pages 250–251. Why is this book called Esperanza Rising? 
   Esperanza could rise above her difficulties. When she first leaves Mexico, she feels like she’s rising and spinning out of control. Later she feels like she’s rising like a phoenix.

2. Inference Esperanza did not get fancy gifts for her birthday, but she was happy. How do you know? 
   She was with the people she loved; she understood life better; she was stronger.
Allow time for groups to meet for The Exchange. If you plan to participate, use these tips for guiding students in discussing the big question:

Can people truly change? How?

What strengths does Esperanza discover she has? Would she have discovered them if Papa had lived?

Esperanza learns that she can work hard and live without riches; she can care about other people and understand them; she can deal with difficult problems. If Papa had not died, she never would have discovered these strengths.

Have you ever been forced into a new situation? Did you have to change to survive? Explain.

Marta and the strikers want to change conditions for the workers. Tell about a situation in society that you would like to change.

Extend the Reading

Write Your Reaction

Have students pretend that they are writing their reaction to Esperanza Rising to post online. Suggest that they give a brief summary of the book and tell how they felt about it. Encourage students to display their work in the library.

Conduct an Interview

Have students write three questions that they would like to ask Esperanza or one of the other characters. Partners can take turns role-playing their character as they interview each other for their classmates.

Role-Play

Have groups role-play the scene at the jamaica in which Marta tries to convince the workers to strike. Then students can discuss their own ideas about the strike, as well as whether poor workers in Mexico should have tried to strike, too.