



Esperanza Rising by Pam Muñoz Ryan

Discussion Questions

Directions: Read the book with your child and use these questions to increase his or her understanding of the book's themes.

1. When and where does the story take place? (Check the dates from the first two chapters). Use some outside information (parents, Google, etc.) to learn more about what was happening in Mexico and in the U.S. during that time period.
2. Why do Esperanza and her family have to leave El Rancho de las Rosas? Where do they go?
3. On the train ride, a poor peasant girl runs up to Esperanza to see her doll. Later on, there is a peasant woman named Carmen who talks with Mama on the train (p. 75). How does Esperanza react in each situation? Why do you think she acts this way?
4. Compare and contrast Esperanza's life on the ranch in Mexico to her life working in the fields in America.
5. Esperanza's first big task is taking care of the babies (p. 143). How does it go? How is Esperanza already a little bit different from when we meet her at the beginning of the book?
6. On page 176, Esperanza thinks, "Isabel had nothing, but she also had everything". What does she mean by this? What are ways that someone can have nothing, but also have everything?
7. Back in Mexico, Esperanza tells Miguel that "between them [runs] a deep river" (p. 18). What does she mean by this? How does Esperanza and Miguel's friendship change after they move to the United States?
8. When Abuelita is teaching Esperanza to crochet, she unravels Esperanza's mistakes and says, "Do not be afraid to start over" (p. 15). How does Esperanza use this lesson in her new life? How does she pass on this lesson to others?
9. What does "Esperanza" mean in Spanish? Why do you think the author chose this name for the main character of this story?
10. Esperanza changes a lot over the course of one year! List three characteristics that describe Esperanza at the beginning of the book, and three characteristics that describe her at the end of the book.