

Teaching the Book

Esperanza means hope, and hope is what Esperanza needs as she goes from the life of an indulged daughter of a Mexican landowner to the hardscrabble life of a farm labor camp worker in California. This award-winning novel provides the opportunity to teach students to analyze character through text quotes and to use adjectives to describe character traits. Students will engage in researching the history of farm workers, writing a book blog, and creating a book of personal proverbs.

Theme Focus: Change

Comprehension Focus: Analyze Character

Language Focus: Adjectives Describing Character

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pam Muñoz Ryan was raised in the San Joaquin Valley in California. Her Mexican grandmother lived around the corner, and her Oklahoman grandmother lived nearby in Lamont. "When I was with one, I often ate enchiladas, rice, and beans. When I was with the other, I ate black-eyed peas, fried okra, and peach cobbles." *Esperanza Rising* is based on her Mexican grandmother's immigration story from Mexico to California.

After college, Pam became a bilingual teacher and then left her job in education to raise her children. She went back to school for her master's degree where a professor encouraged her to write. More than 25 books later, Pam Muñoz Ryan is the award-winning author of the novels *The Dreamer*, *Paint the Wind*, *Becoming Naomi León*, and *Riding Freedom*, as well as, numerous picture books. Today, she is a full-time writer and lives with her husband in San Diego County near the Pacific Ocean. Her four grown children frequently come and go.

To find more information about Pam Muñoz Ryan and her books, visit: <http://www.pammunozryan.com/>.

BOOK STATS

Grade Level Equivalent: 5–7

Ages: 10+

Lexile Measure®: 750L

Pages: 298

Genre: Realistic Fiction/Historical Fiction

Subject/Theme: Change, Identity, Journeys

Common Core Standards	Reading	Writing	Listening & Speaking	Language
Grade 5	RL.5.1, RL.5.2, RL.5.3, RL.5.4	W.5.1	SL.5.1, SL.5.4	L.5.4, L.5.5
Grade 6	RL.6.1, RL.6.3, RL.6.4	W.6.1	SL.6.1, SL.6.4	L.4.4, L.4.6
Grade 7	RI.5.1, RI.5.2, RI.5.3, RI.5.4, RI.5.7, RI.5.8	W.5.2, W.5.4, W.5.6	SL.5.2, SL.5.4, SL.5.5	L.5.4, L.5.6

OVERVIEW

Book Summary

Esperanza Ortega's happy life as her father's only, beloved child comes to an abrupt end when her father is murdered and her devious uncles seize his vast land holdings. Rather than accept one uncle's proposal of marriage, Esperanza's mother flees their home with her daughter and faithful servants. Abuelita, Esperanza's grandmother, must stay behind because of an injury sustained when their home is burnt to the ground.

At the end of a difficult journey, Esperanza arrives in a California farm labor camp and, slowly, begins to grasp the harsh realities of her new life. When her mother falls ill, Esperanza takes over the role of breadwinner, working in the packing sheds and helping with chores for her new extended family at the camp. Esperanza undergoes a tumultuous, emotional journey from the pampered girl of her past to the hardworking and compassionate young woman she becomes.

Set against the backdrop of the Great Depression and the hardships faced by Mexican immigrants during the time, the novel is a testament to the power of hope and the triumph of the human spirit.

Get Ready to Read

Pre-Reading Activities

Proverbs Introduce students to *Esperanza Rising* with this anticipation guide based on Mexican proverbs found in the book. Display the anticipation guide on a whiteboard or chart paper and ask students to respond.

Proverb	Agree / Disagree
The rich person is richer when he becomes poor, than the poor person when he becomes rich.	
There is no rose without thorns.	
He who falls today, may rise tomorrow. The person who does not look ahead stays behind.	

Ask students to explain why they agree or disagree with each proverb. Tell them to keep the proverbs in mind as they read the book and see if their opinion about them changes.

Guide students to find journal prompts, read author Questions & Answers, and complete crossword puzzles by visiting *Esperanza Rising* on The Stacks at: <http://bit.ly/10P6xxO>. An excellent discussion of the historical background of the book can be found at: <http://bit.ly/SnUTXv>.

Preview and Predict Discuss with students the title and cover of the book. Prompt them with these questions: What does the word *esperanza* mean in Spanish? What do you think the title means? Who do you think is the most important character in the book? Where do you think the book takes place?

STORIA ENRICHMENTS

This Storia e-book has the following enrichments to enhance students' comprehension of the book.

- Word Scramble (3)
- Who Said It?
- Word Twister (2)
- Do You Know?

Vocabulary

Adjectives Describing Character Tell students that the author chooses words carefully to describe the characters in the book. These words create a picture



BIG QUESTION

Critical Thinking Ask students to think about this question as they read and be ready to answer it when they have finished the book. Write the question on chart paper or have students write it in their reading journals.

Will Esperanza rise to the challenges of her new life?

in the reader's mind of how the character acts, moves, and talks. The list below contains words that describe different characters in the book. Ask students to look for clues in the text to figure out the meanings of the words then check dictionary definitions.

Use **Resource #1: Vocabulary Cards** on page 7 and distribute copies to students. Ask them to write down the definitions of the words as they read them in the book.

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| elegant (p. 5) | extravagant (p. 136) |
| capricious (p. 13) | despondent (p. 207) |
| pretentious (p. 33) | weary (p. 223) |
| devious (p. 33) | obsessed (p. 244) |

As You Read

Reading the Book

Modeled Reading Read aloud the first six pages of the book, asking students to follow along. Then ask these questions: Where does Esperanza live? What is her life like there? How does she feel about her father and mother? How would you describe Esperanza as a character? Clarify any questions students have before they begin reading the book.

Independent Reading Assign students to read *Esperanza Rising* independently. Remind them to keep the Big Question in mind as they read.

Comprehension Focus

Analyze Character Change *Esperanza Rising* is a novel about a young protagonist who deals with challenges and changes in her life and finally rises above self-pity to become a strong and resilient person. Help students identify how the author expresses this character change through key dialogue in the book. Remind students that a reader can get to know a character by paying close attention to how he or she speaks, thinks, and acts. These pieces of evidence are clues to the character's traits or personality.

Use the graphic organizer on **Resource #2: Analyze Character** to model for students how to use Esperanza's words as text evidence to analyze her character. Project the page on a whiteboard and pass out copies to students.

Model: We're going to think deeply about things that Esperanza says in the story and what they tell us about her character. A trait is a quality or habit that a person has. The first quotation is from page 67. Esperanza is getting on the train to leave Mexico. She says, "Mama, we cannot travel in this car. It . . . it is not clean. And the people do not look trustworthy." Esperanza's words tell me that, even though she has lost her home, she still thinks that she is above other people in Mexico. She does not yet understand what has happened to her life.

Have students fill in the rest of the organizer, analyzing the remaining quotes for what they reveal about Esperanza's character and how she has changed. Discuss students' answers as a group and encourage them to support their answers with other evidence from the text.

After You Read

Questions to Discuss

Lead students in a discussion of these focus story elements.

1. Change By the end of the book, Esperanza is united with her mother and grandmother. What do you think is next for Esperanza? Will she become rich again? Will she marry? What do you predict about her future? (*Sample answers: Abuelita might not be able to get her money from the bank, so they may remain poor. Esperanza might marry Miguel because of the scene between them at the end of the book.*)

2. Analyze Character The novel ends with these words, spoken by Esperanza: "Do not ever be afraid to start over." What do these words tell us about Esperanza's character at the end of the book? How has she changed? What has she learned? (*Sample answers: She has learned that riches in life consist of family and love. Strength comes from believing in yourself. With those things, a person can triumph over life's challenges.*)

3. Adjectives Describing Character What adjectives would you use to describe Esperanza and the other characters at the end of the story. Which of the vocabulary words apply or no longer apply to them? (*Answers will vary, but should be supported by text evidence.*)

Questions to Share

Encourage students to share their responses with a partner or small group.

WORDS TO KNOW

Adjectives Describing Character

Ask students to refer to the definitions they wrote on their vocabulary cards to answer the following questions.

1. How was Esperanza's Mama **elegant**? Does she remain elegant?
2. Why is Abuelita described as **capricious**?
3. Give an example of how Tío Luis is **devious**.
4. What was **extravagant** about Esperanza's old life in Mexico?
5. Why did the faces on the deportation buses look **despondent**?

Have students ask and answer more questions about the vocabulary words, applying them to the novel or to their own lives.

1. Text to Self Do you think that Esperanza and her mother made the right choice to leave Mexico? Might they have had a better life in Mexico than in California?

2. Text to World Compare the conditions of the Mexican immigrants in the novel with immigrants from Mexico today. How have things changed? How have they stayed the same?

3. Text to Text What other young characters have you read about who had to adapt to a different place or different circumstances in life? Compare one of the characters to Esperanza.

Extension Activities

Reading/Writing Connection

Book Blog Ask students to review the book by giving it a star rating (one through five), stating their opinion, and then backing it up with at least three text-based reasons.

Content Area Connections

Social Studies **Cesar Chavez** Challenge students to learn what happened to the farm labor camp workers in California after the Great Depression. Suggest that they research the life of Cesar Chavez, the celebrated Latino leader of farm workers. Ask students to report on how Chavez achieved results for the workers through nonviolent means. Guide students to the PBS website to research Cesar Chavez at: <http://to.pbs.org/V4jZb2>.

Language **Crossword Puzzle** To engage students in a language activity based on the novel, download the crossword puzzle from the Scholastic website, by visiting: <http://bit.ly/Tj6d4A>. Questions on the puzzle challenge students' comprehension of the book, as well as, their language skills. Distribute the Answers PDF when students have completed the crossword.

Science **Las Uvas** The author titled each chapter of the book with the name of a fruit or vegetable that plays a role in the story. Ask several students to report on the life cycle of these fruits and vegetables and find out how they are planted and harvested.

Arts **Craft Projects** Guide interested students to create a paper donkey and cart like the one that helped Esperanza

Don't forget the



BIG QUESTION

Critical Thinking Give each student an opportunity to answer the Big Question. Encourage students to support their answers with details and evidence from the text. Tell them there is no one right answer.

Will Esperanza rise to the challenges of her new life?

escape from the ranch by downloading the pattern from the Scholastic website: <http://bit.ly/So2KEp>. Help other students who are inspired by Esperanza learn the zigzag pattern of crocheting taught by Abuelita. Direct them to refer to the instructions of the alternating mountains and valleys, found on page 14 of the book. If students want to make Mama's Yarn Doll, refer them to the unnumbered back pages of the book to find instructions.

BIG ACTIVITY

My Book of Proverbs Pam Muñoz Ryan begins *Esperanza Rising* with two Mexican proverbs that reveal their truth in the story. In this activity, have students create their own "Book of Proverbs" by listing old proverbs that have been passed down to them by their parents or by researching proverbs that they think are true for themselves. Print and distribute copies of the **Big Activity: My Book of Proverbs** on page 5. Lists of proverbs can be found at many websites including:

<http://bit.ly/Ts9Fwj>, <http://bit.ly/Y0FZLz>, and <http://bit.ly/TozDyB>.

Name: _____ Date: _____

BIG ACTIVITY: My Book of Proverbs

What wise sayings do you believe in? Record your favorite five proverbs below.

My Book of Proverbs

by _____

PROVERB #1: _____

PROVERB #2: _____

PROVERB #3: _____

PROVERB #4: _____

PROVERB #5: _____

READ MORE AND LEARN MORE

Use these books and other resources to expand your students' study of the book or theme.

Author Connections



Becoming Naomi León

Pam Muñoz Ryan

Ages: 10–13

Grades: 5–7

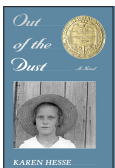
Lexile Measure®: 830L

Pages: 272

Guided Reading Level: V

Naomi León is a half-Mexican girl living with her great-grandmother and disabled little brother on an avocado ranch in California. Then one day her alcoholic mother reappears, after being gone for years. Naomi's Gram decides to take the family to Mexico to find Naomi's father and seek his help. Naomi's trip to Oaxaca and her time with her artist father open her eyes to a whole new world. She ends up learning valuable lessons about family ties and about the creative power within herself. **Available as a Storia e-book**

Theme Connections



Out of the Dust

Karen Hesse

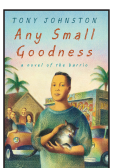
Ages: 11–14

Grades: 5–8

Guided Reading Level: X

Pages: 352

Growing up in the Oklahoma Dust Bowl during the Great Depression, Billy Jo must cope with life-threatening weather and personal disasters. She accepts blame for her mother's tragic death that also left her hands permanently scarred, damaging her ability to play the piano. This Newbery Award-winning novel, composed entirely in free-verse poetry, demonstrates that hope is always present, even in the darkest of circumstances. **Available as a Storia e-book**



Any Small Goodness: A Novel of the Barrio

Tony Johnston

Ages: 10–13

Grades: 5–7

Lexile Measure®: 600L

Pages: 123

Guided Reading Level: X

Arturo is 11, and as he adjusts to his new home in Los Angeles, he encounters questions about his heritage and about what it means to be an immigrant. He also worries about a local gang and the safety of his loved ones. Life in the States isn't always easy, but through it all, Arturo holds fast to what matters to him most—his family. This book is a realistic, loving portrait of a close-knit familia. **Available as a Storia e-book**



Ten Things I Hate About Me

Randa Abdel-Fattah

Ages: 11–15

Grades: 6–10

Lexile Measure®: 720L

Pages: 304

"At school I'm Aussie-blondie Jamie—one of the crowd. At home I'm Muslim Jamilah—driven mad by my Stone Age dad." Jamie just wants to fit in. She doesn't want to be seen as a stereotypical Muslim girl, so she does everything possible to hide that part of herself. Can Jamie figure out how to be both Jamie and Jamilah before she loses everything?

Available as a Storia e-book



First Person Fiction: Flight to Freedom

Ana Veciana-Suarez

Ages: 11–15

Grades: 5–9

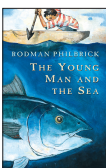
Lexile Measure®: 850L

Pages: 240

Guided Reading Level: W

It's 1967, and Yara and her family live a comfortable middle-class life in Havana, Cuba. But as Communist ruler Fidel Castro tightens his hold on Cuba, the family is forced to flee to Miami, Florida. There, Yara finds that the other students in her new school have much more freedom than she and her sisters do. Yara's account poignantly documents her family's story of exile and adjustment to life in a new country.

Available as a Storia e-book



The Young Man and the Sea

Rodman Philbrick

Ages: 9–13

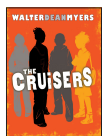
Grades: 4–7

Lexile Measure®: 800L

Pages: 208

Guided Reading Level: S

After Skiff's mother dies, his fisherman father seems to have given up on life. To solve their money problems, Skiff takes matters into his own hands and heads 30 miles out to sea, alone, to catch a mighty bluefin tuna. The wide-open adventure, heart-pounding suspense, and satisfying coming-of-age plot—with a triumphant ending—make this a page-turning classic. **Available as a Storia e-book**



Cruisers Book 1

Walter Dean Myers

Ages: 11–14

Grades: 6–8

Lexile Measure®: 810L

Pages: 144

Zander Scott and his friends are students at a school in Harlem for gifted students, and their grades are slipping. Then the school starts a unit on the Civil War, and the students split up into Union and Confederate sympathizers. Zander and his crew are given the task of negotiating peace between the two sides. That's when Zander comes up with the idea to launch an alternative school newspaper called the *Cruiser*. The result is nothing they could have expected, and everything they could have hoped for. **Available as a Storia e-book**

To find PDF versions of the Storia teacher guides and links to purchase the related books, visit:
<http://teacher.scholastic.com/ereading-resources/>

elegant (p. 5)

capricious (p. 13)

pretentious (p. 33)

devious (p. 33)

extravagant (p. 136)

despondent (p. 207)

weary (p. 223)

obsessed (p. 244)

Name: _____ Date: _____

RESOURCE #2: Analyze Character

Read each quotation. Explain what it tells about Esperanza at each point in the story.

Quotation	What It Tells About Esperanza
"Mama, we cannot travel in this car. It . . . it is not clean. And the people do not look trustworthy." (p. 67)	
"I said I could work. I told Mama I could help. But I cannot even wash clothes or sweep a floor. Does the whole camp know?" (p. 117)	
"Don't worry. I will take care of everything. I will be <i>la patrona</i> for the family now." (p. 178)	
"I can't stand your blind hope. I don't want to hear your optimism about this land of possibility when I see no proof!" (p. 224)	
"Do not ever be afraid to start over." (p. 253)	