

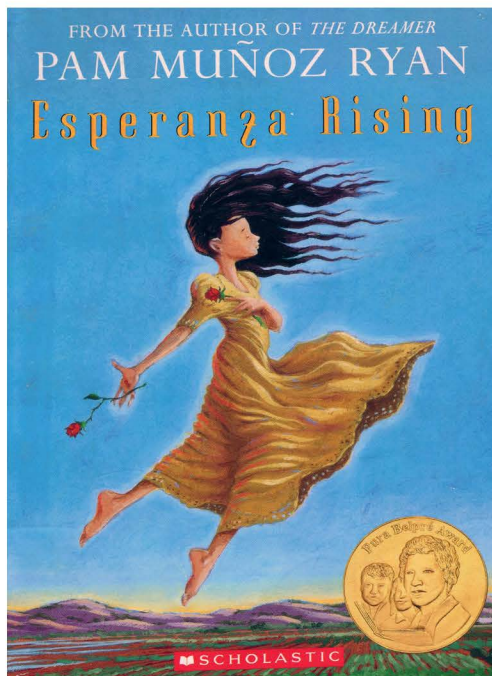
# Reading <sup>with</sup> Relevance

Building INDEPENDENT READERS and THINKERS

A Teacher's Guide for

*Esperanza Rising*

A novel by Pamela Muñoz Ryan



Recommended for:  
Grade Levels  
4th-6th



# A tool to inspire change

This literacy curriculum is constructed around a content-rich novel that builds students' literacy skills and supports their character development and self-confidence. Students are motivated to read because they relate to the strong, diverse, and resilient characters featured in our selected novels and because each session gives them the opportunity to connect what they've read to their own lives.

Developed, field-tested, and refined in our own tutoring and mentoring programs, this Common Core Standards curriculum has inspired persistently low-performing students to engage with literature, make meaning in their lives, and improve their English language arts skills. Now, *Reading with Relevance* is available to help you dig deep into the social, emotional, and academic needs of your students, whether in your classroom, after-school program, or youth development agency!

## Why *Esperanza Rising*



*Esperanza Rising* is the story of thirteen-year-old Esperanza, and what happens when she experiences an unexpected tragedy and must flee from her home in Mexico to the fields of California amid the Great Depression. We chose this novel for its thoughtful attention to some powerful social and emotional themes: loss, family, change, resilience, and self-growth. Students will find themselves relating to and being inspired by Esperanza's story; this curriculum will help students build connections between Esperanza's inspiring life and journey and their own.

### This teacher's guide includes:

- A facilitator's guide with tips and resources for implementing the curriculum.
- A map of Common Core Standards addressed through this program.
- 14 individual lesson plans, including vocabulary, discussion questions, journal prompts, extension activities, and all handouts.
- Two assessments to monitor student progress throughout the program.
- Regular checkpoints to help teachers assess their students' progress on ELA standards.
- A culminating essay-writing unit.
- An appendix with additional teaching resources and activities to continue exploring this novel.

# Session 1

pages 1-22



## Vocabulary

**vineyard** (pg 1): n., an area of land where grapes are grown

**capricious** (pg 13): adj., led by whim, fickle

**propriety** (pg 13): n., acting in an accepted, conventional way

**candelabras** (pg 21): n., candleholders that hold more than one candle

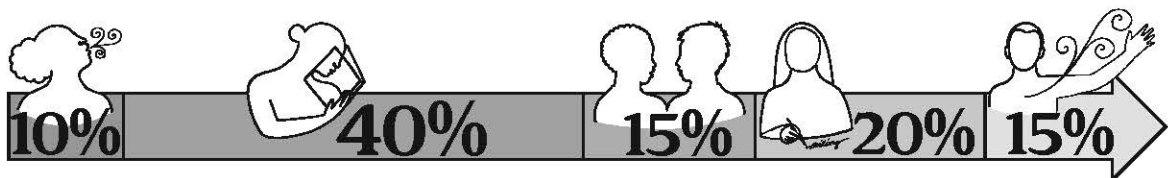
## Today's Theme

Today's theme is **home**. Esperanza and her family are connected to the land and to each other. They work the land, celebrate the harvest, and have a comfortable, happy life together at their ranch. Esperanza's home is defined as much by the people in it as by the place they live and the traditions they keep. You can have students consider what they think is important in defining home. Is it a place? A group of people? A set of traditions? What makes them feel "at home"?

**Pre-Reading Note:** At the very end of today's reading, Esperanza learns her Papa has been killed. Some of your students may have lost parents or someone close to them, and some may have lost loved ones to violence; this section may be difficult for them. Please refer to the Social and Emotional Topics for more guidance to support your students.

## Story Setup

The novel is set in both Mexico and California during the 1930s, in the years after the Mexican Revolution and during the Great Depression. Throughout the novel, Esperanza struggles with her own privilege (the power or things she has because of her position in society) and often does not understand that she is both privileged because of her wealth and her lighter skin. The bulk of the struggle takes place in the Central Valley of California, where Esperanza and her family are migrant workers.





## During Reading

**Vaqueros** (pg 4): Spanish word for horse-mounted livestock herders

**Campesinos** (pg 5): Spanish word for farm workers

**arbors** (pg 5): small shelters made of or surrounded by trees or vines

**“Old enough to be courted”** (pg 7): To be “courted” is a traditional saying about dating, in which a young man would try to gain the favor of a young woman in order to marry her.

**The Mexican Revolution** (pg 12): The Mexican Revolution was a major armed struggle that started in 1910 and largely ended in 1920 (ten years before the opening of the novel). Multiple groups rose up against Mexico's longtime ruling dictator Porfirio Díaz. See the Historical Context section for more information.

**crochet** (pg 12): needlework done by a hook used to pull yarn through loops; often used to make large blankets

**Zapotec Indian from Oaxaca** (pg 15): The Zapoteco Indians are an indigenous group largely from the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca, but also from other southern Mexican states, as well



## Discussion Questions

- What do you think Papa means when he tells young Esperanza that the land “is alive”?
- Why does Esperanza get to be the first person to harvest the grapes?
- How do we know that Esperanza's family is important?
- Why are their quinceñeras so important to Esperanza and her friends?
- What does Esperanza mean when she says there is a river between herself and Miguel?
- How does Esperanza's father die? Were you surprised by this? What do you think will happen to the Ranch now?

# Journal Prompt

## CLASS

- Esperanza tells her playmate Miguel, whose family works for her own, that between them runs a “deep river” that can never be crossed.

**What do you think Esperanza means by this? What divides her and Miguel?**

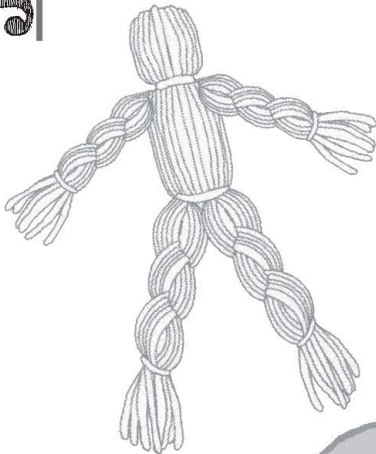
- » Do you agree with Esperanza? Should people be separated based on whether they are rich or poor?
- » Have you noticed that people are treated differently because of how much money their family has?
- » Have you ever felt like Miguel or Esperanza, separated from a friend because of your differences?

## WORRYING

- To take her mind off of worry, Abuelita crochets.

**How do you cope with stress or worry?**

- » What worries do you have?
- » Do you think it's ever useful to worry?
- » How can you manage your worries without being overwhelmed by them?



## Extension Activity

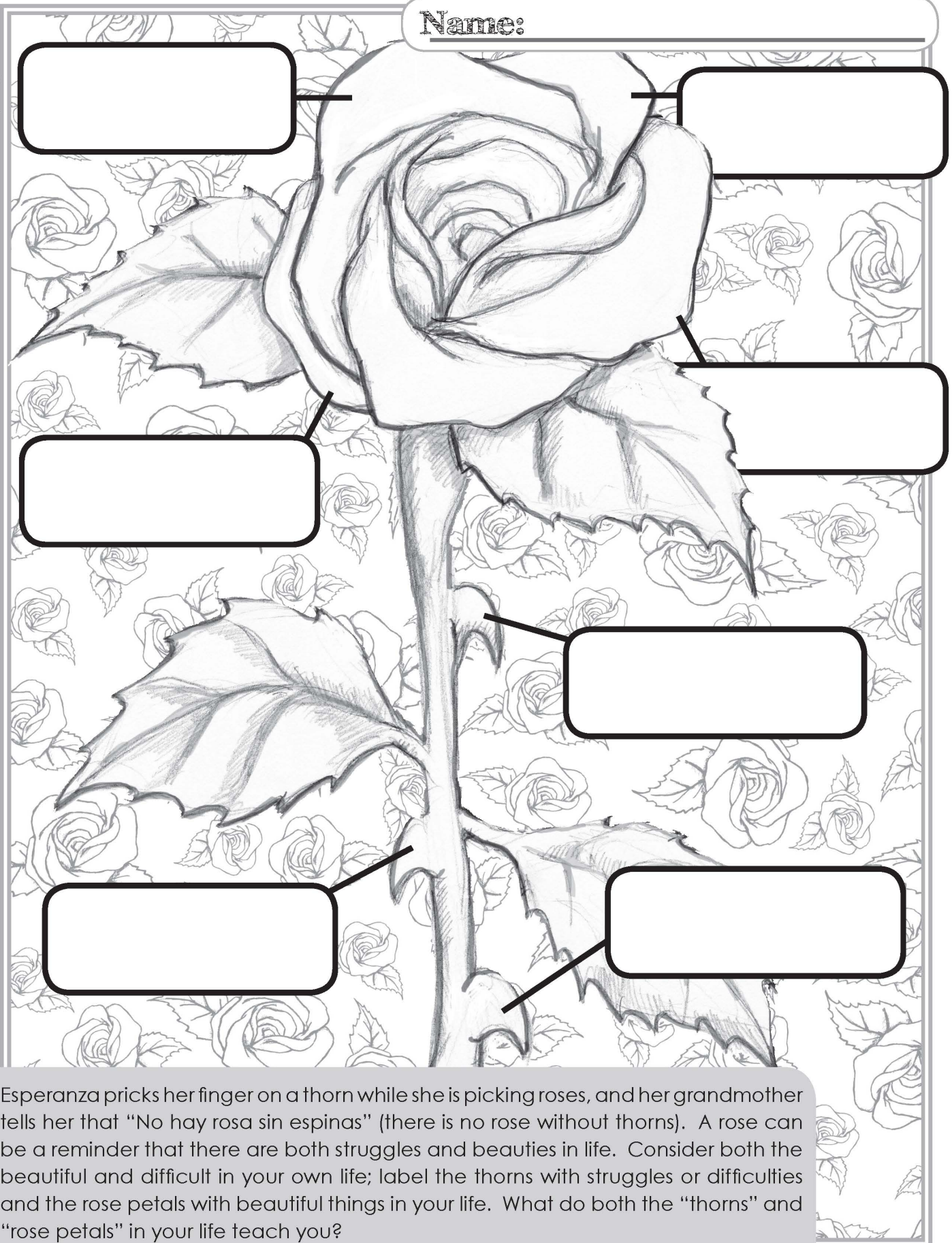
Esperanza pricks her finger on a thorn while she is picking roses, and her grandmother tells her that “No hay rosa sin espinas” (there is no rose without thorns). A rose can be a reminder that there are both struggles and beauties in life. Have students consider both the good and the difficult in their own lives. Have students label the thorns with struggles or difficulties and the rose petals with beautiful things in their lives.

### Materials:

- » No Rose without Thorns Handout:



Name: \_\_\_\_\_



Esperanza pricks her finger on a thorn while she is picking roses, and her grandmother tells her that “No hay rosa sin espinas” (there is no rose without thorns). A rose can be a reminder that there are both struggles and beauties in life. Consider both the beautiful and difficult in your own life; label the thorns with struggles or difficulties and the rose petals with beautiful things in your life. What do both the “thorns” and “rose petals” in your life teach you?

## No Rose without Thorns

# Appendix

## *Additional Activities*

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### Get to Know MFI

**Moving Forward Institute** is a nonprofit publisher of social justice educational materials. The organization was created by the founders and staff of Moving Forward Education, a multi-generational tutoring and mentoring organization aimed at fostering academic and emotional success for underserved students in California. Since our founding in 2003, MFE has provided tutoring and mentoring services to thousands of students and has trained hundreds of young adults to enter careers in the educational field. This reading curriculum was developed by our leadership team and its advisory group, including credentialed teachers and college professors. This program has been successfully facilitated throughout California by achieving powerful and measurable results for students and schools. To learn more about our organization, or our research and data, please contact us today.

### Our Purpose

*At Moving Forward Institute, we know that students can be successful learners when their social and emotional needs are met.*

*We empower educators to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of their students by using culturally-relevant and gender-responsive reading curricula.*

### Training and Professional Development Services

*While lesson plans are designed to be easily facilitated by classroom teachers and after-school staff alike, our in-person training and professional development services will ensure fully effective implementation of the literacy curricula.*

*Additionally, we offer technical support, classroom observation, and program evaluation services to help your program be successful. Contact us for more information about these services!*

### Contact Us

*Contact us today to learn more about how the Moving Forward Institute can support your students and staff!*

**Online:** [www.movingforwardinstitute.org](http://www.movingforwardinstitute.org)

**By Email:** [info@movingforwardinstitute.org](mailto:info@movingforwardinstitute.org)

**By Phone:** 510-658-4475

**By Mail:** 1425 Park Ave  
Emeryville, CA 94608

### If your students liked *Esperanza Rising*. . .

*...they might love some of our other book selections! We suggest that you check out *Bud, Not Buddy*; *Inside Out and Back Again*; and *Any Small Goodness*. Please visit our website today to browse our full selection of socially and emotionally rich novel-based curricula!*