Esperanza Rising
Comprehension Questions

Use for literature circles, instructional conversations, or to guide discussions as you read.

p. 1 - 22

1. What is the setting for the story?
2. How is Esperanza’s relationship with her parents?
3. Who are the important people in Esperanza’s life?
4. How does the clothing reflect the different classes of people on the ranch?
   Describe each group mentioned in “Las Uvas.”
5. What do Esperanza and her friends look forward to?
6. What foreshadowing does the author use to indicate something bad might happen?
7. How does Esperanza celebrate her birthday each year?
8. Why are there problems between the landowners and campesinos?
10. Compare Esperanza’s family and Alfonso and Hortensia’s family.
11. What metaphor does Esperanza use for her relationship with Miguel?
12. How is Papá different than Tío Marco and Tío Luis?
13. What did Tío Luis do that scared Esperanza?
14. How did Esperanza know her father had died?

p. 23 – 57

1. How did Señor Rodriguez react when Esperanza told him her father was dead?
2. How does the family pass the days after Papá’s death?
3. What did Esperanza mean when she compared her uncles to “la calabaza?”
4. Why is the family so angry at Tío Luis?
5. Why did Alfonso decide to take his family to the United States?
6. Describe the fire.
7. What does the author mean by “They were numb, as if encased in a thick skin that nothing could penetrate” (p. 43)?
8. What was not damaged by the fire?
9. How does Tío Luis threaten Mamá?
10. Why does Mamá decide to go to the United States with Alfonso and his family?
11. How does Esperanza envision life in California?
12. What metaphor does Abuelita use for Esperanza’s life?
13. Why does the family leave the ranch secretly?

p. 58 – 85

1. Describe Esperanza’s journey north.
2. How does Esperanza react when they board the train?
3. What was Miguel’s relationship with Papá?
4. What does Esperanza learn when the family meets Carmen on the train?
5. What happens when the family arrives at the border?

p. 86 – 138

1. Who greets the family when they arrive in Los Angeles?
2. How is Esperanza’s life different at the camp than in México?
3. Why does Esperanza become so upset when the family stops for lunch?
4. Describe the landscape Esperanza sees in California.
5. What happens when Esperanza meets Marta for the first time?
6. Describe the living conditions at the camp.
7. Compare Mamá and Esperanza’s attitudes about the changes in their lives.
8. How do the families divide the work?
9. Why does Esperanza learn during her first day with Isabel? Why is it so difficult for her?
10. What surprise did Miguel have for Esperanza and her mother?
11. What happens when the women bathe?
12. Explain why Marta is encouraging workers to strike.

p. 139 - 198

1. What happens during Esperanza’s first day alone with the babies?
2. Why is the dust storm dangerous?
3. How does the doctor describe Mamá’s illness?
4. What does Esperanza do after Mamá gets sick?
5. Why did Mamá have to go to the hospital?
6. Why did Esperanza start working?
7. How does Esperanza spend Christmas?
8. Why are the others worried about Esperanza?
9. How does Miguel describe segregation to Esperanza? Why had she not been aware of it before?
10. Describe Mr. Yakota’s store.
11. How is the strikers’ camp different than Esperanza’s camp?
12. What happens that makes Miguel happy?

p. 199 – 253

1. Why do the strikers frighten Esperanza and the other women?
2. How do the strikers make the work dangerous?
3. Why do immigration officials come to the camp?
4. What happened to the people that INS caught?
5. Why did Esperanza help Marta?
6. What did Miguel and Esperanza find when they went to the strikers’ camp the second time?
7. How is the piñata a symbol for what happened to the strikers?
8. How is the Queen of the May chosen?
9. How will the camp for the people from Oklahoma be different than the Esperanza’s camp?
10. How do segregation and discrimination affect Esperanza and her family and friends?
11. Why do Miguel and Esperanza argue?
12. Why did Esperanza give Isabel the doll?
13. How does Esperanza discover the money orders are gone?
14. Why does Alfonso take Esperanza to Bakersfield?
15. Why does Esperanza not recognize her grandmother immediately?
16. What happened to Abuelita in the year before she came to California?
17. How does Esperanza celebrate her birthday?