



Esperanza Rising

Discussion Guide #2



Encourage critical thinking and support your students' literacy development by asking questions during reading. Here are some questions you can ask your readers to engage them in a discussion.

CHAPTERS: Las Guayabas (Guavas) – Los Melones (Cantaloupes)


Comprehension:

- As they ride away from home in the wagon, Hortensia and Esperanza recount how Miguel once saved them from robbers and Papa later rewarded him with a train ride. What does this story show about Miguel?
- Esperanza snatches her doll away from a poor girl on the train. What does Mama's reaction show about her character?
- Why is Esperanza uncomfortable with Mama's behavior on the train?
- What happens to the woman who is begging at the train station, and what is the significance of the incident?
- Mama and Esperanza board the northbound train and then wait for the others to join them. How does Esperanza feel about the wait?
- Miguel and Alfonso almost miss the train because, once again, they are getting water for their mysterious package. How does Esperanza feel about what they are doing? What does her reaction show about her character?
- In California, when everyone piles into Juan's old truck, what happens that signals that Esperanza is starting to accept her new social status?
- Who is Isabel, and what is she like?
- Who is Marta? What are her beliefs?

Text Analysis:

- The first of these two chapters is "Las Guayabas" and the second is "Los Melones." What role does each of the named fruits (guavas and cantaloupes) play in Esperanza's story? Why might the author have chosen these titles?
- As they journey from Mexico to the United States, how is Esperanza's understanding of Miguel changing?
- Soon after they arrive in California, Esperanza tries and fails to feel the heartbeat of the valley. What is the significance of this moment?

Personal Connection:

-  When Marta and Esperanza meet, they immediately dislike each other. Do you think it is fair to make an immediate judgment about someone? Why or why not?



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CHAPTERS: Las Cebollas (Onions) – Las Almendras (Almonds)


Comprehension:

- Soon after arriving at the camp, Esperanza finds something to be grateful for. What is it?
- When they arrive at their tiny cabin, Esperanza complains that they are living like horses. Mama answers that they have a choice. What are the two options that Mama presents? How does Esperanza respond?
- Esperanza learns she will be responsible for taking care of the cabin and the twins. What new skills must she learn? What happens when she tries to sweep for the first time?
- Alfonso and Miguel carry and plant rose cuttings from Mexico. Why are these plants important to Esperanza?
- In the bathing scene, what details show us that Esperanza's character is starting to change?
- Marta and her friends urge the other workers to strike. What are their arguments in favor of striking? What is the reaction in Esperanza's camp?
- What does the bedtime conversation between Mama and Esperanza reveal about their relationship?

Text Analysis:

- The camp holds regular *jamaicas*. What is the significance of these gatherings?
- Is Marta having an influence on Esperanza? How can you tell?
- Reread the last lines of "Las Almendras." What do you think the author is signaling in Mama's words?

Personal Connection:

-  As Esperanza says, Isabel makes the household chores look so easy, but Esperanza finds them difficult. Have you ever encountered a task that was difficult for you, even though it seemed easy for others? What did you do when you faced that challenge?