

Esperanza Rising Discussion Questions

1. Who is Esperanza? Use at least 5 adjectives to describe her.
2. What Happens to Esperanza's father?
3. What happens to the Ranch?
4. How are Tio Luis and Tio Marco different from Esperanza's Papa?
5. What does Esperanza mean when she tells Miguel that there is a "deep river" that runs between them? Does this change in California? If so, describe how their relationship changes and reasons why this might happen.
6. Esperanza and Miguel take a train ride together as young children. Compare this train ride to the one they take when going to live in America.
7. On the train, Esperanza won't let the peasant girl touch her doll, yet later she gives the doll to Isabel. Why did she change?
8. How is Esperanza's life different in Mexico and in America? How is her life the same?
9. Why does the author name each chapter for a fruit or vegetable?
10. Esperanza liked her grandmother's scent of face powder, garlic and peppermint. Do you have a special aroma that brings back memories?

11. Isabel shows Esperanza the camps where people of different ethnic backgrounds live. She says, "We all live separate and work separate. They don't mix us."
What do you think about that?
12. Compare the strikers' camp to the camp in which Esperanza lives. How does seeing this camp and its inhabitants affect Esperanza?
13. What do you think of "voluntary deportation"? Is this a peaceful or violent way to handle the situation with the strikers? Did Esperanza do the right thing by helping Marta and risking the chance of being deported herself?
14. Miguel disappears. What terrible thing did Esperanza think Miguel had done? What does she find out later? Was Esperanza happy, sad or upset by his actions? Explain.
15. Did you notice when Esperanza realizes that she is really poor now and is never going back to her old life?
16. Is there a character you admire? If so, why?
17. The novel ends with Esperanza teaching Isabel how to crochet the zigzag stitch. What is the symbolism of the "mountains and valleys"?
18. Read the last sentence of the novel and explain how it relates to the book's themes.