



TeachersFirst READING TREKS

Esperanza Rising

Teacher Guide

Access Reading
Trek Map

Grade Level & Content Areas

Ages: 8–12

Grades: 3–6

Reading Level: 5.3

Lexile Measure: 750L

Guided Reading Level: V

Developmental Reading

Assessment (DRA): 40–50

Content Areas: English/ language arts, reading, literature, and social studies, including individual development, identity, and geography.

Synopsis of Book

Inspired by the true story of her maternal grandmother's riches-to-rags story, Pam Muñoz Ryan spins the tale of Esperanza Ortega, a privileged Mexican landowner's daughter whose life takes a drastic turn just prior to her thirteenth birthday when her father dies and her ranch home burns to the ground, injuring her beloved *Abuelita*. Fearing for their safety, Esperanza and her mother—accompanied by the family who had been their servants and trusted friends—leave all that they know to travel to California's San Joaquin Valley to work and live in a farm camp. As the months pass, Esperanza's mother becomes very ill and is hospitalized. Esperanza has to learn a new way of life to earn money for her mother's hospital bills and to bring *Abuelita* to join them. As time passes, Esperanza learns many hard-won lessons and deals with the prejudices of people who think differently than she does. The story shows the struggles of the farmworkers and their living conditions during the 1930s.

Standards

Common Core State Standards for K–5

Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge

Common Core State Standards for 6–12

Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- Theme 1: CULTURE
- Theme 2: TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE
- Theme 3: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS
- Theme 4: INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY
- Theme 6: POWER, AUTHORITY, AND GOVERNANCE
- Theme 7: PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, AND CONSUMPTION

National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts

- CREATING
- RESPONDING

Using a TeachersFirst® Reading Trek to Explore This Book

TeachersFirst Reading Treks create a virtual field trip of resources about a piece of literature or a text using the My Maps feature of Google Maps. To motivate and enrich student reading, teachers and students can reference this visual collection of web resources and images as they relate to the contents of a book.

TeachersFirst has done the hard work for you! Use the activities in this teacher guide and the accompanying [Reading Trek map](#) as you and your students explore this book. And, if you feel inspired, you (or your students) can create your own Reading Trek about this or another book!

Using This Reading Trek in Class

Below is a list of ideas for how to use this Reading Trek in your educational setting.

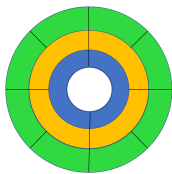
Working with the Map:

1. Introduce the book to the whole class on an interactive whiteboard using the Reading Trek map, highlighting its various layers.
2. Discuss the classroom and school demographics, “The elephant in the room,” and how stereotypes and cultural racism impact individual and group academic

performance and social and emotional development, including implicit racism that becomes transgenerational. Show these [farm labor camp images](#) to begin a discussion of how different ethnic groups were treated then. During the 1920s and 1930s, many Mexican citizens had to

choose between providing for their families in a new, safer place and staying in their beloved homeland while struggling to find a job with sustainable wages and with the scarcity of food and resources.

3. Author Pam Muñoz Ryan has said, “I am an ethnic smorgasbord.” Have students discuss their families’ cultural heritages to the best of their ability. If a student is not able to due to special circumstances, allow the student to create a heritage. For a paper and pencil version of this activity, consider using [circle graph paper](#) to create a sunburst chart or stacked pie chart with the student at the center of two circle rings. Working from the inside out, divide the next ring into two sections and add the name of each parent, then divide the next ring into four sections for each grandparent, creating a chart that looks like this:



For a technology-based version for advanced students, create the graph in Microsoft Excel and insert the information into the hierarchical chart. Visit the [Support Center explanation](#) to learn how.

4. Storytelling inspired this book. Have students ask family members and neighbors

to share folktales or superstitions, then share with the class orally or digitally using Sway ([TeachersFirst review](#)) or Adobe Express ([TeachersFirst review](#)).

5. Create a timeline of Esperanza’s life throughout the story using Padlet ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
6. Discuss social equality and the civil rights of immigrants and their families and create posters to promote unity within the community. To make online, interactive posters, use Adobe Express ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
7. Explore the underlying meaning of symbolic items like the crocheted blanket, the rose bush and its thorns, the river, the railroad, and dolls and their importance to the story. Compare the literal and symbolic significance of at least one item.
8. The families’ faith was apparent throughout the story. Identify specific instances where Esperanza’s faith helped her through difficult times—when challenges buffeted her strength and determination like the dust storm that caused Valley Fever. Consider how the faith of those living in the farm labor camp impacted the feeling of community there.

Extension Activities:

1. Learn about the people, places, and culture of another country as compared to your current location using Your Life in Another Country ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Then create a Google My Map ([TeachersFirst review](#)) showing points of interest.
2. Listen to the [National Endowment for the Arts interview with Pam Muñoz Ryan](#). Respond creatively through poetry or art about the feelings it evokes.
3. Rewrite one of the Mexican proverbs in a more contemporary language and illustrate it as an infographic to share and display.

4. Make yarn dolls to share within your community, such as with a shelter.
5. Draw or create a diorama of the prayer altar as described in the story using clay figures, silk flowers, etc.
6. Listen to “[Las Mañanitas](#)” and read the translated lyrics. Discuss how the events of the past year shaped Esperanza and how differently she would have felt if she heard this song as the story closes.
7. Learn to crochet simple stitches and then the zigzag of the “mountains and valleys of life.”

Helpful Resources

From TeachersFirst:

- [TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps](#)
- [TeachersFirst Review of Google My Maps](#)
- [OK2Ask: Engage & Inspire with Reading Treks](#)

Other Resources:

- [Pam Muñoz Ryan](#)
- [Reading Rockets Interview with Pam Muñoz Ryan](#)
- [Colorín Colorado](#)
- [A Book and a Hug](#)
- [Background Information](#)