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# Esperanza Rising

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## Book Review

# Esperanza Rising

### Author

Pam Muñoz Ryan

### Illustrator

### Reviewer

Emma Patton

### Rating

Excellent

### Level

Primary, Intermediate

### Pages

265

### Year

2000

### Publisher

Scholastic, Inc.

### ISBN

9780439576178

Esperanza Ortega lives in Mexico in a grand house on a vineyard, and she lives a life of plenty. But when her father is killed and her house burns down, life as Esperanza knows it is forever changed. Her uncle suddenly controls all the land that they live on, and he promises to take care of Esperanza and her mother if her mother agrees to marry him. Penniless but determined to live their own life, Esperanza and her mother leave Mexico with the aid of their former servants and head to the United States. They can now start a new life, but they have a new position in society, too. Now, Esperanza's mother picks and packages produce for low wages. They have to learn to live as equals among the struggling immigrant families. Amidst sickness, labor strikes, and scarcity, Esperanza must find the tenacity to make her own decisions. Where she once couldn't even bathe herself without the help of servants, she now must rise to the occasion of forming a new destiny.

Esperanza Rising is a useful book for introducing the complex issues of immigration and race. Esperanza is a highly relatable character, and hearing the struggles of immigrant farm workers through her voice makes it easy to develop empathy for these individuals. The book has no profanity, sexual content, or violence. However, Esperanza grapples with mature issues, like financial hardship and worry, intricacies of class structures, and politics in the workforce. For that reason, the book would probably be most enjoyable to people ages ten and older, though certain primary age children may also enjoy the book. The story does focus primarily on Esperanza and her struggle as a girl, but there are still valuable insights that a male reader could gain about the immigrant experience. Also, author Muñoz Ryan incorporates Spanish words into the text, but always provides a clear context so the reader knows exactly what the foreign words mean. The use of these words immerses the reader in the culture of the story and assists that reader in taking on an unfamiliar perspective.