

Esperanza Rising

by Pam Muñoz Ryan

by | Lynne Farrell Stover

• Library Lessons •

Grades
4–6

Esperanza Ortega is an only child and has lived a life of privilege on a beautiful ranch in Mexico. But when her father is murdered the day before her thirteenth birthday, she and her mother discover that their greedy male relatives intend to take over the ranch. To escape a dreadful future, Esperanza, her mother, and a family of their loyal servants escape to California. Here she lives with other migrant farm workers looking to make a living during the Great Depression. Esperanza grows up quickly and discovers that she can work hard, solve problems, and be grateful for things that she loves.

Note: It is not necessary for the students to have read *Esperanza Rising* to successfully complete these activities.



- Paper & writing tools
- Optional: marker, crayons, or colored pencils
- Optional: Copy of *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan
- Optional: Pick-a-Poem extension activities (page 5)
- Optional: *Esperanza Rising* extension activities (page 6)

Procedure:

1. Prepare materials prior to class. If duplicate sets of Pick-a-Poem sets are required, run them off on different colored card stock to help keep the individual sets organized.
2. Introduce the lesson by telling the students that Pam Muñoz Ryan, the author of *Esperanza Rising*, titled each chapter of the book with the name of a fruit or vegetable that was in season during the time the action in that chapter was taking place. If a copy of the book is available, show the students that the first chapter (page 4) and the last chapter (page 234) are both titled “LAS UVAS—GRAPES”. Ask them what they think this means. Possible answers: “The story takes place over an entire year.” “The story begins and ends in the same place.” “Grapes are important to the story.”
3. Display the transparency and review the three styles of poems featured.
4. Distribute a Pick-a-Poem Card, writing tools, and paper to each student. Students may work individually or in pairs.
5. Instruct the students to write an acrostic poem, haiku, or couplet based on the fruit or vegetable on the card. Encourage students to illustrate their poems.
6. Display completed poems on a bulletin board titled “Pick-a-Poem Creations.”

Lesson 1: Pick-a-Poem

Introduction: The chapters in *Esperanza Rising* do not have numbers. Instead they are titled with the Spanish names of the fruits and vegetables that are in season during the time the story is unfolding. (The English names appear underneath.)

Time Required: 30–35 minutes

Suggested Grade Level: 4–6

Objective:

- The student will review various types of poems.
- The student will write an original poem using a specific format.

Materials:

- Visual: Pick-a-Poem (see page 3)
- Pick-a-Poem Card Sets (see page 4), duplicated on card stock and cut out

Lesson II: Create a Scarcity Story

Note: Esperanza's story relates how migrant workers were forced from their jobs by Midwesterners arriving from the Dust Bowl, as well as the fact that groups of strikers, some of them US citizens who had never been to Mexico, were rounded up and deported during this time period. This "voluntary repatriation" was responsible for sending 450,000 farm laborers back to Mexico during the 1930s.

Time Required: 30–35 minutes

Suggested Grade Level: 4–6

Objective:

- The student will be introduced to the concepts of choice (deciding among alternatives) and scarcity (when wants are greater than resources)
- The student will write a creative story using randomly selected characters, settings, and situations

Materials:

- Visual: Character, Setting, and Scarcity Choices (page 7)
- Activity Sheet: Scarcity Story (page 8)
- Writing tools
- Dice or similar selection device

Procedure:

1. Prepare materials prior to class.
2. Explain to the students that they will be writing a creative story based on the characters (people) and settings (places) found in the book *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan.
3. Tell the students that their story must also include a situation where there is not enough of something. Define scarcity as **when wants are greater than the resources available to satisfy those wants**. Explain that this story takes place during a time referred to as the Great Depression, when many people were experiencing scarcity of essentials such as food, clothing and shelter.

4. Read this "Sample Scarcity Story" to the students: *Isabel was happy to find her friend Tanya from school. They were going to go on a train trip. When they got to the train station, everything was busy and confusing. The girls got on the wrong train and ended up in a crowded passenger compartment headed for Zacatecas, Mexico. What were they going to do? They didn't even have enough room to sit down. The space was so cramped that the girls had nothing to hold on to—when the train rolled over bumps, they nearly fell down! When the ticket collector came into their compartment, he became angry and said they would have to get off at the next stop to get on a train returning home. The girls were so relieved that they did not care that there was a scarcity of seats. They were just glad to be going home.*
5. Ask the students the following: Who were the main characters in this story? (Isabel and Tanya) What was the setting of the story? (A train traveling to Mexico) What was the scarcity situation? (There was not enough room on the train.)
6. Display the visual and explain to the students that they may either make their own choice (deciding among the alternatives) as to the character, setting, and scarcity situation they would like to select, or they may use a selection device and have the choice made for them. Note: the visual should remain displayed during the lesson for student reference.
7. Distribute the activity sheets and writing tools. Review the directions with the students. Encourage the students to either evaluate their own story or have another student do so. Reiterate that when they rate the story, they are making another choice.



Lynne Farrell Stover has over thirty years of experience as an educator and is currently a Teacher Consultant at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. She has taught many teacher workshops and won Teacher of the Year in 1999 from the Virginia Council of Economic Education and from the Virginia Association for the Gifted. She is the author of Magical Library Lessons, More Magical Library Lessons, Magical Library Lessons: Holiday Happenings, and From Snicket to Shakespeare from UpstartBooks.

Pick-a-Poem

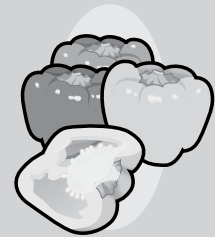
Acrostic Poem: The key letters of each word are aligned vertically to form the word that is the subject of the poem.

Pepper
VegEtable
Pimienta
SPicy
GreEn
Ripe



Hiaku: A Japanese nature poem composed of three unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables.

Spicy veggie treat
Loving the hot summer sun
Green, red, yellow, good!

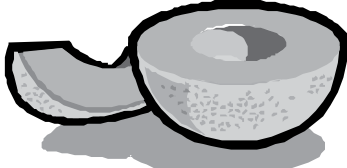
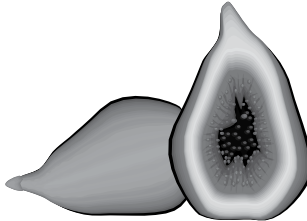
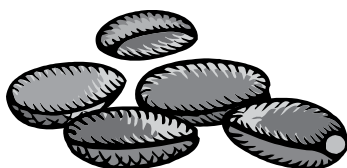


Couplet: A two-line poem that rhymes.

The hot, spicy pepper
is shaped like a bell.
Eat it too quickly and
teardrops will well!



Pick-a-Poem Cards

Papayas  las papayas	Cantaloupes  los melones	Potatoes  las papas
Grapes  las uvas	Onions  las cebollas	Avocados  los aguacates
Figs  las higos	Almonds  las almendras	Asparagus  los espárragos
Guavas  las guayabas	Plums  las ciruelas	Peaches  los duraznos

Pick-a-Poem

Extension Activities

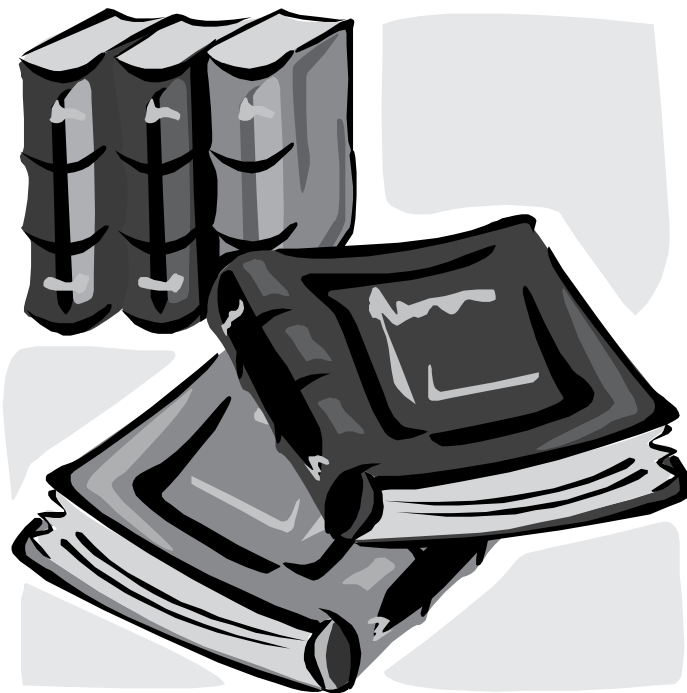
Note: Multiple sets of cards will be required for these activities.

- **Alphabetical Order:** Organize the cards in alphabetical order twice: first alphabetize the English words, then the Spanish words.
- **Card Sort:** Study the cards and select several categories into which they could be sorted. For example: SIZE (big or small), TYPE (fruit or vegetable), TASTE (yummy or yucky). Sort the cards and share your results with the class.
- **Concentration Game:** (2-4 players) Use two sets of cards. Shuffle the cards and lay them face down on a table. Take turns turning over the cards one at a time. If the cards match, you may keep that pair and take another turn. If they do not match, return the cards to their place on the table. Continue playing until all the cards have been matched. The player with the most matched pairs wins!
- **Ranking:** Use your knowledge of the fruits and vegetables depicted on the cards to rank them in a specific order. Possible categories include:
 - Smallest to Biggest
 - Sweetest to Sourest
 - Least Expensive to Most Expensive
 - Delicate to Durable
- **Research:** Select a Pick-a-Poem card and look up the fruit or vegetable in an encyclopedia. List five interesting facts about that fruit. Extra Credit Challenge: Write these facts in the shape of the fruit or vegetable.
- **Write a Recipe:** Select a Pick-a-Poem card. Either create a recipe of your own using the selected fruit or vegetable or look for one in a cookbook from the library's collection (Dewey Decimal number 641.5). Remember to include the ingredients and the instructions for the recipe's preparation. If possible, create a classroom cookbook using these recipes.



Esperanza Rising Extension Activities

- **Geography:** Esperanza's life began in Mexico. Students can create a Mexico A-B-C book by using an atlas or encyclopedia to research this country and find a city or landform that represents each letter of the alphabet. They are to record the word for the chosen location at the top of a piece of paper, write two or three sentences describing it, and then draw an attractive illustration. This could be a class project.
- **Language Arts Unit:** Check out Scholastic's excellent online "Flashlight Readers" unit, located at this address: <http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/unitplan.jsp?id=207>
- **Reading:** Students who enjoy reading historical fiction stories that take place during the era of the Great Depression may find these books interesting:
 - *Bud, Not Buddy* by Christopher Paul Curtis. Delacorte Books, 1999.
 - *Children of the Great Depression* by Russell Freedman. Clarion, 2005.
 - *Dave at Night* by Gail Carson Levine. HarperCollins, 2001.
 - *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hess. Scholastic Press, 1997.
 - *Potato: A Tale from the Great Depression* by Kate Lied. National Geographic Children's Books, 2002.
 - *A Year Down Yonder* by Richard Peck. Dial, 2000.



Character, Setting and Scarcity Choices

Roll the dice or use another selection device to determine the character, setting, and scarcity situation for your creative story.

Characters

1. Esperanza—A happy girl living in Mexico until tragedy forced her to move to California
2. Ramona—Esperanza's mother, a hard worker who gets very ill
3. Miguel—Esperanza was "better" than him in Mexico, but now that she is poor they can be friends
4. Marta—Went on strike for better working conditions
5. Alfonso—Miguel's father. He helped Esperanza escape to California
6. Isabel—Is a happy eight year old who sees the good side of most things



Settings (All take place in the 1930s)

1. Near a vineyard at El Rancho de las Rosas, Mexico
2. During a dust storm in California's San Joaquin Valley
3. In an uncomfortable train compartment near Zacatecas, Mexico
4. In a patient's room at Kern General Hospital in Bakersfield, California
5. On a bus being deported back to Mexico
6. In a crowded elementary school classroom near a migrant camp



Scarcity Situations

1. There are not enough places to sit
2. There is not enough time to complete a task
3. The little food available is old and stale
4. It is dark and there is only one candle
5. It is hot and the fresh water supply is almost gone
6. It is cold and there is only one blanket



Scarcity Story

Name _____ Date: _____

Directions: You may choose a character, setting, and scarcity situation or use a selection device to decide for you. Write a story using all three of the selected story elements. Be prepared to share your story with others.

NOTES:

Character: _____

Setting: _____

Scarcity Situation: _____

Title: _____

Story: _____

How would you rate this story? Circle your choice.

Literary Rating Scale

- \$\$\$\$ This is the beginning of a best-seller!
- \$\$\$ This story has potential, but needs some work.
- \$\$ One or two things are working, but changes are needed.
- \$ Many changes are needed.

