

# Summer Reading ~ 6th Grade

## I. Fiction                      *Esperanza Rising*

Every student will read this novel. Please answer the attached questions on a separate document. This is due when school opens in the fall; the Hands-On portion will be presented the first week of class.

## II. Non-fiction

Choose ONE of the following novels and complete the (attached) nonfiction form.

- A) ***Ain't Nothing But a Man: My Quest to Find the Real John Henry*** by Scott Reynolds Nelson tries to dig beneath the surface and reexamines old documents and ideas to determine if the current thinking on who John Henry was, is based more on legend than reality. Could the real John Henry have actually been in prison and part of a work gang hired out to work for the railroad company? And if so, how did he die? Was it really right after winning against the machine? Looking at the many songs that were written about this man, the author is able to uncover some possible truths about who John Henry really was, and what happened to him.
- B) ***The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*** by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer is a discussion of what life is like living through a famine and the sacrifices that are made. This is a great look at the will of the human spirit to find a way toward fulfilling a dream. When William got discouraged, he never lost sight of his vision--to bring electricity to his home in Malawi, Africa, and to eventually build a windmill that would bring water up from the ground.
- C) ***Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israel Children Speak*** by Deborah Ellis  
Deborah Ellis's enormously popular *Breadwinner* trilogy recounted the experiences of children living in Afghanistan; now Ellis turns her attention to the young people of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. After visiting the region to conduct interviews, she presents their stories here--in their own words. Twelve-year-old Nora, eleven-year-old Mohammad, and many others speak directly about their lives--which prove to be both ordinary and extraordinary: They argue with their siblings. They hate spinach. They have wishes for the future. Yet they have also seen their homes destroyed and families killed, and live amidst constant upheaval and violence.

## **Esperanza Rising**

By Pam Munoz Ryan

### Character Development Questions

1. Explain Mama's reasons for leaving Mexico. Would you have been willing to make the same decision if you were in her situation? Why or why not?
2. What does Esperanza mean when she says to Miguel that there is a "deep river" that runs between them? Does this change in California? If so, describe how their relationship changes and give reasons for why this might happen.
3. Why does Esperanza dislike Marta when they first meet? What makes Esperanza change her mind about Marta?
4. When Esperanza finds out Miguel has taken her money orders, she is devastated. Describe how she must feel when Alfonso comes to take her to the train station to pick Miguel up. Is she justified to feel this way? What was Miguel's reason for taking the money? What do his actions mean?

### Thematic and Life Application Questions

1. For Esperanza, *freedom* means being in charge of your own life. How does she take control of her life? Why is the quest for freedom such an important theme in her life?
2. *Family* is another important theme in this book. Choose two family members, as well as Esperanza, and tell how they are integral to the story.
3. A *poor* woman on the train to Los Angeles explains that although she is poor, she is rich. How can a poor person be rich? How can a rich person be poor?

4. When Esperanza is told she cannot visit her mother for several weeks, she describes her life as going through "the motions of living." Have you ever felt this way? If so, describe how. What does Esperanza do to increase the amount of joy in her life?
5. Alfonso and Miguel keep telling Esperanza that if she does *good work* the farmers will keep employing her. Do you believe that philosophy applies in today's world? Why or why not?
6. The novel ends with Esperanza teaching Isabel how to crochet the zigzag stitch. How do the "mountains and valleys" compare to the plot of the novel? Is there a *skill or talent* that someone in your family has that you have learned or would like to learn? Please describe.

#### Hands-On Activity

*Choose one of the following contrasts of Esperanza's environment and create a visual display that represents each. You can draw detailed pictures, find photos on the Internet, or build models. Make sure that you answer the questions that go along with your choice, as well. Please look for details to demonstrate your understanding of the conditions. Label at least three areas and cite the portion of the story that gives that information.*

- A) Describe the cabin where Esperanza must live in America. How does this home compare to her home in Mexico? When Esperanza points out these differences, why does Mama become angry with her? Is Mama right to be angry with her? Why or why not?

OR

- B) Compare the strikers' camp to the camp in which Esperanza lives. How does seeing this camp and its inhabitants affect Esperanza? Which camp would you see yourself in? Why?

## Nonfiction Book Report

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author's Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher: \_\_\_\_\_

Place & date of publication: \_\_\_\_\_

In complete sentences, explain eight facts that you learned from the book.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_

Describe **two** strengths (reasons why you liked the book) and weaknesses (areas for change) of the book.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

How is the title related to the content of the book?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Does the book seem to be completely factual, or do you suspect that some fiction (not real) material has been included? Explain.

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What three questions would you ask the author(s) if you could meet him/her? This should be something that has not already been answered in the book!

1. -----
2. -----
3. -----

What kinds of illustrations or cover art is used in your book? How did they help you to understand the book? If there were no illustrations, do you think they should be added? Why or why not?

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List and define 5 new words you learned from this book. Use each in a sentence.

1. ----- : -----  
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2. ----- : -----  
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3. ----- : -----  
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4. ----- : -----  
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5. ----- : -----  
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