*Esperanza Rising* Socratic Seminar Questions

1. Why does the author open with a scene of Esperanza and her father lying down to hear the heartbeat of the earth? How does this shared experience seem to affect Esperanza's relationship with her father?
2. 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?
3. 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.
4. 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?
5. After the dust storm, Mama is the only one of the workers in the cabin to become ill. Why is this so? How does her illness affect Esperanza? Why does Esperanza agree to cut the eyes out of the potatoes?
6. 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?
7. Compare the strikers' camp to the camp in which Esperanza lives. How does seeing this camp and its inhabitants affect Esperanza?
8. Alfonso and Miguel keep telling Esperanza if she does good work, the farmers will keep hiring her. Do you believe that philosophy applies to everyone in today's world? Why or why not?
9. What do you think of "voluntary deportation"? Is this an acceptable way to handle the situation with the strikers? Why did Esperanza take this risk to help Marta and why did her attitude change towards Marta from their first meeting?
10. How would you define family? Who in this novel would be considered Esperanza’s family? What was their importance in her life where she had to transition to a new country as a stranger to both its customs and people?
11. Why does Miguel drive out of his way to shop at the Japanese store? What does Alfonso mean when he tells Miguel that Mr. Yakota is "getting rich on other people's bad manners"?
12. Read the last sentence of the novel out loud. What do you think of Esperanza? In what ways does she change throughout the story?
13. What is the theme of *Esperanza Rising*?