

# TEACHER GUIDE



recommended for ages 8 and up

by Lynn Alvarez  
based on the book by Pam Muñoz Ryan  
music by Victor Zupanc  
directed by Lisa Portes  
musical direction by Mark Elliott

teacher guide prepared by  
Shea Corpora, Adam Elliott, Daniella Mazzio, and Lauren Quinlan

October 8 - November 14, 2015

at DePaul's Merle Reskin Theatre  
60 E. Balbo Drive, Chicago  
(please note: not a mailing address)

THE  
**THEATRE  
SCHOOL**  
AT DePaul University

theatre.depaul.edu  
theatreboxoffice@depaul.edu  
theatregroupsales@depaul.edu

Box Office and Group Sales: (312) 922-1999

# Table of Contents

Teacher Guides are developed by The Theatre School at DePaul University.

Complimentary guides are distributed to teachers, and are available online for all ticket purchasers. They are intended as a tool to facilitate learning, discussion, and an enhanced theatre experience for our audience.

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Dramaturgy:  
Shea Corpora  
Adam Elliott  
Daniella Mazzio  
Lauren Quinlan

Dramaturgy Advisor:  
Ernie Nolan

Faculty/Staff Editors:  
David Keohane  
Ernie Nolan  
Leslie Shook

Chicago Playworks  
Artistic Director:  
Lisa Portes

Box Office:  
(312) 922-1999

Group Sales Representative:  
Laura Rice  
(312) 922-1999

Please Note:  
Some links may have changed since this guide was published.

.....	.....
Welcome, Teachers! .....	3
Welcome, Students! .....	4
The Journey of Esperanza! .....	5
Who is Pam Muñoz Ryan? .....	5
Genre: Historical Fiction .....	6
Adaptation .....	7
Who is the Playwright? .....	7
Raise Your Hand If .....	8
<i>Thoughts: Growing Up is a Boarder You Must Cross</i> .....	8
<i>School of Hope</i> .....	9
<i>Play and Learn</i> .....	10
<i>Thoughts: Life Can Change in an Instant</i> .....	11
<i>Play and Learn</i> .....	11-13
<i>Thoughts: What You Love Never Leaves You</i> .....	13
<i>School of Hope</i> .....	14
<i>School of Hope</i> .....	15
<i>Play and Learn</i> .....	16
Webliography .....	17
Season Schedule .....	18
.....	.....

## Chicago Playworks Program Goals:

- To provide a live theatre experience for students and teachers in the Chicago metropolitan area.
- To provide theatre for Chicago's children that reflects their experiences in a contemporary, urban, and multi-ethnic environment.
- To serve principals, teachers, and students in their pursuit of Illinois State Learning Goals.
- To integrate performances and teacher guide information/activities into the classroom curriculum.
- To offer our performances within a workable, convenient time frame.
- To contact principals and teachers with valuable and solid information that will help them to make choices that fit their students' needs.



# Welcome, Teachers!

*"We are like the phoenix," said Abuelita. "Rising again, with a new life ahead of us."*

~Pam Muñoz Ryan, *Esperanza Rising*

Welcome to DePaul University's Merle Reskin Theatre and the Chicago Playworks production of Pam Muñoz Ryan's *Esperanza Rising*, adapted by Lynne Alvarez with music by Victor Zupanc. The piece is directed by Lisa Portes with musical direction by Mark Elliott.

This guide is designed to help your students comprehend and unpack the events unfolding on stage with the help of discussion questions, activities, and lessons for use in the classroom both before and after the performance. By sharing these materials, we hope to enrich your students' theatrical experiences.

In this guide, you will find lessons from:

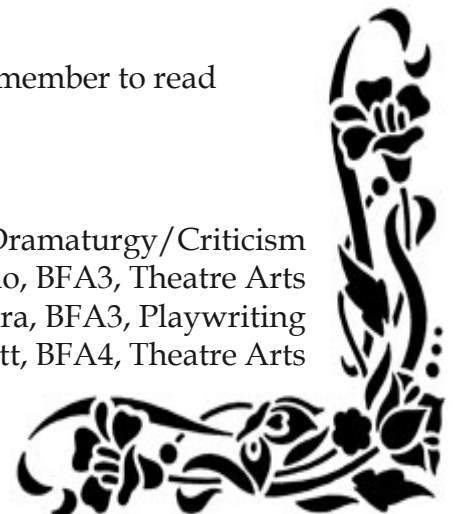
- ¡**ESCUELA DE ESPERANZA!** (Eh-Squell-Uh Deh Es-Per-Ahn-Za)  
(*School of Hope*)
- ¡**JUEGA Y APRENDE!** (Hu-Eh-Gah Ee Ah-Prehn-Deh)  
(*Play and Learn*)
- ¡**PENSAMIENTOS!** (Pen-Sah-Mee-Ehn-Tohs)  
(*Thoughts*)

Every part of the guide is closely aligned with sections of curricular focus, along with Illinois Learning Standards, to support an experience for your students that aligns with school work.

Thank you for bringing your students to our theatre, and please remember to read their welcome letter before you attend the production!

**Let's begin...**

Lauren Quinlan, BFA3, Dramaturgy/Criticism  
Daniella Mazzio, BFA3, Theatre Arts  
Shea Corpora, BFA3, Playwriting  
Adam Elliott, BFA4, Theatre Arts





## Welcome, Students!

Bienvenida, and welcome to the lush fields of Mexico, the United States almost a Century ago, and our production of *Esperanza Rising*!

You are very important in our storytelling process. Watching *Esperanza Rising* today won't be like watching a movie – the actors on stage can see and hear everything the audience does, and respond to it immediately. They need all of your energy to make Mexico and the San Joaquin Valley come alive but also your full attention to share Esperanza's story. So please don't talk to your neighbor during the play. Theatre seats are softer than school desks, but please sit in them properly, keeping your hands and feet to yourself.

As beautiful as our Mexico and San Joaquin Valley are, please do not take photographs! Instead, let the images and feelings live on in your mind.

One last reminder: no gum, food or drink is allowed in the theatre. Sticky sweet papaya and juicy grapes have a place in the fiestas on stage but not in the seating area.

**It's time for our story to begin! Enjoy!**

Lauren Quinlan, BFA3, Dramaturgy/Criticism  
Daniella Mazzio, BFA3, Theatre Arts  
Shea Corpora, BFA3, Playwriting  
Adam Elliott, BFA4, Theatre Arts



# iEl Viaje de Esperanza!

(The Journey of Esperanza!)

**Esperanza Ortega** is a wealthy, young Mexican girl who has known nothing but a life of luxurious dresses, beautiful dolls, and her parents' unconditional love on their ranch in Aguascalientes, **Mexico**. A string of devastating events turns Esperanza's life upside down, forcing her to travel to the **United States** in search of a new life in the San Joaquin Valley in California.

Esperanza struggles to form a new identity in her new environment. She is faced with discrimination as a Mexican who has immigrated to the United States. Through the love of her adopted family in her new home, Esperanza discovers her inner strength. She learns that it is possible to find happiness in any circumstance.

## Who is Pam Muñoz Ryan?

**Pam Muñoz Ryan** was born and raised in Bakersfield, California, in the San Joaquin Valley. Her Mexican grandmother lived around the corner, and her Oklahoman grandmother lived in the nearby town of Lamont.

Muñoz Ryan explains, "when I was with one, I often ate enchiladas, rice, and beans. When I was with the other, I ate black-eyed peas, fried okra, and peach cobbler."

After college, she became a bilingual teacher and then left her job in education to raise her own children. Eventually, she went back to school for her master's degree. That's when a professor encouraged her to write.

"Part of the appeal of writing is similar to the enchantment of reading. They are both quests. Except when I write, I'm the creator and choose the path. . . I can sort out the issues of life by way of the unexpected journeys I take with my characters."

Today, Pam Muñoz Ryan is a full-time writer and lives with her husband in north San Diego County near the Pacific Ocean. Her four grown children and their assorted entourages frequently come and go. Two dogs, Buddy and Sammie, keep her company while she works.



Pam Muñoz Ryan  
amazon.com



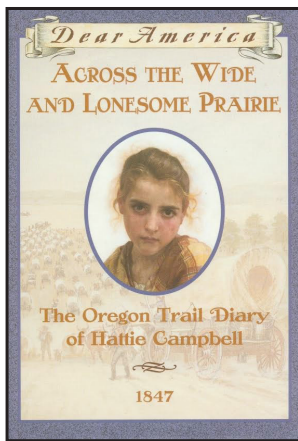


## Genre: Historical Fiction

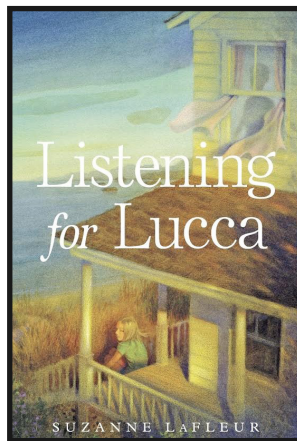
**Historical fiction** is a genre where characters and actions in a story are not real but are set in a real time and place. This form can be used to help us make sense of our past.

While writing *Esperanza Rising*, Pam Muñoz Ryan created Esperanza's character using her grandmother's experiences; she did not create a completely made-up character. Inspired by her grandmother's life, she wrote a tale filled out by her imagination. This play uses its fictional characters to explore what it would be like to immigrate to the United States during the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. **Here are some other great historical fiction books to read!**

### Examples of Historical Fiction



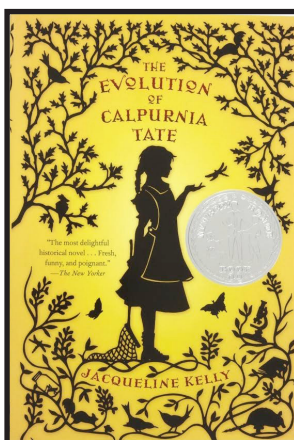
*Dear America: Across the Wide and Lonesome Prairie*  
by Kristiana Gregory



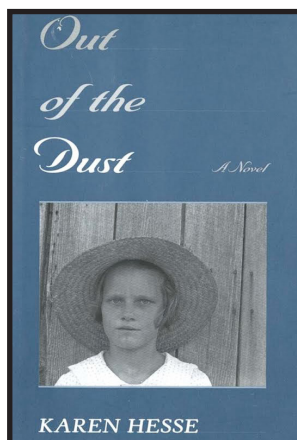
*Listening for Lucca*  
by Suzanne LaFleur



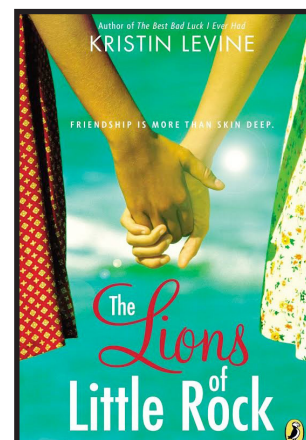
*Longbow*  
by Wayne Grant



*The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate*  
by Jacqueline Kelly



*Out of the Dust*  
by Karen Hesse



*The Lions of Little Rock*  
by Kristin Levine



**Illinois Learning Standards:** English/Language Arts 2.A.2c. Identify definitive features of literary forms (e.g. realistic fiction, historical fiction, fantasy, narrative, nonfiction, biography, plays, electronic literary forms).

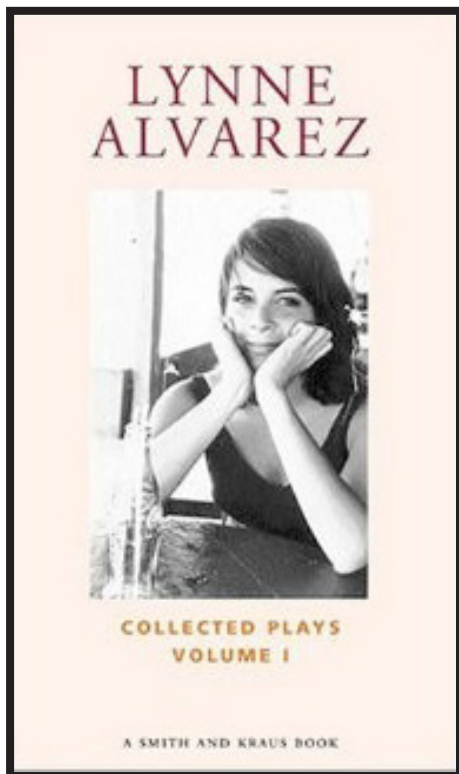


# What is an Adaptation?

An **adaptation** is one form of storytelling (like a movie, play or book) reshaped into another form. For example, Lynne Alvarez adapted the book *Esperanza Rising* for the stage. You may have also seen the *Spider-Man* movies, which have been adapted into several forms. They started out as a series of comic books, then became a cartoon, several movies, and even a Broadway musical! You may have also read the *Harry Potter* book series, which was adapted into eight magical movies over the course of ten years.

You create adaptations every day and don't even know it! At school, your teachers may ask you to remember a problem you heard about or share a story, and then act out a solution or write about it. When you do this, you are adapting someone's spoken story into physical movement. With adaptation, we are able to communicate our thoughts and stories in a variety of ways.

## Who is the Playwright?



**Lynne Alvarez** went to New York in 1977 as a poet, won a grant for poetry in 1979, and proceeded to serve as Vice President of the Board of Directors of Poets & Writers for ten years. She had great success as a poet, but in 1978, she was inspired to write plays after attending a gathering of Hispanic writers at Miriam Colon's Puerto Rican Traveling Theater.

Alvarez wrote several plays as a new dramatist, including *Hidden Parts*, which won a Kesselring Award in 1983, and *The Wonderful Tower of Humbert La Voignet*, which won two awards.

Alvarez also used her talents to translate plays and poetry. She translated three plays by the great contemporary Mexican playwright, Felipe Santander.

Lynne Alvarez passed away in 2009 in Dallas, Texas.



**Illinois Learning Standards:** English/Language Arts 2.A.2a Identify literary elements and literary techniques (e.g. characterization, use of narration, use of dialogue) in a variety of literary works.





## Raise Your Hand If . . .

- you have ever had a doll or toy that you loved very much.
- you have ever moved to a new place.
- you have ever been away from your mom or your dad for a long time.
- you have ever planted a garden.
- you have ever fought for something you believed in.
- you have ever made a new friend.
- you have ever missed someone a lot.
- you have ever fought with a friend.
- you speak a language other than English.
- you have ever been to a farm.




¡Pensamientos!  
Thoughts 

## Growing Up is a Border You Must Cross

Growing up can be scary, but everyone does it. And the experiences you go through help to shape you into the person you will become. While everybody goes through a similar process, we all experience different things which make us unique. While that can be frustrating at times, these differences make us special.

At first, Esperanza values her doll more than anything in the world, but she quickly learns that the relationship she has with her mother is far more important than any toy she owns. Sometimes part of growing up involves making sacrifices for the greater good. It can mean doing something you don't want to do. In this case, Esperanza gave her doll to Isabel. Esperanza begins the play as a spoiled young girl who values her possessions, but she ends the play as a mature young woman who values her family. We each grow up at different times and for different reasons. And while it can be scary, it is vital for us to reach our full potential and discover our true nature.

1. *What do you want to be when you grow up?*
2. *What obstacles might stand in your way of achieving your dreams?*
3. *In what ways did Esperanza face her challenges and overcome obstacles in her way?*

 **Illinois Learning Standards:** Social Emotional Learning 1C.2a. Describe the steps in setting and working toward goal achievement.







# ¡Escuela de Esperanza!

School of Hope



Everyone in the world has a hometown or a place that they come from. Esperanza comes from Rancho Linda Flor in Mexico. **Mexico** is a country south of the United States of America. Its border touches the southernmost edge of four U.S. states.: Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and California. The capital of Mexico is Mexico City. It is in the southern part of the country.

The weather in northern Mexico where Esperanza lives is a lot like the weather in most southern parts of the United States. Its climate ranges from dry and desert-like to tropical. In the north of the country, it is dry and desert-like, while the south of Mexico is wet and tropical.



Mexico is surrounded by many bodies of water. On the east side of the country is the Gulf of Mexico, and on the west side is the Pacific Ocean. There is also a river that runs between the border of Mexico and the United States called the Rio Grande.

There are also two peninsulas that are part of Mexico. A **peninsula** is a piece of land that is surrounded by water on three sides. The Mexican peninsulas are called The Baja Peninsula (in the northwest) and the Yucatan Peninsula (in the southeast).

Use the paragraph and map above to answer the following questions:

1. *What body of water is on the East coast of Mexico?*
2. *Name one city that is south of the capital city.*
3. *What state is directly north of the city of Tijuana?*
4. *Name a peninsula that is part of Mexico.*
5. *What might the weather be like in the city of Oaxaca?*



**Illinois Learning Standards:** *Social Science 17.a.2b.* Use maps and other geographic representations and instruments to gather information about people, places, and environments.



# ¡Juega y Aprende!

Play and Learn



In the United States we speak many languages, but the most common language is **English**. In Mexico, the most common language is **Spanish**. There are a lot of countries around the world where Spanish is the most common language including Spain, Colombia, Chile, and so many more. Spanish is most commonly spoken in South America.

Below is a list of Spanish words. Use a Spanish-to-English dictionary to figure out what each word means, and write the English word beside the matching picture.

For example, "Rose" in Spanish is still "Rose!" So, you would write the word "Rose" beside the picture of the Rose.

Example:



ROSE

Word Bank

Granja	Fuego	Muñeca
Amigo	Tren	Trabajo



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\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



**Illinois Learning Standards:** *Foreign Language 30.* Use the target language to make connections and reinforce knowledge and skills across academic, vocational, and technical disciplines.



## ¡Pensamientos!

Thoughts



### Life Can Change in an Instant

Life doesn't always happen the way you want it to. Take what happens to Esperanza, for example. One day she is enjoying her birthday feast, with presents and people dancing. The next day, she is stricken with grief over the passing of her father. Soon she must relocate to a new and foreign land, abandoning the life she knows in Mexico.

Esperanza learns the hard way that you can't plan everything in life – sometimes it just happens, and it is out of our control. But she also learns not to be afraid of starting over. If you remain determined and brave, much like Esperanza, you can make the best out of your circumstances and not let those things define you. Instead, you can choose to overcome these hardships, adapt to your new surroundings, and remain hopeful. It takes time and patience to adjust to changes in life, but in the words of Esperanza's father, Sixto, "You can't have roses without thorns."

1. *Have you ever planned for something? (i.e., birthday party? vacation?)*
2. *Has anything ever happened that surprised you? Did the event change your life?*
3. *Have you ever had to remain hopeful in a sad situation?*
4. *In what ways did Esperanza have to remain hopeful during her unique situation?*

## ¡Juega y Aprende!

Play and Learn



In the play, Esperanza uses roses from her old house in Mexico to make a rose garden in her new home. Be like Esperanza, and make your own rose garden out of colored paper!

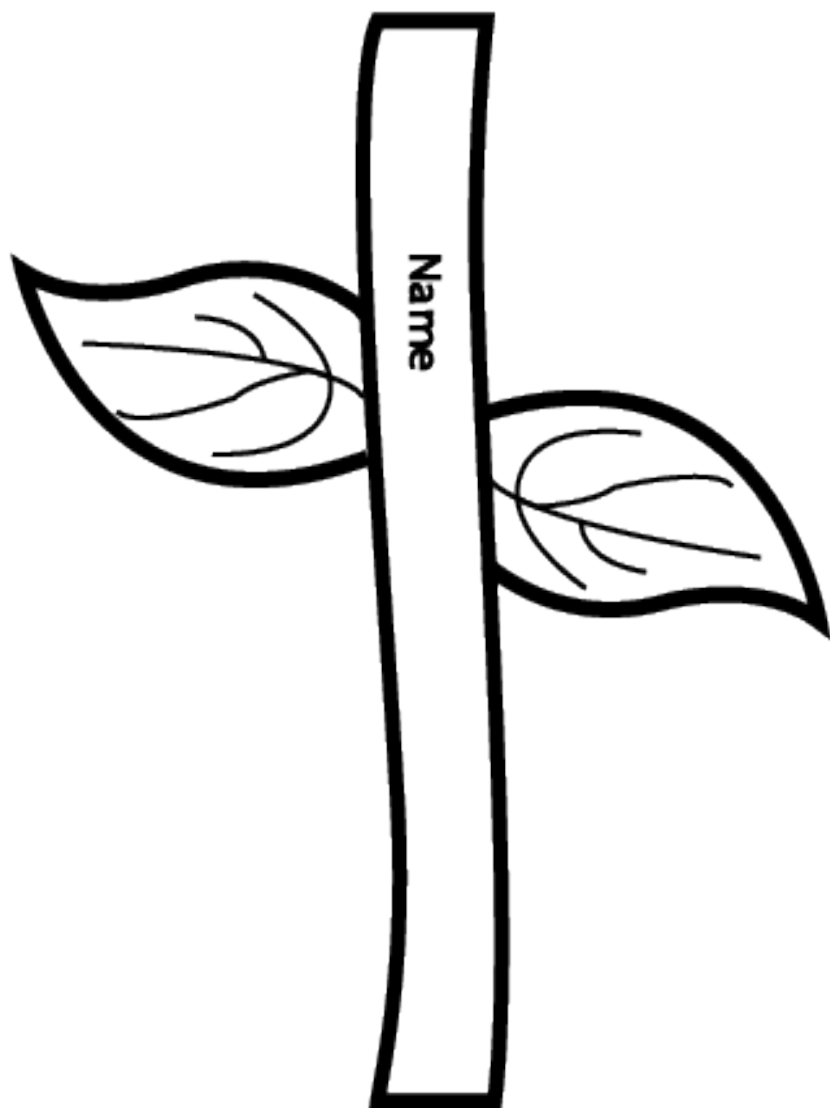
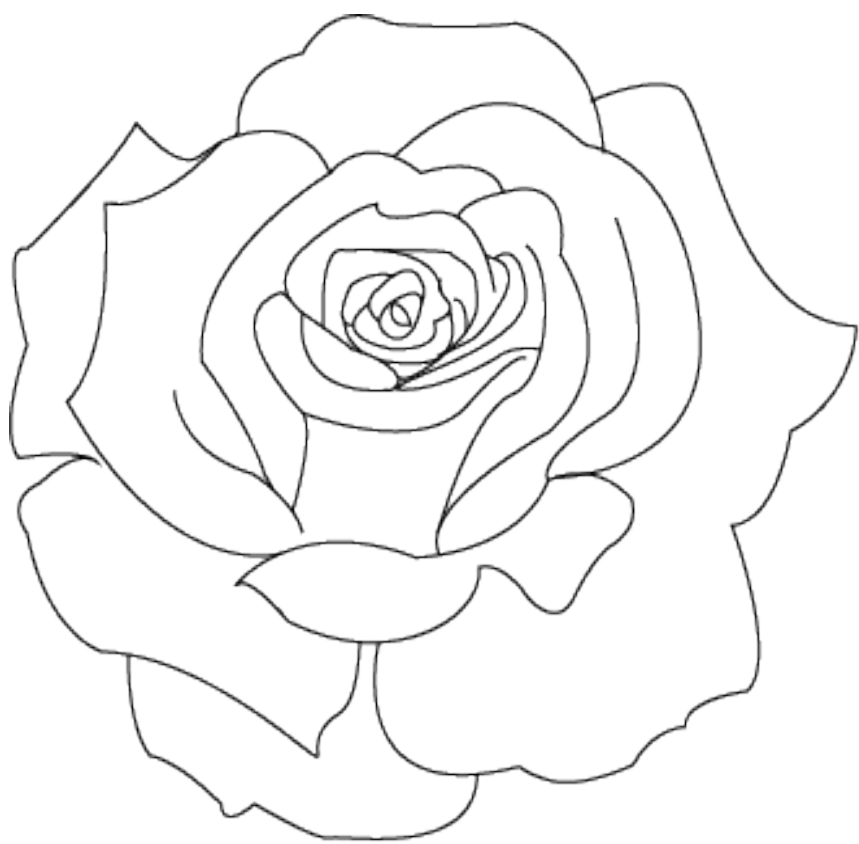
### Materials

- Red, Green, and Brown Construction Paper
  - Rose Petal Layout (see next page)
  - Scissors
  - Glue or Glue Stick
1. Take three sheets of paper, one Red, one Green and one Brown.
  2. Trace the rose petal layout onto the red paper, and cut it out.
  3. Trace the stem and leaves layout onto the green paper, and cut it out.
  4. Cut thorns out of the brown paper.
  5. Glue them all together!

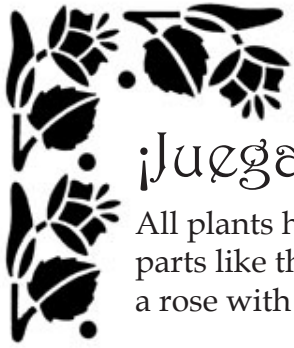


**Illinois Learning Standards:** *Social Emotional Learning 1A.2a.* Describe a range of emotions and the situations that cause them. *Science 12.A.1a.* Identify and describe the component parts of living things (e.g. birds have feathers; people have bones, blood, hair, skin) and their major functions.



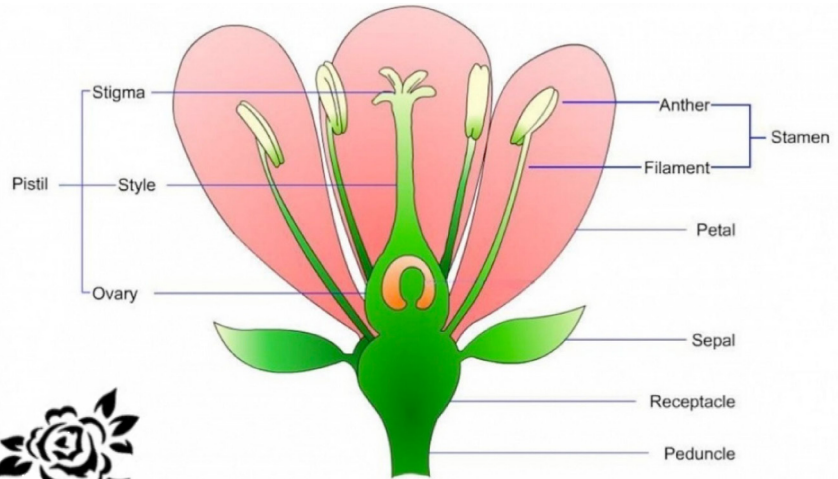






## ¡Juega y Aprende! Part Two:

All plants have different parts, just like humans. You may already know some of those parts like the stem and petals, but plants have other parts inside. Below is a diagram of a rose with the parts labeled. Can you label your own rose for your rose garden?



## ¡Pensamientos!



### Thoughts

### What You Love Never Leaves You

*MAMA: Are you living without Papa?*

*ESPERANZA: Yes. But I carry him in my heart and in my head.*

It is normal to feel pain and sadness after losing someone. Everyone feels loss, and people grieve in many different ways. But just because somebody close to you passes away does not mean we forget the impact they had on our lives. They can live on in our hearts, our minds, and the way we honor their memory.

Esperanza loses her father early on in the story, and it takes some time for her to come to terms with the reality of that loss. How does she cope with the loss of somebody she loved so much? One way is by continuing on her father's tradition of growing beautiful roses. In a way, her father lives on through the memory of his rose garden. Miguel was able to save the roses from Esperanza's childhood home and bring them to her new home in America. For generations to come, her father's roses will bring joy to many people. And much like a flower that endures a recurring life cycle, the memories of Esperanza's father will live on in Esperanza. Sometimes in life we must face losing a loved one, but that does not eliminate the time and energy we spent creating those loving relationships or the impact they have on us. On the contrary: the losses we experience help us to carry on with our head held high and to cherish each and every day.

1. *Have you ever lost someone or something?*
2. *Have you ever had to move to a new place?*
3. *What is your fondest memory of that time?*



**Illinois Learning Standards:** Social Emotional Learning 1A.3b. Apply strategies to manage stress and to motivate successful performance.



# ¡Escuela de Esperanza!

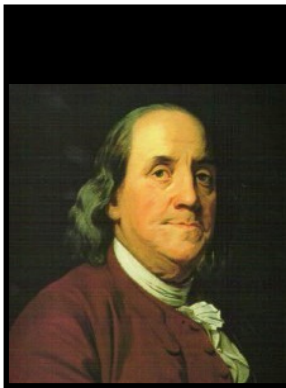
## School of Hope

In *Esperanza Rising*, Esperanza and her friends travel across the Mexican border into the United States. This means that they are **immigrants**. An immigrant is someone who moves from one country to another, sometimes to find a better life. The U.S. is special because many people came from other countries to live here.

The first people to immigrate to the United States were the Spanish, French, and English. They all came to the “New World” in search of a place to live freely.

Most European immigrants who came from Europe to the United States came by boat through Ellis Island. Ellis Island is where the Statue of Liberty stands in New York City. New immigrants would spend their first few days in America on Ellis Island before they traveled to the mainland to look for a place to live and work. Immigrants who come to America today are no longer required to go through Ellis Island. A lot of people enter the U.S. on airplanes or ships. If they wish to become citizens, they can go through a process to gain citizenship.

**Some famous immigrants to America include:**



**Benjamin Franklin**  
England



**Sammy Sosa**  
Dominican Republic



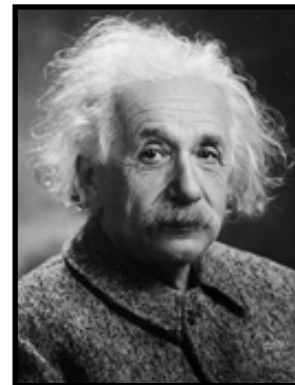
**Lupita Nyong'o**  
Kenya



**Sofia Vergara**  
Columbia



**Ming Na**  
(Voice of Mulan)  
China



**Albert Einstein**  
Germany



**Illinois Learning Standards:** *Social Science 18A.* Students who meet the standard can compare characteristics of culture as reflected in language, literature, the arts, traditions, and institutions.





# ¡Escuela de Esperanza!

School of Hope

While watching *Esperanza Rising*, you may notice colorful images that make up the scenery. These images are **murals**, large wall paintings that usually include several different images. A person who creates a mural is called a **muralist**. Around the time *Esperanza Rising* takes place, there were several famous muralists. Many muralists came from Mexico, the same place *Esperanza* is from!



Graffiti on the Berlin Wall, 1986.  
Photo credit: Nancy Wong.

Murals can be artistic and enjoyable to look at, using lots of bright colors and pleasing images. Murals also can be used to communicate ideas. **The Berlin Wall**, a wall that was built to divide Germany in 1961, was often a site where muralists created art. Because the wall was a symbol of division and lack of freedom, the art was used to help unify Germany and to give room for expression.

**Diego Rivera** is a famous Mexican muralist who became popular after the Mexican Revolution. He helped to unify the country. Diego Rivera painted murals that are in the United States as well. In the early 1930s, Rivera painted a series of murals in Detroit, Michigan, called the **Detroit Industry Murals**. These murals depicted workers in the automotive industry from that time.



*A Dream of a Sunday Afternoon  
in Alameda Park.*  
Diego Rivera, 1947.



Detroit Industry Mural.  
Diego Rivera, 1932.



**Illinois Learning Standards:** *Fine Arts 27.A.2a.* Identify and describe the relationship between the arts and various environments (e.g. home, school, workplace, theatre, gallery).





## ¡Juega y Aprende! Play and Learn



Materials:

- Large sheet of poster board
- Crayons, Markers, Colored Pencils
- Scissors
- Tape or Glue Stick

Congratulations!

You've been hired to design a mural that helps tell the story of *Esperanza Rising*.



Often, schools have murals! Think about your own school. Does it have a mural? What does it look like? What does the mural tell you about your school?

The mural pictured above is nice to look at because of the colors and various shapes and pictures, but it also communicates that you are in the music hallway because of the different instruments and music notes.

Pretend that your school has hired your class to paint a new mural that best tells *Esperanza's* story! Use a piece of blank paper to draw a symbol or scene that you think is important in *Esperanza Rising*. When you are done, cut out your image, and find a place for it on a bulletin board or a poster board that your teacher has hung up. Once the whole class has added their pictures, look at the mural you've created! You are all muralists now.

Discuss how you told *Esperanza's* story through pictures.



**Illinois Learning Standards:** *Fine Arts 25.B.2.* Understand how elements and principles combine with an art form to express ideas.





# Webliography

## **Across the Wide and Lonesome Prairie**

<http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/91ZjUGV1CzL.jpg>

## **The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate**

[http://c3.q-assets.com/images/products/p/ml/ml-018\\_1z.jpg](http://c3.q-assets.com/images/products/p/ml/ml-018_1z.jpg)

## **Interview with Pam Muñoz Ryan**

<http://www.pammunozryan.com/pages/novels/interviewEsperanza.pdf>  
(page has since been removed)

## **Longbow**

[http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/91Los0yGZdL.\\_SL1500\\_.jpg](http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/91Los0yGZdL._SL1500_.jpg)

## **The Lions of Little Rock**

<http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/91r%2BHmWT3SL.jpg>

## **Listening for Lucca**

[https://theawesomeadventuresoflulu.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/a1tec9w6kl-\\_sl1500\\_.jpg](https://theawesomeadventuresoflulu.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/a1tec9w6kl-_sl1500_.jpg)

## **Lynne Alvarez Biography**

<http://gurmanagency.com/selected-clients/lynne-alvarez/>

## **Out of the Dust**

[http://mrskbooks.pbworks.com/f/out\\_dust.jpg](http://mrskbooks.pbworks.com/f/out_dust.jpg)

## **Pam Muñoz Ryan Biography**

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/contributor/pam-munoz-ryan-1>

2015-2016 Chicago Playworks Season  
at DePaul's Merle Reskin Theatre, 60 E. Balbo Drive, Chicago



**Esperanza Rising**

by Lynne Alvarez, based on the book by Pam Muñoz Ryan, music by Victor Zupanc  
directed by Lisa Portes, musical direction by Mark Elliott

recommended for ages 8 and up

**October 8 - November 14, 2015**

Tuesdays at 10 a.m.: 10/13, 10/20, 10/27, 11/3, 11/10

Thursdays at 10 a.m.: 10/8, 10/15, 10/22\*\*, 10/29+, 11/5, 11/12

Fridays at 10 a.m.: 10/23, 11/6

Saturdays at 2 p.m.: 10/10, 10/17, 10/24, 11/7\*\*, 11/14; Sunday at 2 p.m.: 11/1+



**Prospero's Storm**

based on William Shakespeare's The Tempest, adapted and directed by Damon Kiely  
music & lyrics and musical direction by Mark Elliott

recommended for ages 8 and up

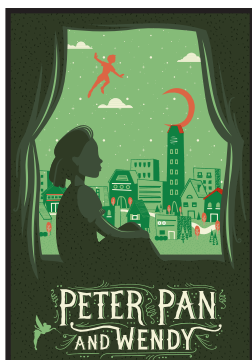
**January 14 - February 20, 2016**

Tuesdays at 10 a.m.: 1/19, 1/26, 2/2, 2/9, 2/16

Thursdays at 10 a.m.: 1/14, 1/21, 1/28\*\*, 2/4, 2/11, 2/18

Fridays at 10 a.m.: 2/5+, 2/12

Saturdays at 2 p.m.: 1/16, 1/23, 1/30, 2/13\*\*, 2/20; Sunday at 2 p.m.: 2/7+



**Peter Pan and Wendy**

adapted by Doug Rand from the novel by J.M. Barrie, directed by Ernie Nolan  
recommended for all ages

**April 21 - May 28, 2016**

Tuesdays at 10 a.m.: 4/26, 5/3, 5/10, 5/17, 5/24

Thursdays at 10 a.m.: 4/21, 4/28, 5/5\*\*, 5/12+, 5/19, 5/26

Fridays at 10 a.m.: 4/29, 5/13

Saturdays at 2 p.m.: 4/23, 4/30, 5/7, 5/14+, 5/28; Sunday at 2 p.m.: 5/22\*\*

+ASL/ American Sign Language Interpreting

\*\*Post-Show Discussion

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