**Writing for Understanding**

Teacher **Blake** Grade 6 Genre Argumentative Writing

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| **Topic / Subject Text**  Immigration Esperanza Rising by Pam Munoz Ryan |
| **CENTRAL IDEAS**  **Content:** Migrant workers who come to the United States to work face many dilemmas. Many migrant workers believe they should strike for better living conditions and higher wages. Although the purpose of striking is to better the lives of migrant workers, striking can often have many negative effects.  **Reading CC Standards:**  RI.,RL.6.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well inferences drawn from the text.    **Writing CC Standards:**  W.6.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence. |
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| **Focusing Question** | **Focus (answer to focusing question)** |
| Should Esperanza and her family strike with the migrant workers? | I believe Esperanza and her family should/should not strike with the migrant workers. |

**TEST DRIVE**

*NOTE: this is for the teacher’s use only, not for students. The purpose is to show the teacher what the final piece might look like when students have completed their work.*

In Esperanza Rising by Pam Munoz Ryan, it is the eve of Esperanza’s thirteen birthday when Papa is killed by bandits while mending a fence on their ranch. To escape Papa’s step-brother’s demands that she marry him, Mama decides to flee Mexico with Esperanza and go to California where she can work to save up money to later send for Eperanza’s grandmother, Abuelita. In California, Mama works in the fields as a migrant worker. At night when Mama and the workers come home from the fields, there is talk about whether the migrant workers should strike for higher wages and better living conditions. In the fields, Esperanza sees the strikers and learns about their reasons for striking. I believe Esperanza and her family should not strike with the migrant workers.

Esperanza and her Mama are working and saving money to send for Abuelita to come join them so as to reunite their family. Later when Mama gets sick and is in the hospital, Esperanza needs money for Mama’s recuperation. Esperanza says on page 165, “I need to work so I can bring Abuelita to Mama.” In addition to wanting to reunite Abuelita with her and Mama, Esperanza also knows that Mama needs Abuelita to recover and get better. Esperanza needs money to make this happen. She needs her job. If she joins the strikers, Esperanza will not be able to save the money needed to send for Abuelita to join them.

In addition to losing their wages, migrant workers who strike also lose their job security. Growers need the migrant workers to pick their crops, so a migrant worker who makes the decision to strike will be replaced by other workers.

“More people are coming to the valley to look for work, especially from places like Oklahoma, where there is little work, little rain, and little hope. If the Mexicans strike, the big farms will simply hire others” (135). Esperanza …”worried about what many were saying. If they didn’t work, the people from Oklahoma would happily take their jobs. Then what would they do?”(147). Esperanza realizes the reality that she and the other migrant workers are replaceable and that the growers will do whatever they need to do to harvest their crops. The only possible job Esperanza and the others have is the work the fields, and if they strike there is no other option for work.

Very often strikers are deported back to Mexico. Immigration authorities round up people who are causing problems. Esperanza sees this first hand when she is out in the fields. “Several immigration officials accompanied by police began searching (for strikers).”… “They will take them to Los Angeles, and put them on a train to El Paso, Texas, and then to Mexico.”… “They are causing problems for the government. They are talking about forming a farm worker’s union and the government and the growers don’t like that” (206). Mama made the decision to flee Mexico to escapeTio Luis’s demands of marriage. If Mama and Esperanza join the strikers and are deported back to Mexico, Mama will be forced to marry her husband’s step-brother and Esperanza will be sent to a boarding school to live and be separated from her mother. Mama left Mexico to keep her family united, so joining the strikers and risking being deported would be against everything Mama has fought so hard for.

Marta and the other strikers believe that striking will result in higher wages and better housing for the migrant workers. “They only get seven cents a pound for picking cotton. They want ten cents a pound. It seems like such a small price to pay, but in the past, the growers said no” (134). Marta and the other strikers believe striking is their only option for more money. But as Esperanza and the others know and realize, more and more people are coming to the valley. “Some of them say they will pick cotton for five and six cents a pound” (203). What good does it do to strike for higher wages, if a grower can turn around and hire another worker for even less than what he was paying you. Esperanza and the migrant workers know how vulnerable their job is and how in many ways they are very fortunate to have a job.

To strike or not strike is a constant issue for the migrant workers. Although there are many good reasons to strike, Esperanza and her family should not join with those who are in favor of striking. Esperanza needs the money she earns in the fields to bring Abuelita to California for her family to be reunited. Not only does Esperanza and the others need money, they need their job as a migrant worker. They know there are many others who are more than willing to step right in and replace them should they make the decision to leave and strike. Finally, Esperanza and her Mama can not risk being deported back to Mexico. They left Mexico to flee from Tio Luis and his demands of marriage and to return to Mexico would be walking right back into that awful situation and life they ran away from. As Josefina tells Esperanza, “That is why we came to this country. To work. To take care of our families.... There are many of us who don’t want to get involved in the strike because we can’t afford to lose our jobs, and we are accustomed to how things are in our little community” (134). Esperanza and her Mama are now a part of the migrant worker community and that is where they need to stay.