



EXPEDITIONARY  
LEARNING

# Grade 5: Module 1: Unit 2: Lesson 8

## Understanding Themes in *Esperanza Rising*



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Long-Term Targets Addressed (Based on NYSP12 ELA CCLS)

I can determine the meaning of literal and figurative language (metaphors and similes) in text. (RL.5.4)

I can use quotes to explain the meaning of literary texts. (RL.5.1)

I can determine a theme based on details in the text. (RL.5.2)

I can use quotes to support my inferences in literary texts. (RL.5.1)

Supporting Learning Targets

- I can interpret two big metaphors in Chapter 8, “Las Almendras,” in *Esperanza Rising*.
- I can explain what it means to find the theme of a book or story.
- I can identify themes in *Esperanza Rising*.

Ongoing Assessment

- Comprehension Quiz, Chapter 8: “Las Almendras/Almonds” (entrance ticket)
- Observation of placement of evidence flags (homework and classwork)
- Triad discussion
- Exit ticket: Independent answer to text-dependent question



Agenda	Teaching Notes
<p>1. Opening</p> <p>A. Entrance Ticket: Comprehension Quiz, Chapter 8: “Las Almendras/Almonds” (5 minutes)</p> <p>B. Engaging the Reader: Oral Chapter Review (5 minutes)</p> <p>C. Adding to Anchor Chart: Reading <i>Esperanza Rising</i> (5 minutes)</p> <p>2. Work Time</p> <p>A. Big Metaphors: Answering Questions in Triads (15 minutes)</p> <p>B. Inferring Themes in <i>Esperanza Rising</i> (25 minutes)</p> <p>3. Closing and Assessment</p> <p>A. Exit Ticket: Independent Writing (5 minutes)</p> <p>4. Homework</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In advance: Review <i>Esperanza Rising</i> (including but not limited to Chapter 8: “Las Almendras”), noting examples of “big metaphors” (symbols) and themes.</li><li>• Read and review the text-dependent questions for Chapter 8: “Las Almendras/Almonds” (see supporting materials). Two copies of the questions are provided: a blank to display for students, and one with answers for teacher reference.</li><li>• This lesson goes into more depth on the concept of theme, which was briefly touched on in Lesson 6. Students may not have time in Part B of Work Time to address all four central “big metaphors” (symbols) and their thematic significance. This is fine; students will return to this idea in future lessons. Be sure to save 10 minutes for students to prepare for the Mid-Unit 2 Assessment, which will occur in Lesson 9.</li><li>• This lesson uses the “big metaphors” as a more student-friendly way to begin to think about the central symbols in the novel. Feel free to introduce the concept of a “symbol” if appropriate for your students. (See Teaching Note in Lesson 6.)</li><li>• Students may benefit from instruction or review of these terms: <i>perseverance</i>, <i>careless</i>, <i>rosebush</i>, <i>crochet</i>.</li></ul>



Lesson Vocabulary	Materials
interpret, identify, figurative language, metaphor, symbol; flan, bloom, meek, wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Esperanza Rising</i> (book; one per student)</li><li>• Evidence flags</li><li>• Comprehension Quiz Entrance Ticket, Chapter 8: “Las Almendras/Almonds” (one per student)</li><li>• Text Dependent Questions: Chapter 8: “Las Almendras/Almonds” (one per student; one to display)</li><li>• Text Dependent Questions: Chapter 8: “Las Almendras/Almonds” (Answers for Teacher Reference)</li><li>• Big Metaphors and Themes in <i>Esperanza Rising</i> anchor chart (begun in Lesson 6)</li><li>• Reading <i>Esperanza Rising</i> anchor chart (begun in Lesson 2)</li><li>• Human Rights Challenges in <i>Esperanza Rising</i> anchor chart (begun in Lesson 3)</li><li>• Inferring by Using Text Clues anchor chart (begun in Lesson 3)</li><li>• Character T-charts (from Lessons 4 and 7)</li><li>• Index cards or half-sheets of paper</li><li>• Document camera</li><li>• Homework: Purpose for Reading, Chapter 9: “Las Ciruelas/Plums” (one per student)</li></ul>



Opening	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>A. Entrance Ticket: Comprehension Quiz, Chapter 8: “Las Almendras/Almonds” (5 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students should sit with their triad. Begin the lesson with the comprehension quiz entrance ticket. As usual, collect this quiz to assess whether students are reading and understanding the text.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consider providing extra time for tasks and answering questions in class discussions. ELLs often need more time to process and translate information.</li></ul>
<p><b>B. Engaging the Reader: Oral Chapter Review (5 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Using a cold-call strategy, invite some students to give a summary of the chapter that was read for homework. You may start with an open-ended question, such as: “What happened in this chapter?” and then ask more detailed text-dependent questions as necessary. Commend students who refer directly to the text when they provide their summaries. Remind students that they have had lots of practice thinking about what each chapter is mostly about. They will get to demonstrate how well they can do this on their own during the Mid-Unit 2 Assessment tomorrow (Lesson 9).</li><li>• Ask students if they can predict what question you will ask them next. Listen for students to say something about thinking about the title of the chapter. Commend them, and ask someone to explain why Chapter 8 is titled “Las Almendras.” Listen for students to point out that they shell almonds (page 127), which Isabel’s mother then uses to bake a <i>flan</i> or custard, a sweet dessert. Ask students to add an evidence flag on the first page of Chapter 9, on which they write a phrase that will help them summarize the main events in this chapter and remember why it was titled “Almonds.”</li><li>• Return students’ entrance and exit tickets from Lesson 7. Address major misconceptions. Ask students to hold on to these entrance and exit tickets to use for future writing.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consider charting the main events of the chapter. Providing a visual will assist students needing additional supports in following the discussion.</li></ul>



Opening (continued)	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>C. Adding to Anchor Chart: Reading <i>Esperanza Rising</i> (5 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remind students that they have been building a strong routine during their study of the first half of the novel. Direct their attention to the <b>Reading <i>Esperanza Rising</i> anchor chart</b> from the previous lessons. Ask students to talk briefly with their triad about some of the things they have been doing as readers to make sense of this novel.</li><li>• Ask students to share out; add strong comments to the anchor chart that are not already listed. Listen for students to comment on the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Rereading</li><li>– Thinking about what a chapter is mostly about</li><li>– Paying attention to chapter titles</li><li>– Using context clues to figure out new words</li><li>– Inferring using text clues</li><li>– Inferring about characters</li><li>– Thinking about the challenges characters are facing, and how they overcome them</li><li>– Thinking about metaphors</li><li>– Making connections to the UDHR</li></ul></li><li>• Point out to students that some of these strategies are things they would use when reading any novel; others are specific to <i>Esperanza Rising</i>.</li><li>• Congratulate students on all they are learning about reading challenging text. Remind them that tomorrow they will get to “show what they know” on their own, on the Mid-Unit 2 Assessment.</li></ul>	



Work Time	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>A. Big Metaphors: Answering Questions in Triads (15 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Choose a student to read the learning target aloud: “I can interpret two big metaphors in Chapter 8: ‘Las Almendras,’ in <i>Esperanza Rising</i>.” Point out to students that they already identified some metaphors in the novel in previous lessons. Briefly review the term <i>metaphor</i>, emphasizing that it is <i>figurative language</i> authors use to make a direct comparison between two things, in order to show something important.</li><li>• Distribute a small stack of <b>evidence flags</b> to each triad.</li><li>• Read aloud pages 122–124, as students follow along.</li><li>• Using your <b>document camera</b> or placing the questions on the board, display just Question 1 from the <b>Text-Dependent Questions for Chapter 8: “Las Almendras/Almonds”</b> (see supporting materials).</li><li>• Refer students to pages 72–73 to help them with Question 1. Have them reread these pages on their own, with Question 1 in mind, and then talk with their triad. Encourage them to use their evidence flags to mark evidence that supports their answer.</li><li>• Ask a few groups to report out their answer and their evidence. If necessary, model by adding additional evidence to clarify and further support what students are saying.</li><li>• Praise groups using Triad Talk well. Remind them how discussing their thinking with others can help them understand difficult text.</li><li>• Show the students the second text-dependent question. Tell them to listen for and mark evidence that answers the question as you read aloud.</li><li>• Reread the long paragraph on page 128 that begins, “‘I know,’ said Esperanza ...” aloud, with students following along. Have them think about Question 2.</li><li>• Ask students to discuss their answers to Question 2 with their triad, rereading if necessary.</li><li>• Circulate to listen in and support as needed. Probe students to cite specific words and phrases describing how Esperanza is like an almond, reminding them to use context clues to help them figure out the meaning of unknown words.</li><li>• Ask students to continue with the third text-dependent question. Make sure they are reading it aloud, clarifying any terms, thinking on their own, then talking and marking their answers with evidence flags. As in previous days, students do not need to write complete answers to the questions at this point.</li><li>• As students work, monitor this discussion, making sure all students are participating. Reinforce students who are following the Triad Talk norms well.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Visuals can help ELLs comprehend questions and discussions. Chart main points in answers and post all questions asked to students. Consider drawing small pictures to illustrate your examples.</li></ul>



Work Time	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>B. Inferring Themes in <i>Esperanza Rising</i> (25 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To close students' analysis of the excerpts in Chapter 8 about the rose and the kitten, ask students to go "vote with their feet."               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– They should move to the back left corner of the room if they think life is like a rose.</li> <li>– They should move to the back right corner if they agree with Marta that the poor workers are like kittens.</li> <li>– They should stay in the center of the room if they are not sure.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Once students get to the corner of their choice, they should discuss their reasons with another who voted the same way. Students should be encouraged to use specific details from the text to support their opinions.</li> <li>• Transition from the topic of figurative language to that of inferring theme by explaining that literature contains both "little metaphors," which might show up in a sentence, and "big metaphors" (often symbols), such as the metaphors about the rose and the kitten they just talked about. The big metaphors can point the way toward a book's big ideas, or themes.</li> <li>• To illustrate, use the example of a fable that the students are likely to know, such as "The Tortoise and the Hare," explaining that the story is a big metaphor, in which the animals represent a slow and steady person and a fast but careless person. The big idea, or theme, of the fable is that perseverance pays off. Give further examples of what the word <i>theme</i> means, as necessary.</li> <li>• Tell the students that today they will briefly begin to think about themes in <i>Esperanza Rising</i>, using the big metaphors to help find them. Read the learning target aloud: "I can identify the themes in <i>Esperanza Rising</i>." Explain that one metaphor that runs through the book is that life is a rosebush. Tell the students that they should be thinking about what theme the passages suggest.</li> <li>• Ask students to list some of the big metaphors/symbols they have examined so far. Listen for the following:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The earth's heartbeat (page 2) (Lesson 6)</li> <li>– The river between Esperanza and Miguel (page 18) (Lesson 6)</li> <li>– The rosebush (bottom of page 8 to top of page 9)</li> <li>– The kitten (page 132)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Read aloud the first excerpt, briefly, as students follow along. Review the first passage briefly (students worked with this during Lesson 6 as well). Review briefly:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* "What is the author trying to show when she writes that Esperanza can no longer hear the earth's heartbeat?"</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of students' cultural backgrounds and that they may not be familiar with the fable you are explaining. Some students may know a similar fable from their culture.</li> <li>• Consider partnering an ELL with a student who speaks the same L1 when discussion of complex content is required. This can allow students to have more meaningful discussions and clarify points in their L1.</li> </ul>



Work Time (continued)	Meeting Students' Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* “What might be the main message or <i>theme</i> that this passage suggests?”</li><li>• Invite students to share out, and chart their comments on the anchor chart <b>Big Metaphors and Themes in Esperanza Rising</b> (begun in Lesson 6).</li><li>• Repeat as time permits for each of the other three central metaphors. Note that students will return to this Big Metaphors and Themes in <i>Esperanza Rising</i> anchor chart in future lessons, so it is fine if their work today is just beginning. Tell students that as they keep reading, they should keep watching for the “big metaphors” and how those might help us understand some of the themes of the novel.</li></ul>	
Closing and Assessment	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>A. Exit Ticket: Independent Writing (5 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remind students of the learning targets for today’s lesson by reading them out loud or having a student do so.</li><li>• Distribute index cards or half-sheets of paper. Ask students to respond to the following prompt:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* “Choose to write about <i>either</i> the rosebush or the kitten. Why is this ‘big metaphor’ so important in the story? What message is the author trying to give us as readers?”</li></ul></li><li>• Collect students’ independent writing to check for individual understanding.</li><li>• Remind students that tomorrow they will do their Mid-Unit 2 Assessment. See Meeting Students’ Needs note, below right.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When ELLs are asked to produce language, consider providing a sentence frame, sentence starter, or cloze sentence to assist with the structure required.</li></ul>



Homework	Meeting Students' Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read Chapter 9: Las Ciruelas/Plums (pages 139–157) in <i>Esperanza Rising</i>. Use the <b>Homework: Purpose for Reading, Chapter 9: “Las Ciruelas/Plums”</b> question to focus your reading. Use evidence flags to mark the specific areas in the book that support your answer. Remember that tomorrow is your Mid-Unit 2 Assessment on this chapter.</li></ul> <p><i>Note: If concerned about students completing the reading assignment at home, plan an additional reading period later in the day or first thing in the morning. In addition, students likely to need additional support should preread this novel with support during intervention or other support periods. Prereading with support will then allow students to spend class periods rereading and focusing on evidence.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students are told to read all of Chapter 9 to prepare for the Mid-Unit 2 Assessment. However, the assessment directly addresses only pages 139–143 and 154–157. If necessary and appropriate, tell some struggling readers to focus their homework reading on these discrete sections of the chapter.</li><li>• Audio recordings of text can aid some students in comprehension. Students can pause and replay confusing portions while they follow along with the text.</li></ul>



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## Supporting Materials



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**Name:**

.....  
**Date:**

1. What is the surprise that Alfonso and Miguel have for Esperanza and Mama?

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2. What does Esperanza learn to do by herself for the first time in this chapter?

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3. What does Isabel want to bring home from the fiesta?

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1. In this chapter, Miguel has a surprise for Esperanza and Mama: Papa’s roses. What clues were in the text in a previous chapter that might have indicated that Miguel was taking care of the rose plants? What does the author mean by the sentence: “Now if they bloomed she could drink the memories of the roses that had known Papa”? How is life like a rose? Be sure to give details from the text in your answer.

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2. On page 128, Esperanza is helping to shell almonds. The author describes an almond as “like two hands pressed together, protecting something inside.” Then as Esperanza cracks one open, the text says: “... then pulled the meat from its defenses.” How is the almond a metaphor for Esperanza? Be sure to use details from the text in your answer.

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3. On pages 131–133, Marta is using kittens as a metaphor for the farmers. How are the farmers like the kittens? How does Marta suggest they fight being “like kittens”? Use specific evidence from the text in your answer.

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1. In this chapter, Miguel has a surprise for Esperanza and Mama: Papa’s roses. What clues were in the text in a previous chapter that might have indicated that Miguel was taking care of the rose plants? What does the author mean by the sentence: “Now if they bloomed she could drink the memories of the roses that had known Papa”? How is life like a rose? Be sure to give details from the text in your answer.

**On pages 72 and 73, when they were traveling by train to the United States, the text says: “At every stop, Miguel and Alfonso hurried off the train with a package. From the window, Esperanza watched them go to a water trough, unwrap an oilcloth, and dampen the bundle inside.” They needed to keep the rose plants wet so they would not die. When Esperanza asked about it, he said she would find out when they got there. The rose plants were the same ones that Papa planted, so when they bloomed into flowers they would be the same roses that Papa would have seen. Life is like a rose because it can go through some hard times, like having to move and not having enough water, but it can still come back and still grow, like Miguel says to Esperanza about her rose on page 124. “So you can climb.”**

2. On page 128, Esperanza is helping to shell almonds. The author describes an almond as “like two hands pressed together, protecting something inside.” Then as Esperanza cracks one open, the text says: “... then pulled the meat from its defenses.” How is the almond a metaphor for Esperanza? Be sure to use details from the text in your answer.

**Isabel asks Esperanza if she is going to the party, and Esperanza is not sure because she is still embarrassed by what happened on the platform. Isabel tells her that her mother says it is best to get over it and “just laugh.” Esperanza is like an almond because her feelings got hurt on the inside when she felt embarrassed. Her defenses are like laughing when someone makes fun of her because then they can’t hurt her as much. Esperanza is also like an almond because she is having to get stronger every day, just like the outside shell.**



3. On pages 131–133, Marta is using kittens as a metaphor for the farmers. How are the farmers like the kittens? How does Marta suggest they fight being “like kittens”? Use specific evidence from the text in your answer.

**The text says on page 132: “Small, meek animals. And that is how they treat us because we don’t speak up,” referring to the farmers as kittens. Marta then goes on to say: “We are going to strike in two weeks ... for higher wages and better housing.” Some farmers are afraid to strike and don’t think it has anything to do with them. “Maybe all the cat wants to do is feed his family.... We don’t pick cotton on this farm!” Marta feels all of the farmers should stick together: “Then maybe it will help us all!”**



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**Name:**

.....  
**Date:**

How is Esperanza changing?

As you read, think about this question. Use your evidence flags to mark specific passages in the text to use on your Mid-Unit 2 Assessment. You do not need to write out answers as part of your homework; just keep track of your thinking with your evidence flags.