



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2021 Volume II: Race, Class, and Gender in Today's America

A Nation of Dreamers: Examining American Immigration and Race through Esperanza Rising

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This unit showcases how students can build their historical background knowledge about American immigration through the use of paired texts during a novel study of *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan. Racism and class are prevalent throughout Esperanza's fictional journey to America. This unit provides significant moments where race and class also played an important role in American immigration policies and practices: 19th century Irish and Chinese immigration, Ellis Island and Angel Island entry points, the alliance of Mexican and Filipino farm workers during the Delano Grape Strike, and the enforcement of Japanese internment camps. Teacher strategies and classroom activities include close readings of paired texts during the novel study, informative biographical writing, and creative writing of poetry. Students will end the unit by writing and performing their own "My American Dream" poem.

This unit is written for the 5th grade English and Language Arts classroom but can be adjusted to for a middle school Language Arts or Literature classroom as well.

Key Words: Immigration, Esperanza Rising, novel study, paired text, racism, class, poetry, creative writing, American Dream

(Developed for English, Language Arts, grade 5; recommended for English, Language Arts, grade 6)

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