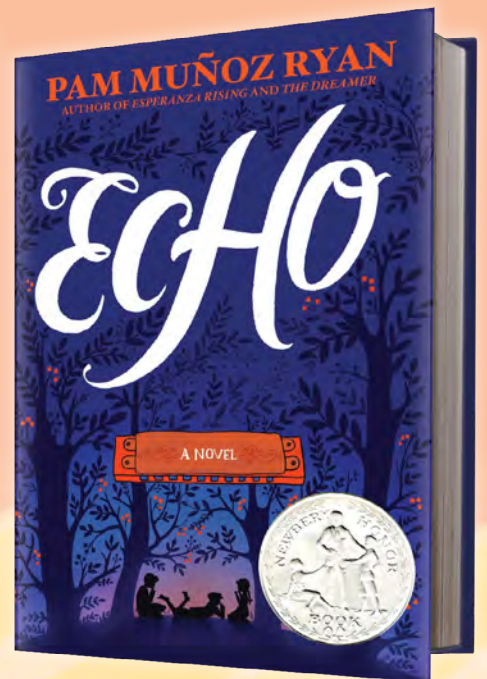
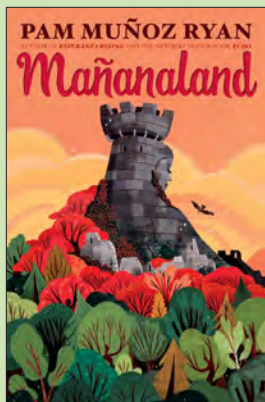


DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Expansive Worlds of **PAM MUÑOZ RYAN**

Ages 8-14
Grades 3-8





Mañanaland

Maximiliano Córdoba loves stories, especially the legend Buelo tells him about a mythical gatekeeper who can guide brave travelers on a journey into tomorrow. If Max could see tomorrow, he would know if he'd make Santa Maria's celebrated fútbol team and whether he'd ever meet his mother, who disappeared when he was a baby. He longs to know more about her, but Papá won't talk. So when Max uncovers a buried family secret—involving an underground network of guardians who lead people fleeing a neighboring country to safety—he decides to seek answers on his own. With a treasured compass, a mysterious stone rubbing, and Buelo's legend as his only guides, he sets out on a perilous quest to discover if he is true of heart and what the future holds. This timeless tale of struggle, hope, and the search for tomorrow has much to offer today about compassion and our shared humanity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

CHARACTERS

Compare Max and his friend Chuy to Ortiz. How are these boys alike and how are they different? Why do you think Ortiz is so sure of himself? Why do Max and Chuy quarrel? Why do you think Chuy does not defend Max to the other boys?

How is Max's family different from the others in his town? Why will Max's father not talk about the mother Max can hardly remember? How does his father's silence affect Max? What role do Buelo and the uncle and aunts play in Max's growing up? Why are they all so protective of Max?

How do various families in Max's village feel about the stories of "the hidden ones" and "the guardians"? Why do people have such different opinions on these stories? How does Max learn to separate the reality of these stories from the legends?

Why does Max know he can trust Father Romero? How does he convince Isadora to trust him? How do Lola and the kitten help in their journey to take Isadora to the next guardian?

How is Yadra different from other characters in this story? Why does she create a safe haven for travelers? How does her story differ from the "hidden ones" and how is it similar? What does Max learn from her about his own quest to find his mother and about what is most important in his life?

THEMES

What is the importance of the peregrine falcon? Why does Buelo call it a pilgrim bird? What does the bird represent to Max? How does he use the falcon in the story he tells Buelo and Papá at the end of the book?

Discuss Buelo's saying: "Solo mañana sabe. Only the place we know as tomorrow holds the answers" (p. 28). How does this phrase help Max? How does it relate to the title of the book? Discuss the concept of Mañanaland, as a destination and as an idea.

THEMES (continued)

Max's father and grandfather are bridge builders, and the bridges are an important part of this story. Discuss the practical use of bridges in the story and also what the bridges represent metaphorically.

Discuss the themes of courage and hope in this book. What does Buelo mean when he tells Max, "It was worth finding the courage . . . to give people hope . . . Being a guardian is not about borders or laws or money" (p. 96)? Which characters do you think exhibit the greatest courage in this story and why?

When Max decides to accompany Isadora, he tells Father Romero, "Favor con favor se paga" (p. 134). Discuss the meaning of this phrase in the context of the story and the theme of selfless devotion to helping others. Why is Max willing to risk danger to help someone he doesn't know? How do his motivations change over time?

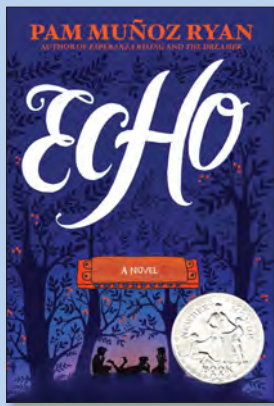
SETTING

Discuss the meaning of the first line of the book: "Somewhere in the Americas, many years after once-upon-a-time and long before happily-ever-after . . ." (p. 3). Why did the author choose to describe the time and place of this story in vague terms? Why did she choose the language of folklore?

Describe the importance of La Reina Gigante and the image of the ruins towering over the village. Why are the ruins of the palace off-limits for the children? Describe the effect of those ruins on Max when his father takes him there. What does Max find when he returns on his own?

How is Max able to find his way through the countryside on his journey with Isadora? How has Buelo's storytelling prepared him for the trip? Compare Buelo's story to the actual landmarks that Max follows.

Compare what you learn about the country of Abismo to Santa Maria. Why is it necessary for certain people to run away from Abismo? How does Max learn that "Mañanaland" is not an actual place where he might find his mother?



Echo

Otto's extraordinary encounter the day he is lost in the Black Forest involves him in a strange destiny—a quest given to him by three mysterious sisters, a prophecy, and a very special harmonica. Many years later the lives of three young people become entwined with that same harmonica. Friedrich must find a way to escape with his father from the growing menace of Nazi Germany, but how can they do that when his father has been imprisoned? Mike is desperate to find a better place for himself and his younger brother than the orphanage where they live near Philadelphia; but perhaps the solution, when it comes, is too good to be true. Ivy longs for her migrant family to have a permanent home in the farming country of California, but does it have to be at the expense of another family's misfortune? What is the secret of the mysterious harmonica that comes into each of these lives, and how will it help to fulfill a promise made long before they were born?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

CHARACTERS

What clues are in the prologue story about Otto to help you determine when and where his story takes place? How does the harmonica help him to find his way home? Why will no one believe his story about Eins, Zwei, and Drei?

Compare the lives of Friedrich, Mike, and Ivy. How are their challenges similar and how do they differ? Discuss how each of them shows courage and determination to find a path for their lives. How does the harmonica play a role in each of their journeys?

Discuss the role of adult characters in the lives of each young person. Which adults are positive role models, and how do they help each of the children to grow in confidence and understanding? Which adults are negative influences in their lives, and how do the children react to them?

Discuss the role of siblings in the lives of Friedrich, Mike, and Ivy. What are their respective sibling relationships? Describe how their different personalities and ages affect the way each reacts to the time and place in which they live—in Germany, in Pennsylvania, and in California.

This story is told from many points of view. Discuss how the author establishes a unique voice for each of the main characters. Why do Friedrich's, Mike's, and Ivy's sections each end with a "cliffhanger" moment and unanswered questions about what will happen to them next?

The main characters in *Echo* are fictional, but there are historical figures and events mentioned throughout the book. Look up information about Adolf Hitler, Matthias Hohner, Albert Hoxie, Larry Adler, Pearl Harbor, Japanese internment camps, and the Bracero Program. Compare what you find in information sources to what you have learned about each of these topics from the book.

SETTING

Look up information about the town of Trossingen in Germany. Why is this place referred to as a "music town"? Compare what you know about Trossingen from the story to what you can learn from information sources.

Read fiction and nonfiction books with similar themes and settings to compare to *Echo*. To understand Elisabeth's point of view in Part One, for example, read *Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti (Scholastic, 2005). For Part Two, compare Mike's plight to that of another Irish-American boy in *The Journal of Sean Sullivan* by William Durbin (Scholastic, 1999), and for Part Three, contrast Ivy's journey to that of Esperanza in *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan (Scholastic, 2000). Compare the story of "A Witch, a Kiss, a Prophecy" to fairy tales in collections such as those of the Brothers Grimm.

THEMES

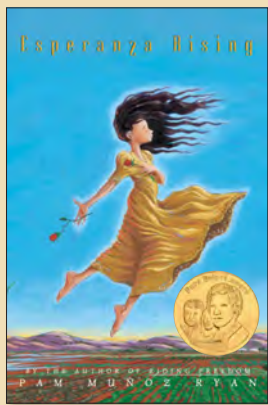
Discuss the first line of the folktale: "Once, long before enchantment was eclipsed by doubt . . ." (p. 4). How does this choice of words set a tone for the book?

Discuss the meaning of the midwife's prophecy in the tale: "Your fate is not yet sealed. Even in the darkest night, a star will shine, a bell will chime, a path will be revealed." How does this prophecy apply to the lives of Friedrich, Mike, and Ivy as well as to Otto and the sisters in the tale?

Discuss Friedrich's thought in the last section: "They all spoke the same language and had found their way to this night with their own stories of determination and practice and their love for music. Here he was safe" (p. 554).

What is the importance of the final sentence in the fourth section: ". . . and connected by the same silken thread?" (p. 578). How does that phrase echo the themes in the story of the three sisters?

Listen to recordings of the pieces of music that introduce each part of this story. How are the songs integrated into the lives of the main characters in each part of the book? Discuss the importance of music in the lives of each of the characters.



Esperanza Rising

Esperanza Ortega's happy life on her family's large ranch in Mexico ends abruptly with the murder of her father. Forced to flee their land and her greedy uncles, thirteen-year-old Esperanza and her mother escape with their former servants to a migrant camp in California. Life in the agricultural camps is a hard adjustment, and when Mama falls ill, it is up to Esperanza to earn money by working in the packing sheds as well as helping with the chores of their new extended family in the farm camp. As Esperanza struggles to understand her new life, she transforms from a pampered rich girl to a hardworking and compassionate young woman. Readers will gain a deep understanding of the historical forces of the Depression, labor strikes, and the immigrant experience in 1930s Southern California through Esperanza's story.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

CHARACTERS

Why does Esperanza's father have a special feeling for his land? Discuss the characters of Tío Luis and Tío Marco. How are they different from Esperanza's father?

What does Esperanza mean when she says to Miguel that there is a "deep river" (p. 18) that runs between them? How does this change when they move to California? Discuss how Esperanza grows as the story progresses.

Why do Alfonso and Hortensia offer to take Esperanza and her mother to the United States with them even though doing so puts their own lives at risk?

On the train ride to California, Esperanza refuses to allow a peasant girl to touch her treasured doll; yet later she offers to give the doll to Isabel, Miguel's cousin. What has brought about this change in her feelings?

Why does Esperanza dislike Marta when they first meet? What makes her change her mind about Marta?

SETTING

Compare the setting in Aguascalientes to the company camp in California. How does Esperanza react to the changes in her life? How does her illness affect Esperanza? Compare the two train rides—the one Esperanza and Miguel took as young children and the one they take to California. What is significant about the description of the earlier train ride in the story?

Compare the strikers' camp to the company camp. How does seeing the strikers' camp affect Esperanza? Why do Josefina and Hortensia tell Esperanza and Miguel to shop only at the Japanese store? What does Alfonso mean when he tells Miguel that Mr. Yakota is "getting rich on other people's bad manners" (p. 188)?

THEMES

When Esperanza lives at El Rancho de las Rosas, she and her friends look forward to their Quinceañeras, after which they will be old enough to marry, "rising to the positions of their mothers before them" (p. 8). Compare this idea of "rising" to the rest of the story and to the title. How does the meaning change?

Discuss the Mexican proverbs at the beginning of the book and how they relate to the story:

"He who falls today may rise tomorrow."

"The rich person is richer when he becomes poor, than the poor person when he becomes rich."

Why does the author name each chapter for a fruit or vegetable? What is the significance of each type of fruit or vegetable to that part of the story? What is the significance of the rose cuttings that Alfonso and Miguel carry with them from Mexico?

How does Abuelita's experience of leaving Spain for Mexico compare to Esperanza's of leaving Mexico for the United States? How does Abuelita's crocheting reflect their experiences? What does she mean when she speaks of the "mountains and valleys" (p. 51) in the stitching?

Research the legend of the phoenix in Mexican folklore. What does Abuelita mean when she says, "We are like the phoenix"?

Signature Themes in the Expansive Novels of PAM MUÑOZ RYAN

NAMES

In *Mañanaland*, how does Max feel when his father first tells him his mother's name? Why are the travelers through Santa Maria referred to only as the "hidden ones"? What is the meaning of the name *Mañanaland*? In the folktale introduction in *Echo*, the three sisters are given numbers for names. Why? Discuss the importance of a name and what a name means to each person. In *Esperanza Rising*, discuss the meaning of the name Esperanza and how it reflects every story of a person seeking a new life.

JOURNEYS

Each of the characters in *Echo* is involved in a journey or contemplating a journey. How does each react to the need to move away from the place they have been living? Compare their journeys to that of Esperanza and her mother from Mexico to California. Compare them to the journeys that are hinted at for the "hidden ones" in *Mañanaland*. Discuss Max's decision to undertake the journey to escort Isadora to freedom. How does each journey reflect the growth and development of these young people?

FREEDOM

For the "hidden ones," Esperanza, and each of the characters in *Echo*, freedom means being able to determine your own destiny, to be in charge of your own life. Discuss how the various characters in each of these stories take control of their lives. Why is the quest for freedom such an important theme in these books? What is the motivation of others who help them along the path to freedom? Relate the theme of freedom to the symbols of the falcon, the phoenix, and the harmonica.

FAMILY

From folktales to modern fiction, the theme of family is critical in Pam Muñoz Ryan's writing. Compare the various families and how they interact with each other throughout each of these stories. How does the idea of "family" keep hope alive for those whose families are separated or lost? Discuss the importance of those who provide support and guidance for children who are separated from their families.



Letter from PAM MUÑOZ RYAN

Dear Reader,

I was twelve years old when my mother asked me if I remembered my biological father. I didn't. He was never discussed in any circles in my presence. Nothing bad. Nothing good. Nothing.

My mom married the man who became my real dad when I was four. He was kind and patient and loved me. As a child, I had only the vaguest memories of my life before he came into our lives. I thought they must have been dreams. So as I grew up, I never felt as if I was missing a father, and being naïve and obedient, I never once questioned my secure situation. All those years, I never suspected the constant threat that someone might try and take me away from my family. It was years later that I discovered the great lengths to which they went to protect me from instability and danger. They were my guardians.

In *Mañanaland*, Maximiliano also discovers staggering information about his family when he is almost twelve. I mined my experience to write about his frustration and all the questions that followed his revelations, not the least of which was “What will become of me?” Max sets out on a quest to find the answers, putting his faith in a legend that suggests he might hold tomorrow in the palm of his hand.

The story is set in an imagined place that could be any number of countries, villages, or backyards. And the story's place in history? It could have happened decades ago. It is happening now. And it is likely to continue in the tomorrows to come. It is a never-ending story about those in hiding and their protectors, about self-discovery and sacrifice . . . about people helping people.

I hope that, like Maximiliano, you will come to discover that *Mañanaland* is far more than a destination.



Pam Muñoz Ryan

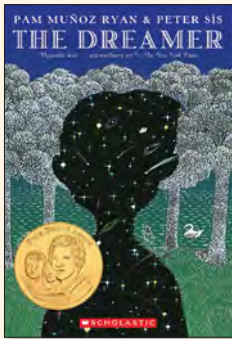


Photo © Mike Brown

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pam Muñoz Ryan is the recipient of the Newbery Honor Medal and the Kirkus Prize for her *New York Times* bestselling novel, *Echo*, as well as the NEA's Human and Civil Rights Award and the Virginia Hamilton Literary Award for multicultural literature for her body of work. Her celebrated novels, *Echo*, *Esperanza Rising*, *The Dreamer*, *Riding Freedom*, *Becoming Naomi León*, and *Paint the Wind*, have received countless accolades, among them two Pura Belpré Awards, a NAPPA Gold Award, a Jane Addams Children's Book Award, and two Américas Awards. Her acclaimed picture books include *Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride* and *When Marian Sang*, both illustrated by Brian Selznick, and *Tony Baloney*, illustrated by Edwin Fotheringham, as well as a beginning reader series featuring Tony Baloney. Ryan lives near San Diego, California, with her family.

Also Available from PAM MUÑOZ RYAN



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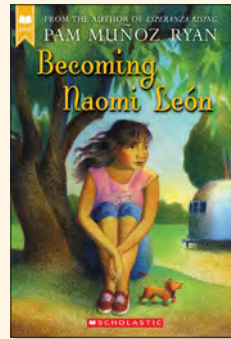
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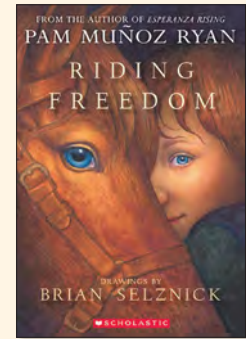
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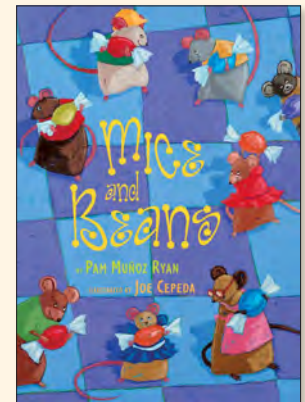
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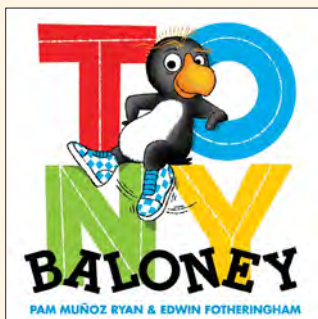


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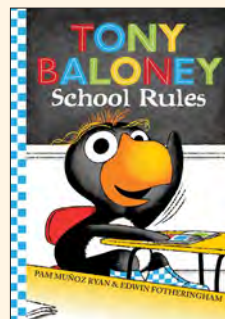
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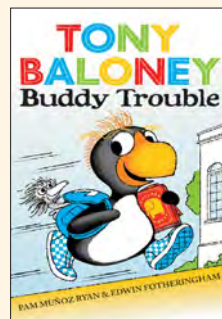
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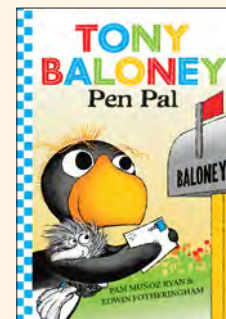
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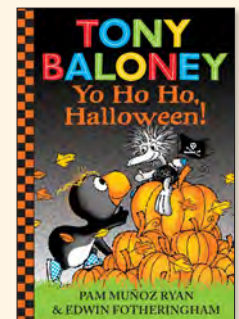
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Praise for *Mañanaland*, *Echo*, and *Esperanza Rising*



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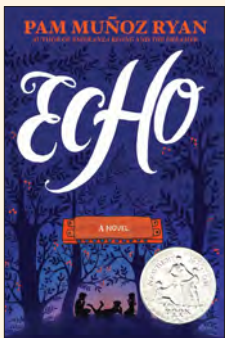
- ★“Ryan beautifully layers thought-provoking topics onto her narrative while keeping readers immersed in the story’s world.”—[Kirkus Reviews](#), [starred review](#)
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“*Mañanaland* is that rare gift of a book. It blends dream and truth into an enthralling fantasy that quietly shows us what it is like to be unwanted, searching for a place to belong. It is a story about choosing the very difficult path of kindness and courage, and about the faith of knowing with all our hearts that this is the path we all must take.”

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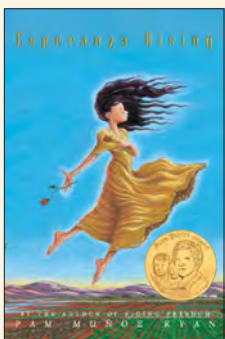
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for Young Adults**

**Publishers Weekly
Best Book of the Year**

★“Told in a lyrical, fairy tale-like style . . . Readers will be swept up.”
—[Publishers Weekly](#), [starred review](#)

★“This well-written novel belongs in all collections.”
—[School Library Journal](#), [starred review](#)

“Ryan writes a moving story in clear, poetic language that children will sink into, and the book offers excellent opportunities for discussion and curriculum support.”—[Booklist](#)

“Ryan’s . . . style is engaging, her characters appealing, and her story is one that—though a deep-rooted part of the history of California, the Depression, and thus the nation—is little heard in children’s fiction. It bears telling to a wider audience.”—[Kirkus Reviews](#)

“Ryan’s novel, inspired by events in the life of her grandmother, deftly weaves social issues into a novel that is first and foremost a compelling story of family and coming of age.”
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