



# Happy Birthday, Josefina!

## A Conversation Guide

Below are suggested topics and passages to use when reading *Happy Birthday, Josefina!*

### 1. Why does Josefina want to become a healer like her aunt?

Talk about Josefina's interest in growing things and caring for others—including young Sombrita. She already knows many of the plants and herbs used in healing and learns more as she helps Tía Magdalena, including the important globe mallow root that Josefina uses to treat Mariana's snake bite.

### 2. Josefina hopes for a second chance with her Tía Magdalena. Can you think of other examples of second chances in the story?

Using passages like the one below, talk about second chances in the story. Discuss why second chances are important and if your reader has ever given someone a second chance.

- Tía Dolores bent down so that her eyes were level with Josefina's. "Spring is the season for second chances," she said. "Didn't your mamá's flowers sprout again? Didn't Sombrita get another chance to live when you promised to take care of her?" Tía Dolores smiled. "We're all given second chances." (pp. 38–39)

### 3. In what ways did Hispanic families, like Josefina's, interact with the Puebloans, like Mariana's family?

Discuss chapter 3 when Papá and Josefina (along with Sombrita) go to visit Mariana's pueblo. Papá and Esteban have a trading agreement—blankets for sheep. The settlers and the Puebloans also share the scarce water in the Río Grande valley. The settlers were often invited to important festivals at nearby pueblos. The adults shared food and the children played games together.

### 4. Life on the rancho requires working together. Can you think of some instances in the story that show Josefina and others working together?

Josefina and her sisters do many everyday tasks together like laundry, cleaning, and preparing food. They also come together to work on major projects as a team such as weaving blankets, planting and tending the garden, and repairing the adobe walls. The rancho functions as a small community. In addition to Josefina and her family, servants and workers all labor together at the rancho.

### 5. How does Josefina show bravery in the story?

Talk about how Josefina shows that she is brave enough to take on caring for a young goat, and how she faces her fears in returning to Tía Magdalena to admit to breaking the special jar. But Josefina's bravery is really put to the test when the snake bites Mariana and she must be brave enough to try and heal her. At the end of the story, Josefina says:

- "We're all given second chances. We just have to be brave enough to take them." (p. 60)

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