



Meet Josefina

A Conversation Guide

Below are suggested topics and passages to use when reading *Meet Josefina*.

1. Each member of the Montoya family contributes to life on the rancho. What was a typical day like for the four sisters? How do they often work together as a team? What challenges do they face? When the sisters do laundry or prepare a feast, they each have different jobs, but they all work hard. If you lived on a rancho in Josefina's time, how would your life be different from your life today? In what ways would it be similar?

2. What special items does Josefina keep in her memory box? How do these things help her remember her mother? Do you ever keep special things in a particular place to help you remember a special person or time?

Talk about the many ways that Josefina's memory box holds reminders of special people. In chapter 1, we learn that the box was made by Josefina's great-great-grandfather and holds a piece of Mamá's favorite lavender-scented soap. Josefina wants to add some primroses, which Mamá loved. Encourage the reader to think about ways that objects can help us remember important people, places, and events.

3. Why does Florecita make Josefina think of her mother? How does Josefina feel about Florecita? Why do you think she feels this way?

As you discuss, consider this passage:

- It was a small herd that had belonged to Mamá. She left the herd to Josefina and her sisters when she died. Josefina wished she hadn't. Mamá had always protected Josefina from things she feared and disliked, and Mamá had protected Josefina from the goats. (pp. 15–16)

Why are the goats associated with Mamá, in Josefina's mind? Why is Josefina so angry when Florecita knocks her into the stream and eats the primroses? How does Mamá's death add to Josefina's strong feelings about the goats, especially Florecita? How do Tía Dolores and Papá show that they understand her feelings?

4. Josefina's story has several surprises in it. What are some of the surprises, and how does Josefina react to them? Were you surprised at any parts of the story?

Discuss how some of the surprises are unwelcome, such as Florecita eating the primroses and, later, Mamá's hollyhocks. Other surprises are very welcome, such as Tía Dolores arriving with the caravan. At the end, Josefina even surprises herself when she stands up to Florecita.

5. Josefina feels sure that Abuelito and his caravan can't bring what she hopes for. Is she right or wrong about this? What is Josefina longing for? Does Abuelito bring anything that might help?

In the passages below, compare what the sisters hope Abuelito will bring. What do their hopes tell you about each sister?

- "Ana," said Josefina, ... "What do you hope Abuelito will bring on the caravan?" "Shoes for my two little boys," Ana answered. "I hope he brings the plow that Papá needs," said Clara. She was always practical. "How dull!" said Francisca. "I'm hoping for some new lace." (pp. 12-13)
- What she [Josefina] wanted most was for her sisters to be at peace with one another. She wanted the household to be running smoothly, and Papá to be happy and laughing again. She longed for life to be the way it was when Mamá was alive. (p. 13)

What does Abuelito bring when he arrives? How does his arrival begin to make Josefina feel better?



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