



Josefina

Learning Guide

Learn about Spanish culture and the settlement of America's Southwestern frontier through the stories of Josefina, a Hispanic girl growing up in New Mexico in 1824.





Josefina

About the Josefina Books

Josefina Montoya is a nine-year-old Hispanic girl growing up on her family's *rancho* in northern New Mexico. Her six stories begin in 1824, just three years after Mexico won independence from Spain and the Santa Fe Trail opened up trade with the United States.

Two themes permeate the six stories: tradition and change. When the first story opens, Josefina's mother has recently died. Josefina and her three older sisters are struggling to keep things as they were when Mamá was alive, relying on family, faith, and traditions for strength and comfort. This profound change in their personal lives echoes changes in the world around them: In 1824, New Mexico was part of the country of Mexico, and families like Josefina's spoke Spanish and followed Spanish and Mexican ways of life. But the opening of the Santa Fe Trail brought Americans into New Mexico with new goods and ideas and different ways of life. Josefina and her family must find a way to accept these changes while holding on to what is precious from the past.

The six books of the core series are:

Book 1: *Meet Josefina*

Book 2: *Josefina Learns a Lesson*

Book 3: *Josefina's Surprise*

Book 4: *Happy Birthday, Josefina!*

Book 5: *Josefina Saves the Day*

Book 6: *Changes for Josefina*

Instructions for Teachers

Assign or read aloud to your students some or all of the books in numerical order. As needed, print copies of each work sheet you would like to use in class. Before assigning the work sheets to your students, consider the talking points and discussion questions for each work sheet provided below. Note: It's not essential to read all six books in order to complete the work sheets.

Talking Points and Discussion

Learning to Read and Write

In 1824, most children, especially girls, did not go to school. Instead, they were taught at home the skills and knowledge their parents felt they needed for adult life. Girls typically learned practical skills like sewing, cooking, and preserving food. Josefina's mamá did not know how to read or write, so when the girls' aunt, Tía Dolores, offers to teach Josefina and her sisters to read and write, they hesitate; this represents a significant departure from their mama's way of life, and they worry that it might make them forget Mamá. Once Tía Dolores shows the girls how reading and writing will help them hold on to their memories of Mamá, the girls become eager. Learning to read and write represents the first big change of many that are coming to the Montoyas' way of life—and to New Mexico. *Discussion questions:* Do you think learning new things makes you forget old things? Why or why not?

Culture and Language of New Mexico

New Mexico is the site of one of the oldest European settlements in North America. Spanish colonists first settled in New Mexico in 1598—more than 20 years before the Pilgrims landed in New England.



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Pueblo Indians and other Native American tribes had lived in New Mexico for thousands of years before the Spanish settlers arrived. Except for the descendants of Native Americans, Americans today have all immigrated from somewhere else, or are the descendents of immigrants. *Discussion questions:* Do you know what countries or cultures people in your family came from? Do you know the languages or special traditions, such as foods or celebrations, of those countries or cultures? Are any of these traditions part of your life today?

Trade and the Santa Fe Trail

Throughout history, the desire to obtain new goods and resources has resulted in exploration, new trade routes, and new relationships between countries. *Discussion questions:* Imagine you are a trader—what would you want to trade for? What things would you use to trade with?

Answer Key

Learning to Read and Write

1. Answers may include the following: you can write down memories and stories about people, write down things people said, read old letters or diaries, add captions to photographs or pictures.
2. Answers may include going to school, getting a job, playing games, cooking, driving, using a computer or phone.
- 3.

New skills	Learn today?
Reading and writing	Yes
Playing the piano (<i>Meet Josefina</i>)	Answers will vary.
Weaving (<i>Josefina Learns a Lesson</i>)	Answers will vary.
Sewing (<i>Josefina's Surprise</i>)	Answers will vary.
Baking bread (<i>Changes for Josefina</i>)	Answers will vary.
Healing illness or injury (<i>Happy Birthday, Josefina!</i>)	Answers will vary.

4. Teaching the sisters to read and write, talking business with Papá and helping to make business decisions, weaving blankets to trade for new sheep. Student opinions on whether these are good ideas will vary.

Culture and Language of New Mexico

1. Spain, Mexico, the United States
2. Answers will vary.
3. *sí*—yes; *fiesta*—party or feast; *tía*—aunt; *adiós*—good-bye; *gracias*—thank you; *arroyo*—gully; *rebozo*—shawl



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- Answers may include building homes out of adobe; making tortillas, chili, or bizcochitos; holding fiestas and fandangos; wearing rebozos and sarapes; baking bread in the horno; drying corn or chiles; weaving wool blankets; decorating the church; celebrating Las Posadas; her family's Catholic faith; having an altar in the home; celebrating your saint's day.
- Pueblo Indians, because they and other Native American tribes were already here when Europeans came to America.

Trade and the Santa Fe Trail

- Traders buy, sell, and trade goods. They may take goods made in one place and sell them in another, where those goods are needed. Examples include Abuelito, who trades goods in Mexico City; Patrick O'Toole in *Josefina Saves the Day*, who trades Papá's mules for silver coins; and Josefina herself, who (along with her sisters) trades her blanket for a violin in *Josefina Saves the Day*.
- Through trade, her family can get things they need or want and can sell things to get money.
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Things they get through trading	Things they have to trade with or sell
silk, cotton fabric, lace, hair ribbons	wool, animal hides, pine nuts (<i>Meet Josefina</i>)
iron tools, paper, ink, books, dishes	blankets, mules (<i>Josefina Saves the Day</i>)
coffee, sugar, shoes, and chocolate (<i>Meet Josefina</i>)	
sheep (<i>Josefina Learns a Lesson & Saves the Day</i>)	
violin, toy farm, knitting needles, silver coins (<i>Josefina Saves the Day</i>)	

- Answers will vary but should express these ideas: The Santa Fe Trail brought Americans from the East, who brought new goods, languages, and traditions to New Mexico. Some of them brought families and stayed in New Mexico; these settlers brought new ways of life to the region.

Fun with Josefina

- false
- c.
- courage
- b.
- Rio Grande—big river; Santa Fe—holy faith; Los Angeles—the angels; El Paso—the pass; Montana—mountain; Colorado—colored red; Florida—flowery

Illustrations by Jean-Paul Tibbles and Susan McAliley



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Learning to Read and Write

1. In Josefina's time, most children did not go to school. Instead, they were taught at home. In *Josefina Learns a Lesson*, Tía Dolores offers to teach Josefina and her sisters how to read and write. The sisters are not sure it's a good idea—until Tía Dolores shows them that reading and writing will help them hold on to their memories of Mamá. How do reading and writing help people hold on to memories?

2. If you didn't know how to read or write, what other things would be difficult for you today?

3. What new skills does Josefina learn in her stories? Do many children learn these skills today?

Fill in the chart below. The first line has been done for you.

New skills	Learn today?
Reading and writing	Yes

4. Tía Dolores introduces new ideas to the Montoyas. What are some of her new ideas? Do you think they are good ideas for the Montoya family?



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Culture and Language of New Mexico

1. When Josefina was born, New Mexico was still a colony of Spain. By 1824, New Mexico was part of the new nation of Mexico. In 1850, when Josefina would have been a young woman, New Mexico became part of the United States. So although Josefina lived in New Mexico all her life, she was a citizen of three different countries in her lifetime! What were the three countries?

2. Josefina's family speak Spanish. Do you know people who speak Spanish? Who?

3. Match each Spanish word with its English meaning:

Spanish	English
<i>sí</i>	aunt
<i>fiesta</i>	thank you
<i>tía</i>	party
<i>adiós</i>	good-bye
<i>gracias</i>	gully
<i>arroyo</i>	shawl
<i>rebozo</i>	party or feast

4. What are some traditions of Josefina and her family that are part of her Spanish and Mexican heritage?

5. Josefina's friend Mariana is a Pueblo Indian. Pueblo Indians still live in New Mexico today, as do descendents of Spanish colonists like the Montoya family. Who do you think lived in New Mexico first—Spanish colonists or Pueblo Indians? Explain your answer.

Pueblo Indians

The Indians of New Mexico were called *Pueblo* Indians by the Spanish settlers. The Indians built homes and villages out of adobe. The flat-roofed houses were built one on top of another, with the different levels connected by ladders. Today such a home or village is known as a *pueblo*. In Spanish, *pueblo* means people.



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Trade and the Santa Fe Trail

1. Several of the Josefina stories talk about traders and trading. What does a trader do? Give an example of trading in the Josefina stories.

2. Why is trading important to Josefina's family?

3. In the chart below, list some things the Montoyas and Abuelito might get through trading, and the things they have to trade with or sell:

Things they get through trading	Things they have to trade with or sell

4. The Santa Fe Trail was a route that ran from Missouri to Santa Fe, New Mexico. It brought settlers and traders from the United States west to Santa Fe. It also brought changes to New Mexico and to the Montoyas' way of life. Why do you think the Santa Fe Trail brought changes? What sorts of changes do you think it brought? (Hint: imagine what would happen if thousands of people from another country suddenly moved into your neighborhood!)



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Fun with Josefina

1. True or false? Josefina's favorite goat was named Florecita.

2. What did Florecita especially like to eat?

- a. tortillas
- b. corn on the cob
- c. flowers
- d. shoes



3. Josefina wanted something that Abuelito's caravan could not bring her—something that would help her stand up to Florecita! What was it? Add the missing vowels to find out.

C _ _ R _ G _



4. Josefina named Florecita's baby *Sombrita*. In Spanish, that means

- a. pretty girl.
- b. little shadow.
- c. giant hat.

5. Josefina grew up speaking Spanish. Spanish people were in North America long before the Pilgrims, and they gave lots of places Spanish names. See if you can match each Spanish place name on the left with its English meaning on the right.

Place Name	English Meaning
Rio Grande	the angels
Santa Fe	colored red
Los Angeles	flowery
El Paso	big river
Montana	the pass
Colorado	holy faith
Florida	mountain



In 1824, the darker area on this map belonged to Mexico. The heavy line in the middle of the shaded area shows the U.S. border today.