

Objective sight words (labor leader, non-violent methods, migrant, philosophies, immigrants, voting registration, pesticides, chemicals, strikes, protest, boycott); concepts (migrant workers and importance of working rights, non-violent means to achieve worker rights, St. Francis and Gandhi influence, Great Depression)



Vocabulary	
labor leader	pesticides
non-violent methods	chemicals
migrant	strikes
philosophies	protest
immigrants	boycott
voting registration	

Cesar Chavez

“Si, Se Puede” (“Yes, it can be done”)

By: Sue Peterson

Cesar Estrada Chavez (1927-1993) was a Mexican-American labor leader who used non-violent methods to fight for the rights of migrant farm workers in the southwestern United States. Migrant workers often move from farm to farm or from town to town to find work. It is usually difficult work and does not pay a high wage. Chavez was influenced greatly by the peaceful philosophies of St. Francis of Assisi and Mohandas Gandhi.

Chavez was born in Arizona. When he was ten-years-old, his parents lost the family farm because of the Great Depression. They were forced to become migrant workers themselves. Chavez worked part-time in the farm fields with his family in Arizona and later in California, when his family lived there. After graduating from 8th grade, Chavez worked full-time to help support his family.

He served in the U.S. Navy during WWII, married Helen Fabela in 1948, and eventually helped raise a family of eight children. Chavez and his wife helped teach Mexican immigrants to read and helped them with voting registration.

Chavez was concerned over the health and working conditions of the migrant population. He did not like the use of pesticides, the name of the chemicals used to kill bugs on the crops. He knew that pesticides could make human beings sick. He organized a group of people to help work for the rights of farm workers. They worked on many goals like increasing the wages for the workers, improving their working conditions, and improving the safety for the farm workers.

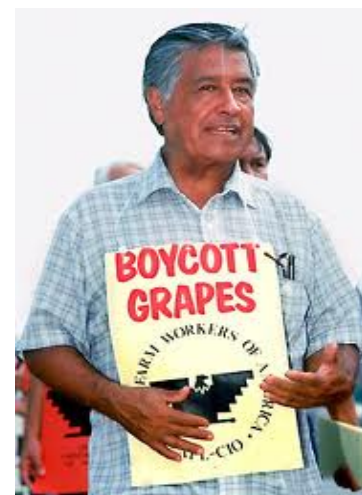
Chavez helped organize strikes, whereby the workers chose to stop working to protest some important issues related to work. For example, the migrant workers went on strike to protest the poor wages, poor working conditions, and lack of safety on their jobs. They refused to work until

something changed regarding their salary and these working conditions. The public, that is consumers like you, sometimes chooses to support the strike by not buying certain products or not buying from a certain store, etc. This is called a boycott. Boycotts put pressure on the people who make decisions regarding those who are protesting and striking.

Chavez went on many hunger strikes, too, which is another type of strike to prove a point and draw attention to what his concerns were. In a hunger strike, you basically do not eat until the demands are met. Chavez was able to use the hunger strikes to move legislators to change the laws to improve the lives of farm workers. Because of Chavez's actions, he was jailed many times. Despite this, he continued his goal of helping to fight for the migrant worker.

Chavez, with aid from Dolores Huerta and Gilbert Padilla, started a union called the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) to help fight for social justice. He organized a national boycott of lettuce and grapes.

The name NFWA was changed to the United Farm Workers (UFW) in 1974. In 1978, some of the demands for better wages and working conditions were met, so the boycott for the lettuce and grapes was lifted.



Throughout his life, Chavez's motto was "Si, se puede". This meant, "Yes, it can be done". Chavez proved that it could be done. His work for fair treatment and better pay for migrant workers helped make the lives of millions of people better.

After a lifetime of working to help these people, Chavez died in 1993. He received the Presidential Medal of Freedom after his death. Chavez's children and grandchildren continue in his footsteps to help fight for the rights for migrant workers.



Practice

Word Search. Find the words from the text.

D	P	E	S	T	I	C	I	D	E	S	Q
R	E	C	I	R	O	B	H	O	W	I	L
G	A	H	B	O	W	O	R	K	U	S	I
I	U	E	C	B	D	Y	K	F	Y	M	E
G	E	M	M	A	H	C	W	V	V	L	K
I	D	I	E	L	J	O	O	L	J	A	W
Z	X	C	Z	X	T	T	P	L	C	E	U
V	F	A	U	U	I	T	X	I	S	E	Q
Y	N	L	Y	N	L	O	T	V	Y	M	J
E	M	S	G	U	R	I	G	H	T	S	J
E	I	G	D	W	U	J	M	K	C	E	C
M	L	T	N	A	R	G	I	M	U	U	Y

WORK
LABOR
BOYCOTT
VOTING
RIGHTS
MIGRANT
PESTICIDES
CHEMICALS

Multiple-Choice Questions (Put an X in front of the correct answers.)

- What are **3** reasons that there were migrant farm worker “strikes” mentioned in the text?
 - a. to protest poor wages
 - b. to protest working conditions
 - c. to protest safety conditions
 - d. to be able to go on vacation

- What is the name of the union that Chavez started?
 - a. The Migrant Association
 - b. The National Farm Workers Association
 - c. Farmers All United
 - d. All for One

3. The union name changed to _____ in 1974.

- a. Si, Se Puede
- b. United Farm Workers
- c. Workers All
- d. Farming for All

Definitions (Write the meaning of each word as it is used in the text.)

1. migrant

2. boycott

3. pesticides

Extended Response (Answer in complete sentences.)

1. What were some of Chavez's non-violent methods used to fight for the rights of farm workers? Were these successful? If so, how?

2. What did Chavez and his wife Helen do to help Mexican immigrants regarding literacy (i.e., the ability to read and write)?

3. What were some of the concerns regarding farm work? How did Chavez's motto play a role in his action toward changing the working conditions for the migrant farmer?

Answer Sheet

Answers for Matching, Multiple-Choice Questions, and Extended Response

Caesar Chavez

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. a,b,c
2. b
3. b

Extended Response (Accept reasonable answers.)

1. **He organized a group of people to work for farmers' rights. He also organized strikes and boycotts like the lettuce and grape boycotts. Another thing he did was to organize a union. All of these actions were successful and led to better working conditions and increased wages for the migrant workers.**
2. **Chavez and his wife helped teach reading and helped with voter registration.**
3. **There were concerns over working conditions, safety, and salary. Chavez played a role in helping change the conditions for the migrant worker. In fact, he helped millions of people. His children and grandchildren continue the fight for the rights of the migrant worker.**