

Dolores Huerta: Working with Others to Create Change

Theme: Collaboration

Duration: 2 Class Sessions

Interdisciplinary Subject: English Language Arts

Grade Level: 3-5

Lesson Overview: In this lesson, students will explore the experiences of Mexican-American farmworkers in the United States and learn about how they – especially through the leadership of Dolores Huerta and the United Farm Workers – worked with others for improvements in pay and working conditions, as well as respect for their civil rights. Students will analyze primary sources that document working and living conditions for farmworkers in order to build context and then analyze additional sources that highlight the contributions of Dolores Huerta. Finally, students will complete a writing assignment to reflect on working with others to help solve a problem; they may also complete an additional (or alternative) writing assignment to write a letter to Congress.

Overarching Essential Question

- How can we work together?

Lesson Essential Questions

- How did Dolores Huerta and the United Farm Workers work to change society?
- What are different ways you can work with others to help solve a problem?

Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe conditions facing farmworkers and how people organized to change them.
- Define relevant vocabulary in context: union, strike, boycott.
- Explore the contributions of Dolores Huerta to the farmworkers' struggle for justice.
- Draw connections between Dolores Huerta's work and their own ability to collaborate to address problems.

Civic Knowledge

- Roles of citizens in American democracy

Civic Skills

- Identifying and describing information and arguments
- Explaining and analyzing information and arguments
- Clearly articulating ideas and interests

Civic Dispositions

- Respecting individual worth and human dignity

Materials Needed

- Teacher's Guide: Dolores Huerta: Working with Others to Create Change
- [PowerPoint slide pack](#)
- Library of Congress Primary Source Analysis Tool ([online version](#) or [PDF](#))
- [Optional: Scaffolded Analysis Tool](#)
- [Handout A – H.Res.37](#) - Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that all workers deserve fair treatment and safe working conditions, and honoring Dolores Huerta for her commitment to the improvement of working conditions for farm worker families and the rights of women and children. (2007)
- (For optional extension activity) [Handout B – Poem, "Huelga"](#) by Diana García

Library of Congress & Additional Resources

Primary Sources from the Library of Congress:

Photographs by Dorothea Lange, from the Farm Security Administration - Office of War Information Photograph Collection at the Library of Congress:

- *Pea pickers. Wages: one cent per pound. Hamper holds about twenty eight pounds. Near Niland, Imperial County, California.* February, 1939. www.loc.gov/item/2017773452/.
- *Mexican cantaloupe worker at 5:00 a.m. Imperial Valley, California.* June, 1938. www.loc.gov/item/2017770636/.
- *Housing typical of that afforded Mexican field workers of the Imperial Valley. These people are not migrants, but live on the edge of the ranches and work in peas and melons.* March, 1937. www.loc.gov/item/2017769676/.

- *Street meeting at night in Mexican town outside of Shafter, California. Organizer for United Cannery Agricultural Packing and Allied Workers of America Congress of Industrial Organizations-CIO talks to mixed crowd. The strike failed.* November, 1938. www.loc.gov/item/2017770938/.

Photograph: *Interior of house rented to Mexican workers by Michigan Sugar Company. Saginaw County, Michigan.* By John Vachon. August, 1941. www.loc.gov/item/2017813400/.

H.Res.37 - Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that all workers deserve fair treatment and safe working conditions, and honoring Dolores Huerta for her commitment to the improvement of working conditions for farm worker families and the rights of women and children. (2007)
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/house-resolution/37/text>

Additional Resources:

Photograph: Dolores Huerta, Huelga, Delano CA Grape Strikes, September 24, 1965 / by Harvey Wilson Richards / Harvey Richards Media Archive, ©Paul Richards
<http://npg.si.edu/exhibition/one-life-dolores-huerta>

Clip (38 seconds) from documentary film *Dolores*, in which Dolores Huerta explains how she coined what would become a slogan of the farmworkers' movement, "Sí, se puede" ("Yes, we can"). Posted by PBS's Independent Lens in anticipation of its airing of the documentary.

<https://www.facebook.com/pbs/posts/10155525278982169>

Optional Resources:

Dolores. Written, produced, and directed by Peter Bratt, PBS Distribution, 2017.

Official site: <https://www.doloresthemovie.com/>

K-12 classroom edition available at: <http://www.rocoeducational.com/dolores>

Farmworker Movement Documentation Project. UC San Diego Library.

<https://libraries.ucsd.edu/farmworkermovement/>

The Land Is Rich. Written and directed by Harvey Richards, Estuary Press, 1966.

<https://hrmediaarchive.estuarypress.com/the-land-is-rich-california-farm-worker/>

Weatherford, Carole Boston. *Dorothea Lange: The Photographer Who Found the Faces of the Depression*. Illustrated by Sarah Green, Albert Whitman & Company, 2017.

Standards

C3 Indicators

D2.Civ.14.3-5. Illustrate historical and contemporary means of changing society.

D3.3.3-5. Identify evidence that draws information from multiple sources in response to compelling questions.

Teacher's Guide

I. Introduction

A. Brief Discussion

Ask students: *What are examples that you know of where people work together to reach a goal or solve a problem?*

Encourage them to think of examples from their lives and their community, e.g. sports and other activity teams, student council, religious organizations providing assistance to people in the community, etc.

Tell students that today they are going to learn about one important way people in the United States have worked together to solve problems: by organizing labor unions.

Ask students if they have heard of someone being in a union and what that means. Depending on your students' familiarity or experience with the concept, you may either help them to clarify a definition of the term, or show them Slide 2 from the slide pack, which provides one.

Note: the definition provided is simplified; teachers may want to elaborate that workers wanting to make their job "better" might refer to issues of pay, working conditions, limits on hours, being allowed breaks, providing health insurance or other benefits, and improving living conditions.

B. Primary Source Analysis

Give each student a primary source analysis tool. You can choose to use the Library of Congress Primary Source Analysis Tool ([online version](#) or [PDF](#)) or the [scaffolded analysis tool](#), depending on your students' needs.

Put students in pairs to work with a partner as they complete the analysis.

Display **Slides 3-6**, directing students to complete the OBSERVE column as they study each slide.

- ◆ Possible cues: Describe what you see. What do you notice first? What is interesting?

Next, display **Slides 7-10**. Be sure to view in "Presentation" mode so that the bibliographic information and questions will appear as you click through each slide.

As captions are revealed, direct students to complete the REFLECT and QUESTION columns of their primary source analysis tool.

- ◆ Cues to help them REFLECT: When do you think this photo was made? Why do you think it was made? What can you learn from examining this photo?
- ◆ Cues to help them QUESTION: What else do you wonder about in this photo? Do you have more questions about the people, events, or time period?

Then reveal the additional questions for students to answer either in their pairs or in a whole-class discussion.

C. Discussion: What did you find?

Ask students to share the most important observations, reflections, and questions they had about the photos they examined.

D. Optional Activity to Build Greater Context

Time permitting, teachers may want to show some or all of a [seven-minute excerpt](#) of Harvey Richards's 1966 documentary film, *The Land is Rich*. See below for [film segment notes](#).

II. Lesson Tasks

A. Introduce Dolores Huerta

Ask students what they think the workers in the photos (and the film footage, if viewed) might want to make their jobs better and safer, as indicated in the definition of "union" on Slide 2. How do they think the workers could ask for that?

Show students the following slides in the PowerPoint:

Slide 11: The photo shows a meeting of workers with a union organizer as part of a strike in 1938; as the caption notes, the strike failed.

Slide 12: Help the students define the term "strike." (This slide also provides the word for "strike" in Spanish ("huelga"), pronounced "well-gah").

Slide 13: Photo of Dolores Huerta holding a sign that reads, "HUELGA".

Ask students what they notice about the photo. Who do they think this woman might be? How would they describe her? What does she look like she's feeling? Does she look tired? Angry? Determined? Fed up? Who do they think she's addressing with her sign?

Tell students that this woman's name is Dolores Huerta (second click on slide 13 will show her name) and that, when this picture was taken in 1965, she was leading a strike of farmworkers, specifically people who picked grapes, who were demanding better working conditions and better pay. In 1962, Huerta, along with César Chávez, helped found the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), a labor union that brought together mainly Mexican and Mexican-American farmworkers.

B. Congressional Resolution

Distribute [Handout A: H.Res. 37](#). Explain that often Congress recognizes special accomplishments by creating a "resolution" that other members of Congress can also support; it is not a law.

Read the resolution with the students. Ask what they found most interesting or surprising.

In case students are interested to know more about this resolution, teachers can let them know that it was introduced by Rep. Hilda Solis (D-CA), gained 63 cosponsors, and was referred to the House of Representatives' Education and Labor Committee; it did not advance to a vote on the House floor.

If possible, play this very short [clip](#) to show students what she looks and sounds like today. Dolores Huerta explains how she coined what would become a slogan of the farmworkers' movement, "Sí, se puede" (usually translated as, "Yes, we can").

III. Closure

Remind students that, throughout history, one of the most important ways people have managed to change society – as Dolores Huerta did through her work with farmworkers – has been by working with others. Tell them they are going to reflect on this idea in a writing assignment.

Two writing assignments are listed below; one provides more of an ELA emphasis, while the other may lend itself more to use in a social studies class. Teachers can choose one or both depending on the kind of writing they want to emphasize with their students.

A. Two-paragraph writing activity (Options 1-4 are also listed on **Slide 14**).

Note: Teachers may give students any of the following options for the assignment or may choose to narrow down the choices based on their own curriculum priorities. Especially for options 2-4, teachers may want to help their students brainstorm examples they already know of people working to address or change an issue or a problem in society (e.g., the Civil Rights Movement, or more recent examples such as the Black Lives Matter movement and student-led protests against gun violence).

1. Write about a time you worked with someone else to solve a problem – either at home, at school, in your community, or in another setting. What was difficult about working with others rather than just by yourself? What was easier? What did you accomplish? How did you feel about it?
2. Write about an issue in society that you think needs to change. Explain why you think it needs to change, and describe how you would work with others to achieve that.
3. Write about an example of people working together today to solve a problem in society. Describe what they are doing, and explain how or why you think this will help them to be successful in achieving their goal.
4. Write a letter to Dolores Huerta about something in society that you think needs to change, and tell her how you would like to work with others to change it. Be sure to include some good questions for her! If anybody can give you good advice about how to change society, it's Dolores Huerta.

B. Writing a letter to Congress (Also listed on **Slide 15**).

1. Refer students back to H. Res. 37. Ask them to think of someone else – from history, from their community, or perhaps both – who they believe deserves to be honored by a House or Senate resolution for their work with others to solve a problem or change society.
2. Explain to the students that now they have a chance to write a letter to either their Representative or their Senators. In their letter, they should note who they believe should be recognized by a resolution and explain why that person is deserving.

Students can look up their Representative by ZIP code [here](#) and their Senators [here](#).

C. Sharing and teacher assessment of written work

Give students the opportunity to share their written work with their classmates, either by reading it aloud or by having students read their classmates' paragraphs and/or letters.

Teachers may also collect the written assignments in order to provide feedback to students.

IV. Optional Extension Activity: Poetry Reading

- A. Using the link provided in the notes of **Slide 13** (also provided [here](#)), pull up the webcast of the poetry reading from the Library of Congress. Cue the video to minute 19:02.
- B. Note that poet Diana Garcia was born in a migrant farm labor camp in California's San Joaquin Valley in 1950. She is now a professor of creative writing at California State University, Monterey Bay.
- C. Distribute [Handout B: "Huelga" by Diana Garcia](#) so that students can read along with her as she recites the poem inspired by the photo on Slide 13.
- D. After reading/hearing the poem, give students the chance to ask questions or share their reactions, including a focus on key elements of poetry and language that they may have already studied in the context of other literary and poetic works.

Film Notes: *The Land is Rich.*

The film provides compelling footage that will help students to understand the realities that faced farmworkers and to see how the farmworker movement was one of collective action, of many people working together to change society. See below for film segment notes.

- 0:16-2:27 shows the living and working conditions of farmworkers of all races, including considerable footage showing children working in the fields and fruit tree groves. (No narration, background music (in Spanish) is "La Peregrinación" ("The Pilgrimage) by Agustín Lira).
- 2:28-3:54 shows scenes from various marches and organizing activities of the farmworkers. (No narration, background music (in Spanish) is "Huelga En General" ("General Strike") by Luis Valdez). Lyrics with translation for both of these songs are available [here](#).
- 3:55-7:07 begins narration and accompanies footage with explanation of the founding of the United Farm Workers and their 1966 march over 25 days (more than 300 miles) from the town of Delano, in California's San Joaquin Valley, to the state capital, Sacramento.

This lesson is part of a larger initiative, Citizen U, which aims to integrate civic learning across the curriculum for students in grades 2-12. For more lessons like it, in Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies, or to learn more about related creative, community, and professional development opportunities, please visit our [Citizen U website](#).