

Dolores Huerta: Inspiring Civic Responsibility

Theme: Impact

Duration: 1-2 Class Sessions

Interdisciplinary Subject: English/Language Arts

Grade Level: 9-12

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 at different times in order to build context and then analyze additional sources that highlight the contributions of Dolores Huerta, including a poem written to celebrate her work. Finally, students will write a poem, speech, or letter to the editor about a social movement (past, present, or future) that inspires them to fulfill their civic responsibilities; they may also complete an additional (or alternative) writing assignment to write a letter to Congress.

Overarching Essential Question

- What are our responsibilities as citizens?

Lesson Essential Questions

- How did Huerta and the UFW work to change society?
- What social movement inspires you?

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 as part of a social movement and their own roles as citizens.

Civic Knowledge

- Principles of American democracy established by the Constitution

Civic Skills

- Identifying and describing information
- Explaining and analyzing information
- Working with others
- Clearly articulating ideas and interests

Civic Dispositions

- Developing as an engaged member of society
- Respecting individual worth and human dignity
- Assuming the personal, political, and economic responsibilities of a citizen

Materials Needed

- Teacher's Guide -- Dolores Huerta: Inspiring Civic Responsibility
- [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. (2007)
- [Handout B – Poem, "Huelga" by Diana García](#)

Library of Congress & Additional Resources

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/.
- *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/.

Photograph: *Mexican workers on strike. California.* October, 1933. www.loc.gov/item/2017761903/.

Photograph: *Farm workers during a strike in Delano, California.* By Paul Fusco. 1966. Look Magazine Photograph Collection, Prints and Photographs Collection, Library of Congress. http://www.americaslibrary.gov/aa/chavez/aa_chavez_huelga_3_e.html

Photograph: *Boycott Lettuce & Grapes.* Chicago: Women's Graphics Collective, 1978. www.loc.gov/item/93505187/

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>

Photo colorscreen: *Homenaje a Dolores Huerta: 1965 / California broccoli harvest: 1995.* By Yolanda M. Lopez and Jos Sances. www.loc.gov/item/2016650197/.

Webcast & accompanying transcript: *Celebrating "One Life: Dolores Huerta,"* a Library of Congress poetry reading https://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=7372

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:

Congressional Glossary from the Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/congress/congress-glossary.html>

Brief biography of Dolores Huerta from the Dolores Huerta Foundation <http://doloreshuerta.org/dolores-huerta/>

Dolores – Documentary film by Peter Bratt (2017)
Official site: <https://www.doloreshemovie.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 – Documentary film by Harvey Richards (1966) <https://hrmediaarchive.estuarypress.com/the-land-is-rich-california-farm-worker/>

Standards

C3 Indicators

D2.Civ.14.9-12. Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.

D3.3.9-12. Identify evidence that draws information directly and substantively from multiple sources to detect inconsistencies in evidence in order to revise or strengthen claims.

Teacher's Guide

I. Introduction

A. Brief Discussion

Ask students: *What are our responsibilities as citizens to address issues or situations we believe are unjust?*

Encourage them to think about the ways individuals and groups have sought to change society.

Ask students: *What are examples of social movements that you have studied or know about? What issue(s) did these movements seek to address?*

In case students need a reminder of what a social movement is, teachers may prompt them to recall examples from various moments in U.S. or world history when people have mobilized to push for social and political change; teachers may also ask students to name related and memorable speeches from those movements.

Examples from U.S. history

- Early labor and workers' rights movements
- The women's suffrage movement
- The Civil Rights Movement
- Anti-war movements from the Vietnam War era and other conflicts
- Current mobilization efforts against gun violence, including the recent March for Our Lives

Examples from world history

- The anti-apartheid movement in South Africa
- Popular movements for independence from colonial rule (e.g., those led by Mohandas Gandhi in India and Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana)
- The Solidarity movement in Poland
- Mass mobilizations against dictatorships in various Arab countries, known collectively as the Arab Spring

Record students' answers on the board or on a large sheet of paper in order to refer back to the list in Part III of the lesson.

Tell students that today they are going to learn about one person and one movement that sought – and still seeks – to improve the lives of an important and often overlooked group in the United States: farm workers, by working to organize them into a labor union.

Check for students' familiarity with key terms. **Slide 2** of the slide pack provides definitions of key vocabulary for this lesson (labor union, strike, boycott) if teachers need to review these words with students. Note that the word for "strike" in Spanish is "*huelga*" (pronounced "well-gah").

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 3-5**, 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 6-8**. Be sure to view in "Presentation" mode so that the bibliographic information 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?

C. Discussion: What did you see?

Ask students to share the most important observations, reflections, and questions they had about the photos they examined. Teachers may record these comments for later follow up, including questions that may be answered as students complete the rest of the lesson activities.

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 end of lesson for [film segment notes](#).

II. Lesson Tasks

A. Introduce Dolores Huerta and the United Farm Workers

Ask students what they think the workers in the photos might have wanted in order to make their living and working conditions better and safer. How do they think the workers could ask for that?

Project **Slide 9**. The photo shows Mexican farmworkers on strike in 1933. Ask a student to read the sign being held by the men in the front of the truck. (It reads: "Disarm the rich farmer OR arm the worker for self-defense").

Project **Slide 10**. 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.

Ask students: *Taken together, what do Slides 9 and 10 tell us about how farmworkers were treated in the 1930s and how they tried to respond?*

Project **Slide 11**. The photo shows two women farmworkers on a picket line during a 1966 strike in Delano, California, led by the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee. Help students to understand that, though those earlier strike efforts by farmworkers were unsuccessful, organizers still used (and still do use) this strategy as a way of mobilizing support and calling for change.

Project **Slide 12** (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?

If students do not know who she is, tell them that the woman in this photo is Dolores Huerta (second click on Slide 12 will show her name) and that, when this picture was taken in 1965, she was one of the leaders of a farmworkers strike, specifically people who picked grapes, who were demanding better working conditions and better pay. The women shown picketing in **Slide 11** were part of this strike.

Project **Slide 13**, which provides background information about the founding of what became known as the United Farm Workers and shows a poster calling for a boycott of lettuce and grapes.

- Note that the NFWA was a labor union that brought together mainly Mexican and Mexican-American farmworkers.
- Note that the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee is usually referred to just as the United Farm Workers (UFW).
- In case students don't notice, point out that it took five years from the beginning of the Delano grape strike until the union reached an agreement with the growers.

B. Congressional Resolution

Distribute [Handout A: H.Res. 37](#). Explain the source by letting students know that sometimes members of Congress want to make recognition of someone's accomplishments even more official and more special by putting it into a "resolution" that other members of Congress can also support; it is not a law, and it only applies to the house of Congress in which it is introduced – either the House of Representatives *or* the Senate.

For a definition of a resolution, specifically a "Simple Resolution" like H.Res. 37, see [this explanation from the Library of Congress](#).

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.

For additional information about Dolores Huerta and her life, click [here](#) to access the biography listed in the Optional Resources section.

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") – and is featured on the poster shown on Slide 13.

III. Closure

Two writing assignments are listed below; the first provides more of an ELA emphasis, while the second 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. Poetry Reading & Written Response

Using the link provided in the notes of Slide 12 (also provided [here](#)), pull up the webcast of the poetry reading from the Library of Congress. Cue the video to minute 19:02.

Note that poet Diana Garcia was born in a migrant farm labor camp in California's San Joaquín Valley in 1950. She is now a professor of creative writing at California State University, Monterey Bay.

Distribute [Handout B: "Huelga" by Diana Garcia](#) so that students can read along with Diana Garcia as she recites the poem inspired by the photo on Slide 12.

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.

Project **Slide 14** of the slide pack. The poster was created in 1995 to pay tribute to Dolores Huerta's leadership and its continued significance for farmworkers, including the women broccoli harvesters portrayed.

Considering the ongoing legacy of Huerta's work as reflected in the 1995 poster, refer back to the list of social movements the class developed in Part I of the lesson. Now that students have had a chance to look at one social movement in some depth, ask students to think of a movement (past or present, or one they think still needs to happen) that has inspired them (or would inspire them) to fulfill their responsibilities as citizens. It may or may not be on the list they helped to compile.

They will reflect on this movement and what it means to them by writing about it in one of the following three formats:

- A poem
- A speech: making sure to note the audience to which they would deliver it and why
- A letter to the editor: they should note in which newspaper they would want to publish and why

Student instructions for this assignment are provided on **Slide 15**.

Give students the opportunity to share their written work with their classmates. One way to structure this would be to have students gather in groups based on which format they chose (poem, speech, or letter to the editor) to discuss similarities and differences and to share reflections. Groups could then select one representative piece to be shared with the full class. Finally, lead a whole-class discussion to explore why students chose the format they did and how and when these different formats can be valuable to advancing a social movement.

B. Writing a Letter to Congress (Student instructions provided on **Slide 16**).

Refer students back to H. Res. 37. Ask them to think of someone – from history, from their community, or perhaps both – who they believe deserves to be honored by a House or Senate resolution for their work, either individually or as part of a coalition, to change society.

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 of this honor.

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

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 from different backgrounds 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](#)