

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Room \_\_\_\_\_ Table \_\_\_\_\_

# Cesar Chavez

**Vocabulary:** find the meaning of these words:

boycott \_\_\_\_\_

pesticide \_\_\_\_\_

labor \_\_\_\_\_

migrant \_\_\_\_\_

civilian \_\_\_\_\_

Cesar Chavez was born in 1927 in his family's farm. The family barely made a living. In the Great Depression of the 1930's, the family lost their farm. They became migrant farm workers in Arizona and California. Migrant farm workers go from one farm to another to harvest crops. Cesar Chavez went to more than 30 schools before he left school after seventh grade.

Life was very hard for migrant farm workers. They had to work long hours working very hard to pick fruits and vegetables. They got little money for their hard work. Sometimes they could not rent a home and had to sleep in their cars. Even children had to work. Sometimes the farm owners would cheat them and not pay them at all. Sometimes they would charge the workers for drinking water. The farm owners used pesticides to protect crops from insects. The pesticides made the workers sick.

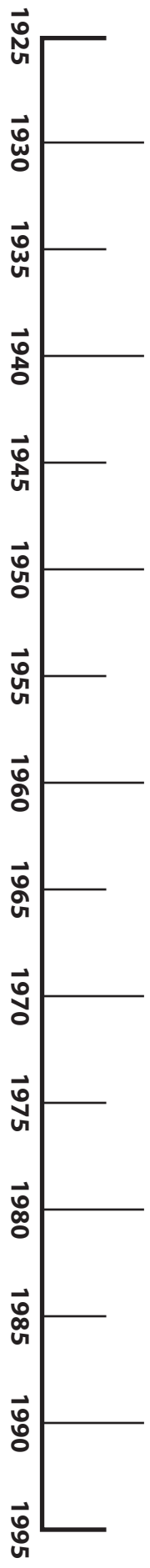
In 1944 at the age of 17, he joined the U.S. Army and fought in World War II. In 1946 he returned to California and married Helen Fabela. He went back to work as a farm worker. Then he realized that life was still really bad for migrant workers, and would not get any better unless he did something.

In 1952, he joined an organization--CSO, the Community Service Organization--to make life better for workers. The organization did not do enough, so he took all the money he had and formed an organization just for farm workers. He went to many different migrant camps and talked to many people. The workers were scared of losing their jobs. Farm owners punished people who tried to make things better for workers. Other people had tried to form labor unions for farm workers, but failed. Cesar talked to many people and inspired them to try.

In 1965, the United Farm Workers made a breakthrough. Grape pickers went on strike for more money. Many workers joined, and the strike grew. Chavez led a 250 mile march which got a lot of attention and better jobs for some workers. In 1968, Chavez organized rallies and started the national boycott of grapes. In 1970, grape growers signed a contract with workers for better conditions and more money. In 1975, California governor Jerry Brown signed a law protecting farm workers.

Chavez continued to work for the rights of workers until his death in 1993. President Clinton gave him the highest civilian honor in 1994--The Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Make a timeline of the life of Cesar Chavez. Things to include: (1) his birth, (2) about when his family lost their farm, (3) when he left school, (4) when he joined the Army, (5) when he married, (6) when he joined the CSO, (7) when the grape pickers went on strike, (8) when he started the grape boycott, (9) when the California law was signed protecting farm workers, (10) his death, and the (11) award of the Presidential Medal of Freedom.



Describe why life was hard for farm workers. \_\_\_\_\_

What did Cesar Chavez do to help? \_\_\_\_\_

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Make a timeline of the life of Cesar Chavez.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Birth
- \_\_\_\_\_ About when his family lost their farm
- \_\_\_\_\_ He left school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ He joined the Army.
- \_\_\_\_\_ He married
- \_\_\_\_\_ He joined the CSO
- \_\_\_\_\_ The grape pickers went on strike.
- \_\_\_\_\_ He started the grape boycott
- \_\_\_\_\_ The California law was signed protecting farm workers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ His death
- \_\_\_\_\_ The award of the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Describe why life was hard for farm workers. \_\_\_\_\_

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What did Cesar Chavez do to help? \_\_\_\_\_

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## César Chavez

**migrant** -- moving around. A migrant worker moves from place to place to work.

**boycott** -- refusal to buy or use something.

**labor union** -- organization of workers formed to protect and help workers.

**pesticide** -- chemical used to kill bugs.

Cesar's family owned a farm and a store when he was little. César's family lost everything when he was 10 years old. They became migrant workers. At an age when most boys and girls play at school, César worked with his family picking celery, oranges, lettuce, grapes and other fruits and vegetables. It was hard work for very little money. He went to more than 30 schools.

Pesticides were sprayed on the plants to stop bugs. César saw how families got sick after working in the fields. He wanted the bugs to be stopped another way. The owners said, No!

César started a labor union for the workers to get more money and better conditions. He held a march to let people know about the problems of workers. He started a boycott of grapes. What he did helped workers a lot.

Who does César Chavez remind you of? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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Who did César Chavez help? \_\_\_\_\_

How did he help them? \_\_\_\_\_

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