

WEEK 22

Cesar Chavez: "¡Si, Se Puede!"

As an adult, Cesar Chavez said, "¡Si, se puede!"—Spanish for "Yes, we can!" Why are these words so important? The answer begins during the 1800s in Mexico.

Chavez's grandfather, Cesario, was born in Mexico. Because of Mexico's *hacienda* system, Cesario and his family lived in **poverty**. Under this system, the government said that, from birth, many people were already in **debt** to the country. They were forced to work their whole lives to repay that debt.

The United States held promise for a better life, and in the 1880s, Cesario's family moved to Arizona. There were six children in Chavez's family. The family owned a ranch and a small market. Then, in the 1930s, their lives changed. This was the time of the **Great Depression**. There was little money and few jobs. People across the country were starving and losing their homes. The Chavez family had to find a new way to survive. They became **migrant** farm workers, moving from place to place to work with **available** crops.

At that time, migrant farm workers in the United States were treated badly. They worked long hours and were given very little to eat. Their working conditions were often unsafe. Children had to change schools frequently as their families followed the crops. Cesar Chavez attended more than 25 schools! When he was in the eighth grade, he was forced to leave school altogether to care for his ill parents.

As an adult, Chavez could not remain silent about the terrible conditions migrant workers faced. He became an organizer for a labor union. The union brought farm workers together with common goals. They worked hard to make their point, and they made a difference—without **violence**. After many years of struggle, workers were finally granted safer working conditions and fairer wages. For his efforts, Chavez was honored with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.



Cesar Chavez founded the National Farm Workers Association in 1962.

MONDAY

Write each word next to its definition.

available

debt

Great Depression

migrant

poverty

violence

- _____ money that is owed
- _____ present and ready for use
- _____ the state of being poor
- _____ a person who moves from place to place
- _____ the period from 1929 to 1940 when there was little economic activity and many people did not have jobs
- _____ harmful physical force

TUESDAY

What do you think Cesar Chavez meant when he said, "Yes, we can"?

WEDNESDAY

Choose the correct answer.

1. What Mexican system kept Cesario Chavez and his family in poverty?

<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ the rancho system	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ the hacienda system
<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ the puede system	<input type="radio"/> Ⓓ the migrant system
2. How was Cesar Chavez's life similar to his grandfather's life?

<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ Both worked in unfair conditions.	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ Neither spoke out for what they believed in.
<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ Both grew up in Mexico.	<input type="radio"/> Ⓓ Both organized labor unions.
3. Why did Cesar Chavez attend more than 25 schools as a child?

<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ He didn't like school.	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ The schools were unsafe.
<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ His grandfather was ill.	<input type="radio"/> Ⓓ His family moved often, following the crops.

THURSDAY

Put the events in order. Write 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 next to each one.

- _____ Cesar Chavez was honored with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.
- _____ Cesar Chavez organized a labor union for farm workers.
- _____ Cesario Chavez was born in Mexico.
- _____ The Great Depression left many people without jobs or homes.
- _____ The Chavez family moved to Arizona.

FRIDAY

If you had the chance to meet Cesar Chavez, what would you ask him?
