

# Easy Reader Biographies: Cesar Chavez

## A Leader for Change

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### Guided Reading Level I

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ISBN-13: 978-0-439-77416-1  
ISBN-10: 0-439-77416-0

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Printed in China.

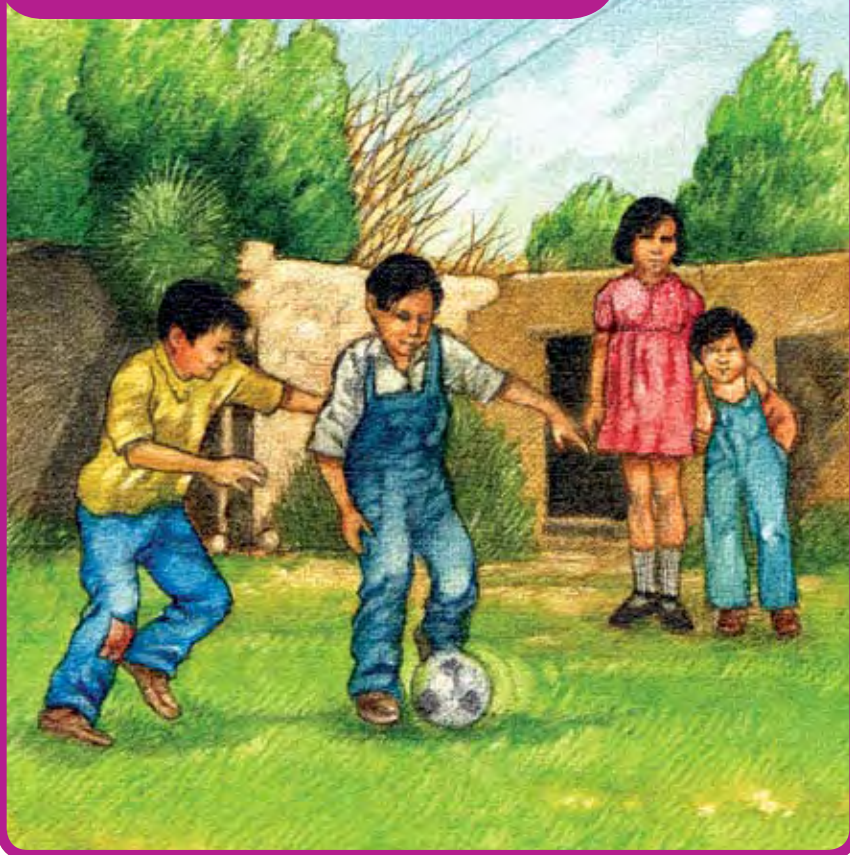
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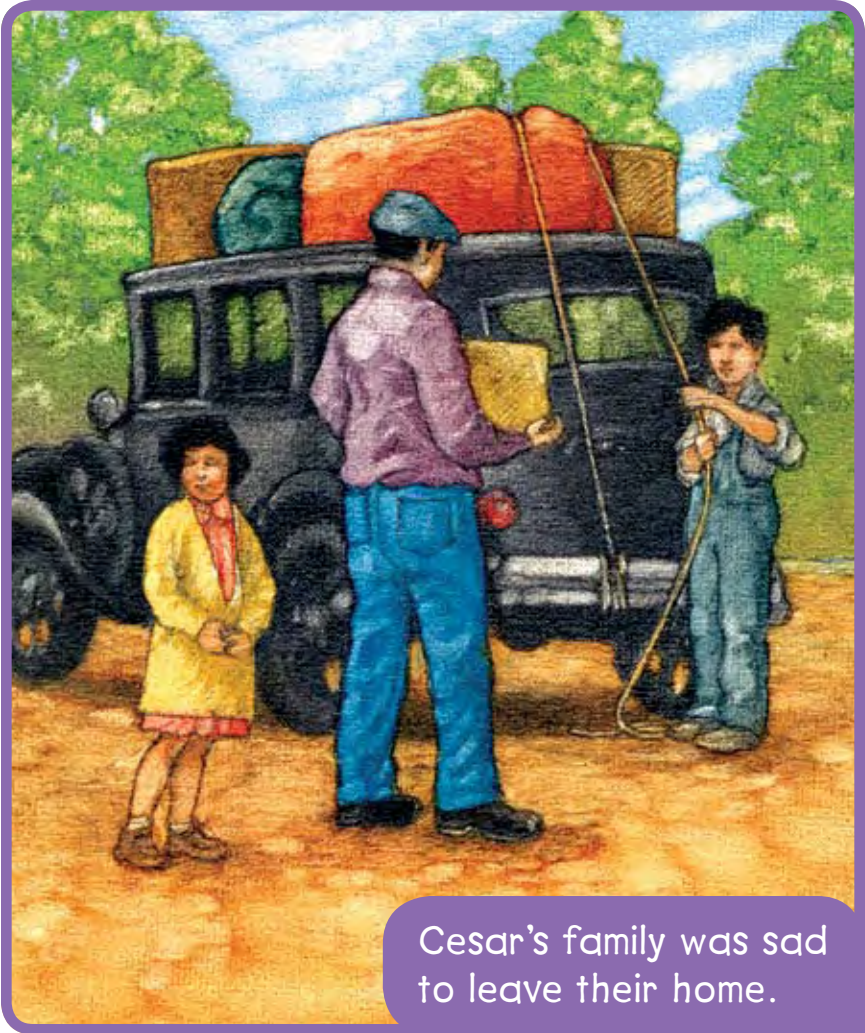
Cesar Chavez  
lived from  
1927 to 1993.

Cesar Chavez spent more than 40 years helping farmworkers have a better life. Keep reading to learn about this leader who fought for change.

When he was young, Cesar liked to play with his brothers, sisters, and cousins.

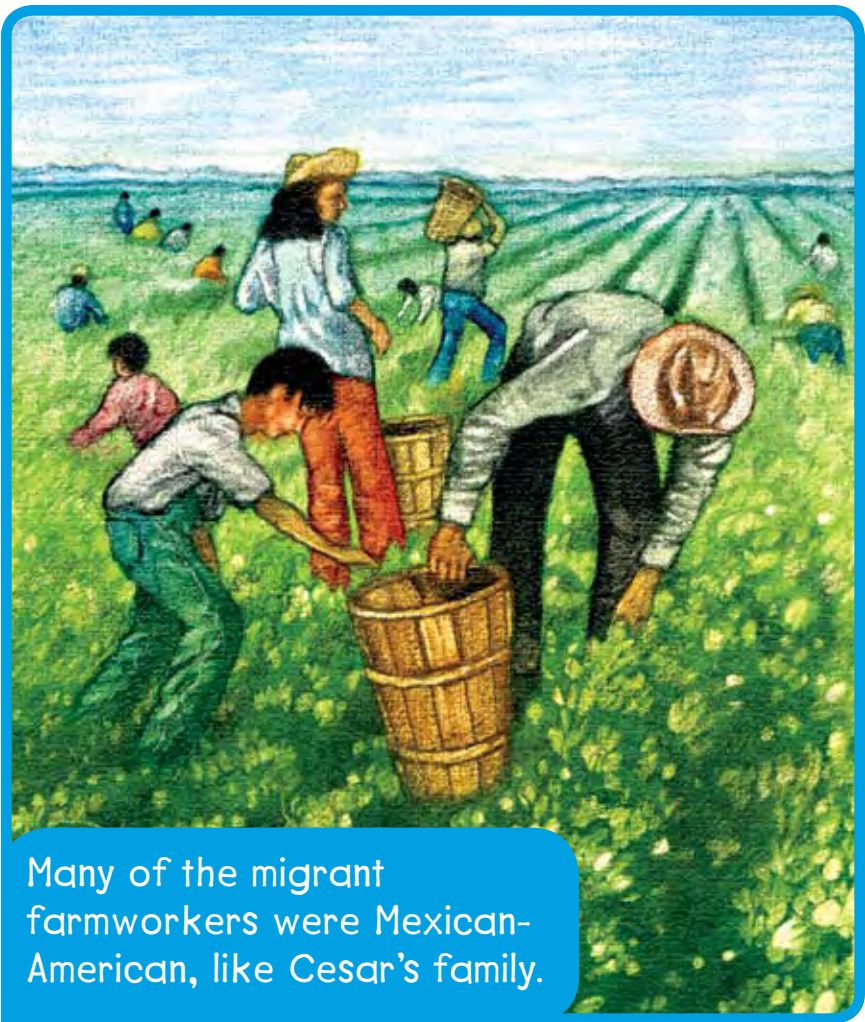


Cesar was born in Arizona in 1927. His grandparents had come to the United States from Mexico years before. Cesar and his family lived on their farm.



Cesar's family was sad to leave their home.

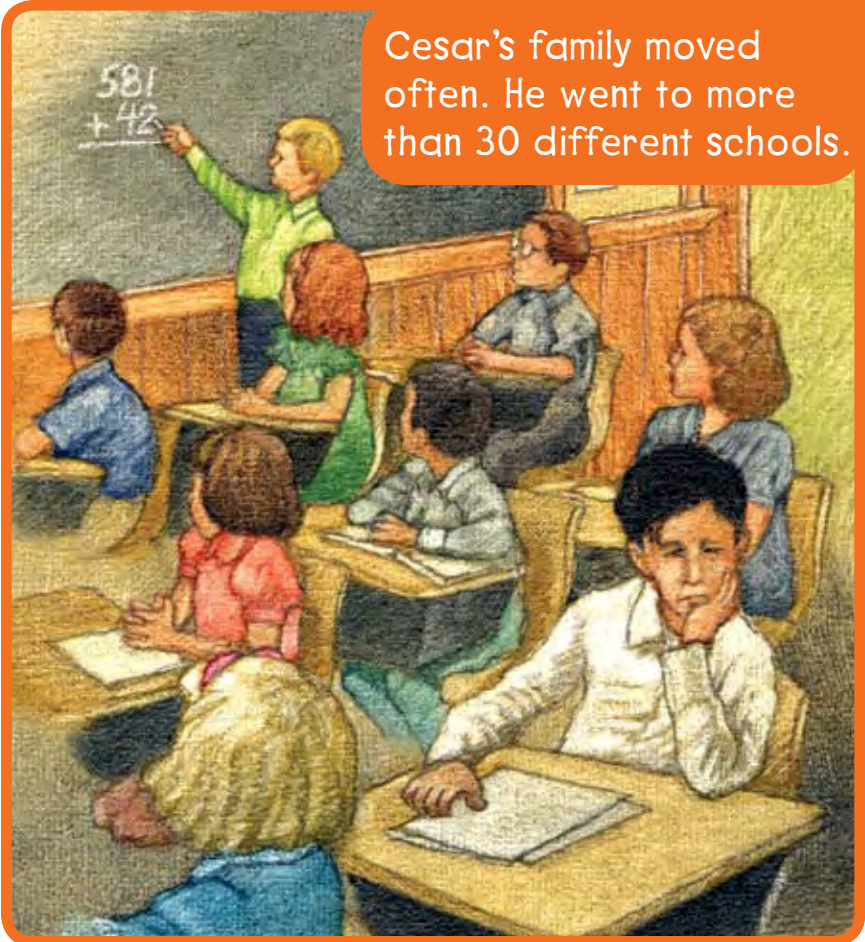
In the 1930s, there was very little rain in Arizona. The land dried up and farmers couldn't grow **crops**. Cesar's family had to move. They went west to California.



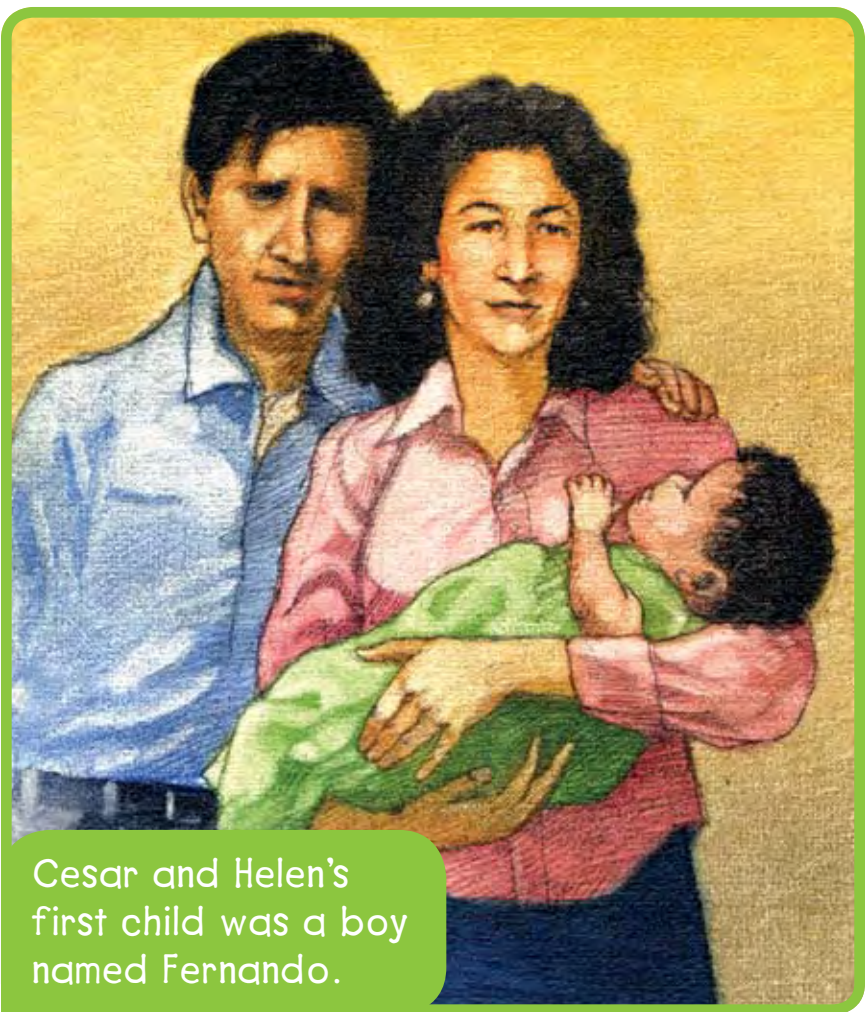
Many of the migrant farmworkers were Mexican-American, like Cesar's family.

California had a lot of farmland. Cesar's family got jobs as **migrant farmworkers**. That meant they moved from farm to farm to pick crops. It was hard work, and the pay was very low.

Cesar's family moved often. He went to more than 30 different schools.



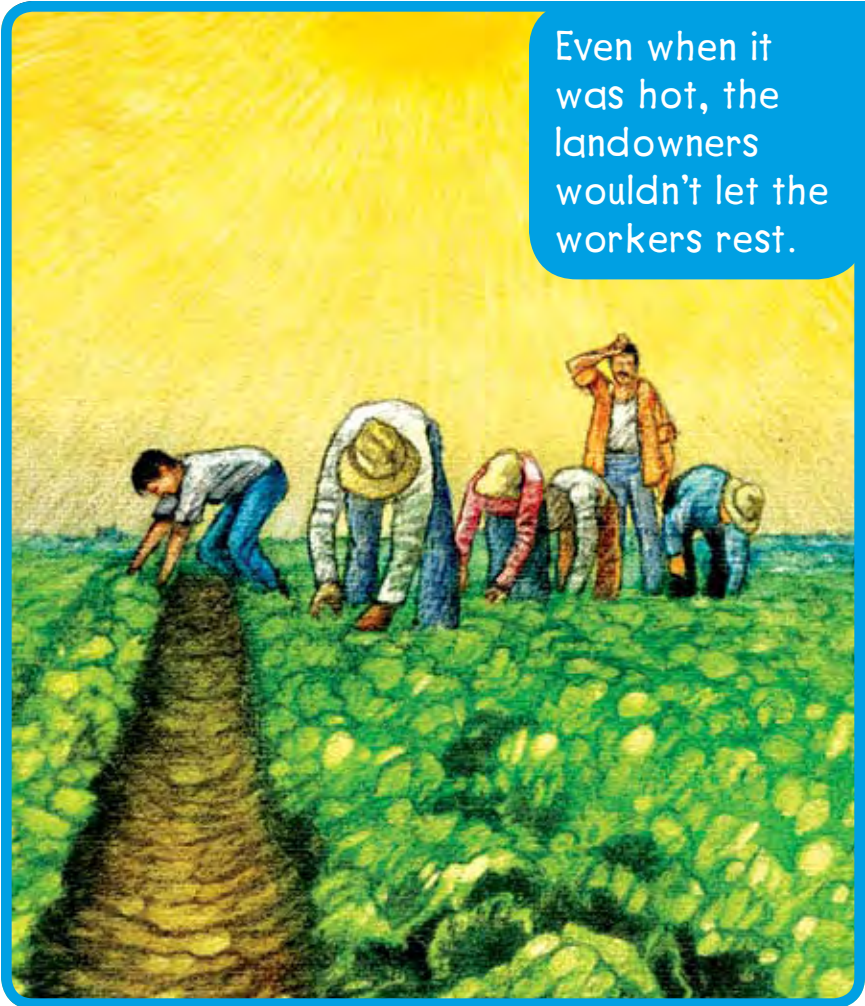
Cesar worked in the fields to help his family. He also went to school. He liked to learn, but he didn't like going to school. Some kids and teachers made fun of him because he did not speak English well.



Cesar and Helen's first child was a boy named Fernando.

When Cesar was 17, he joined the navy. He was at sea for two years. After he returned home, he married his true love, Helen Fabela. They later had eight children.

Even when it was hot, the landowners wouldn't let the workers rest.

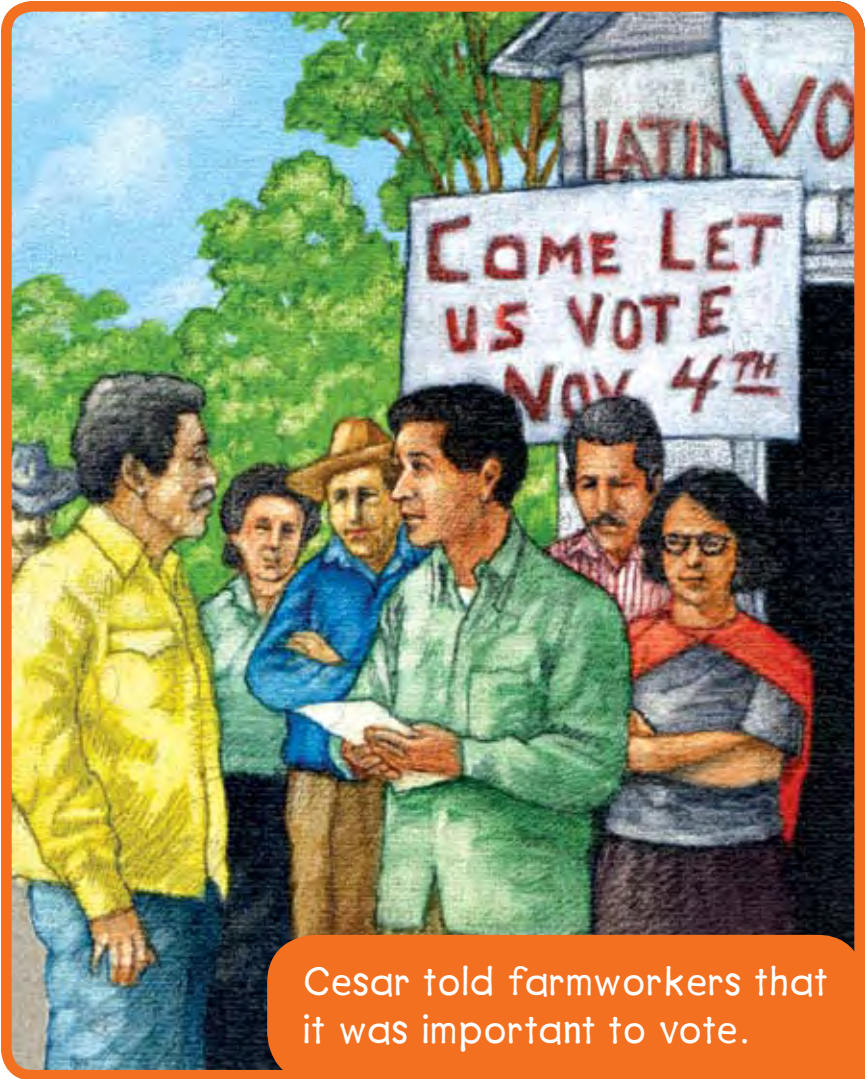


Cesar returned to working in the fields. But he was angry about how hard life was for the farmworkers. The landowners made all the money. They didn't treat the workers well.

## These were some of the ways in which life was difficult for migrant farmworkers:

- \* They made very little money.
- \* They worked long hours each day.
- \* They were not given clean water to drink while they worked.
- \* They were not allowed to rest during the day.
- \* At night they had to stay in small shacks with dirt floors.

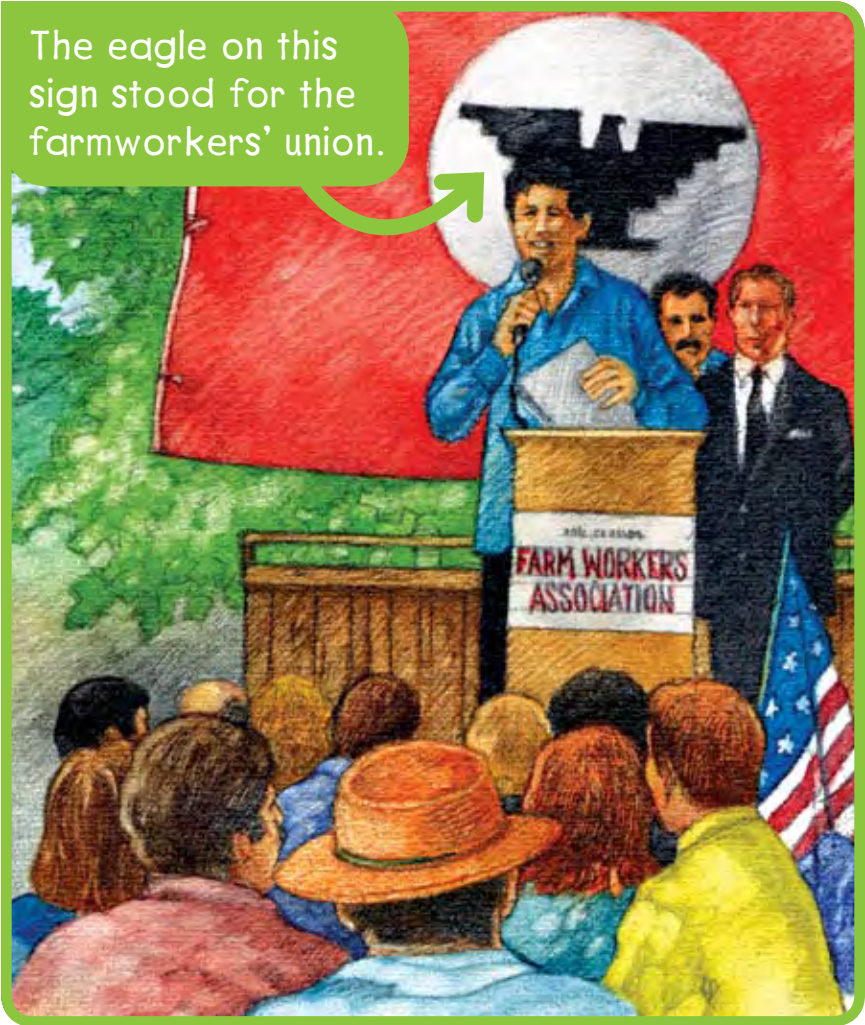
Cesar had always been quiet and shy. But now he decided it was time to speak up. He was going to work for farmworkers' rights.



Cesar told farmworkers that it was important to vote.

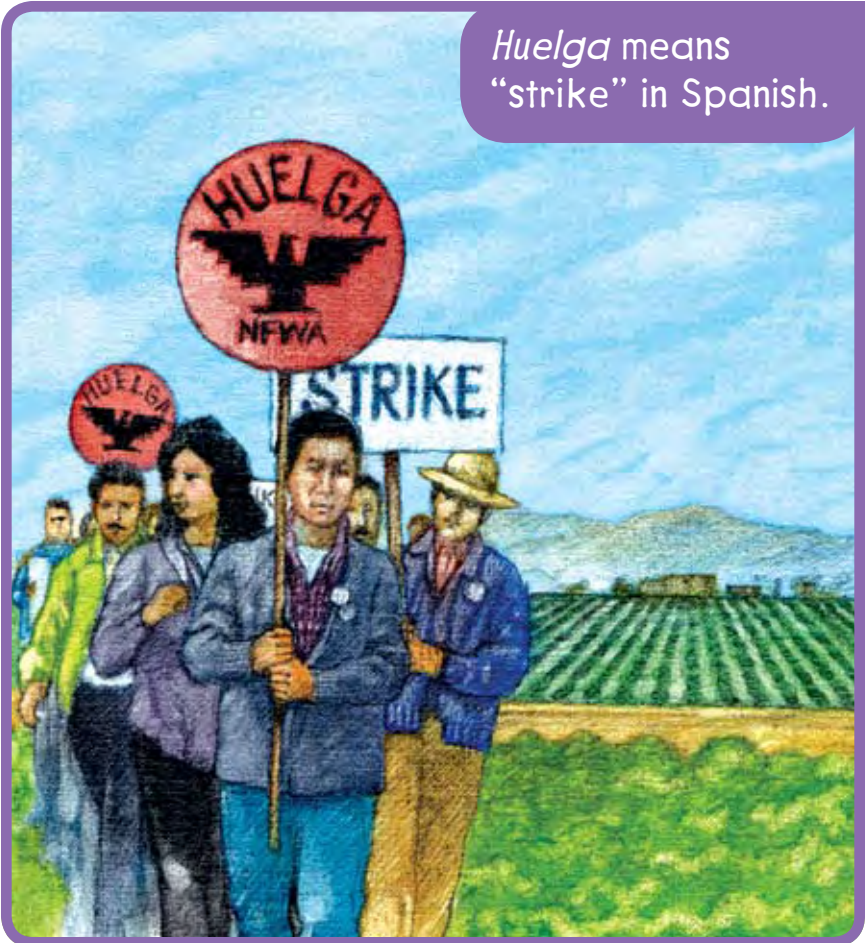
He began by talking to farmworkers. He helped them **register** to vote. If they voted, they could help choose America's leaders.

The eagle on this sign stood for the farmworkers' union.



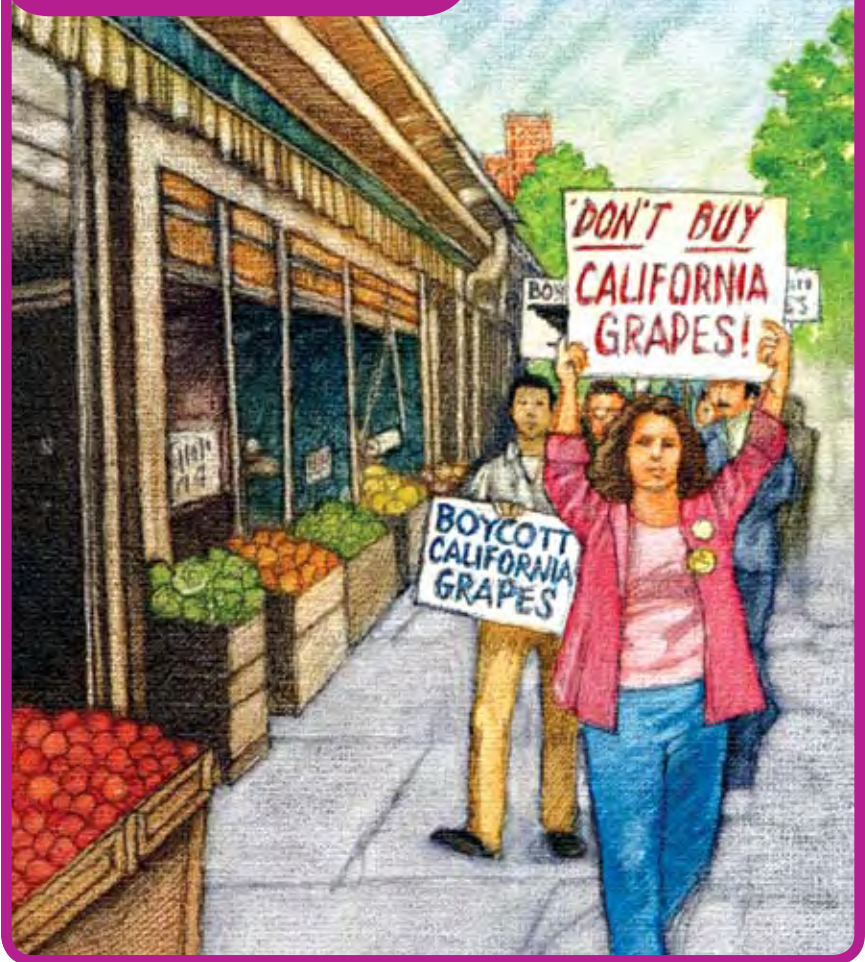
Cesar also got thousands of farmworkers to join a **union**, or workers' group. He said that if the workers joined together, the landowners would have to listen to them.

*Huelga* means  
“strike” in Spanish.

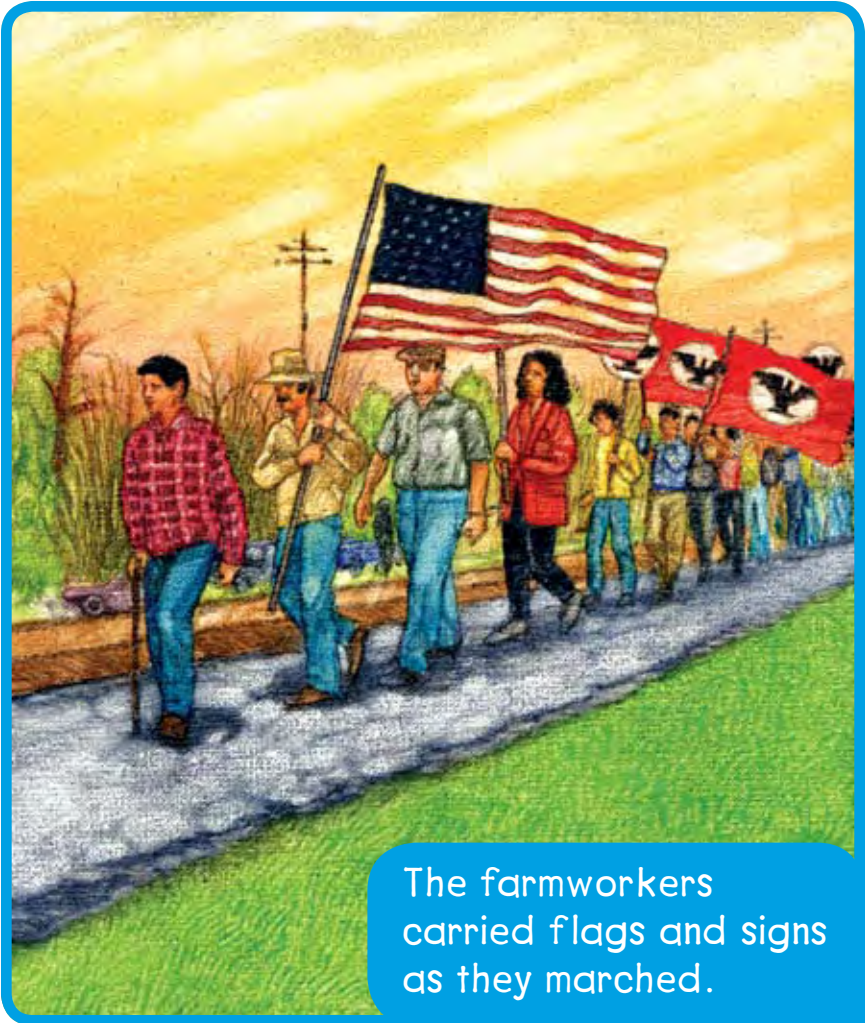


In 1965, some California grape pickers were being paid even less than other grape pickers. Cesar led the workers on a **strike**. This meant that they would not work until the landowners agreed to pay them more.

All over the country,  
many people stopped  
buying grapes.

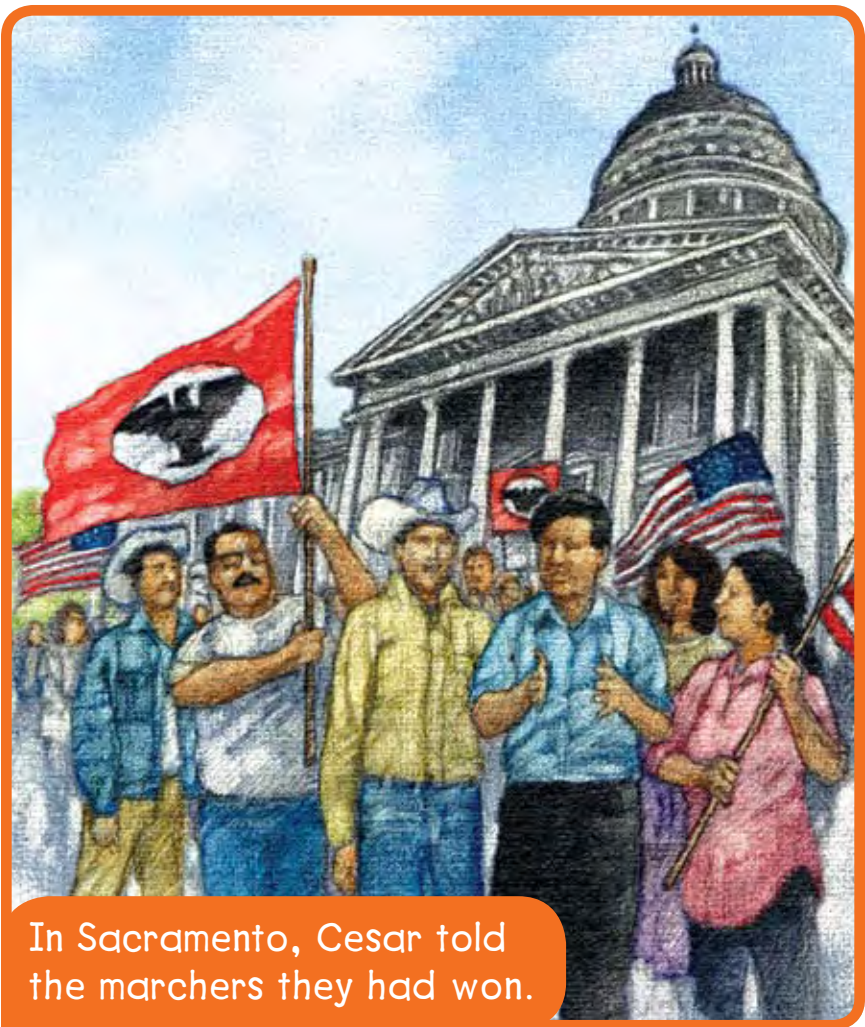


He also planned a **boycott**. He asked people to stop buying grapes from farms that treated workers unfairly.



The farmworkers carried flags and signs as they marched.

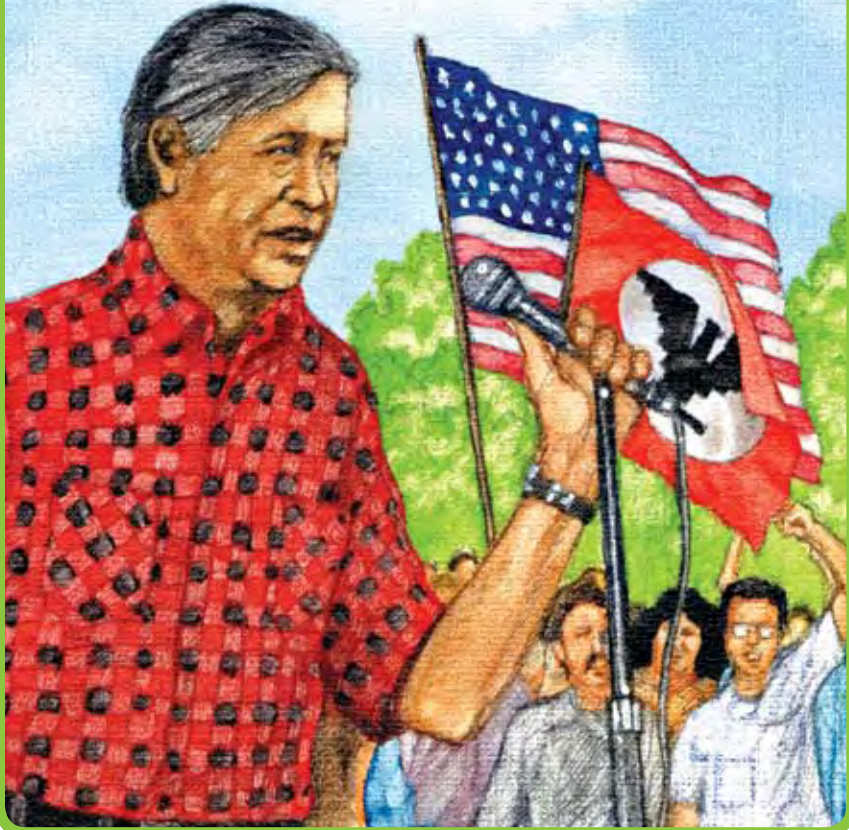
Later he led a march to Sacramento, the capital city of California. Cesar and other farmworkers walked more than 300 miles. Their feet hurt badly, but they kept going.



In Sacramento, Cesar told the marchers they had won.

All their hard work had paid off. The California landowners finally agreed to pay the workers more money. Cesar and the union had won! But there was more work to do.

Cesar showed that people can make a difference by working together.



Cesar spent the rest of his life helping farmworkers. He died in 1993. But people will never forget the man who said “Sí, se puede.” This means, “Yes, it can be done.”

# Glossary

**boycott (noun)** a group's refusal to deal with a business or person, in order to bring about change

**crop (noun)** a plant grown in large amounts, often for food

**migrant farmworker (noun)** a person who travels from one farm to another to find work

**register (verb)** to sign up

**strike (noun)** a group's refusal to work, in order to have changes made

**union (noun)** an organization of workers formed to protect the rights of its members



# Cesar Chavez

## A Leader for Change

**C**esar Chavez (1927–1993) was a Mexican-American migrant farmworker. These workers had few rights. They worked long hours under terrible conditions and were paid very little. Cesar led the way to change by forming a union and encouraging farmworkers to vote. He also led boycotts and strikes. His efforts helped improve life for many migrant farmworkers and showed that people can make a difference by working together.

**Guided Reading Level:** I

**Word Count:** 707

**Average Words Per Page:** 44

**Spotlight Nonfiction Feature:** List

### Introducing the Book

Begin a discussion about teamwork. Ask: *What are some jobs that are easier to do with a group? Have you ever worked with a team to help solve a problem? How did it feel to work together?*

Prepare children for reading by giving a

background on workers' unions. Also explain the concepts of boycotts and strikes. Tell children that they will read about a man who led a union and planned boycotts and strikes in order to bring about important changes.

### Spotlight Nonfiction Feature: List

Review with children that a common way to present nonfiction information is to give a main idea followed by several details that tell more about it. One way to do this is with a bulleted list.

Have children turn to page 8. Point out the sentences next to each bullet, explaining that each one gives a detail. Then ask: *Where is the main idea in this list?* Have a volunteer read the caption heading aloud. Explain that each item on the list will tell something more specific about the main idea.

Help children understand the list's purpose by turning it into a web on the board. In the

center circle, write *How Life Was Hard for Migrant Farmworkers*. Then have children use the list to suggest ideas for the outer circles of the web (low pay, long hours, no rest, and so on).



### Using the Reproducible

Distribute copies of the graphic organizer on page 31. Review with students how Cesar Chavez fought for change. Invite students to write four ways that Cesar worked to improve farmworkers' lives.

### Book Links

For more information on Cesar Chavez, try these titles:

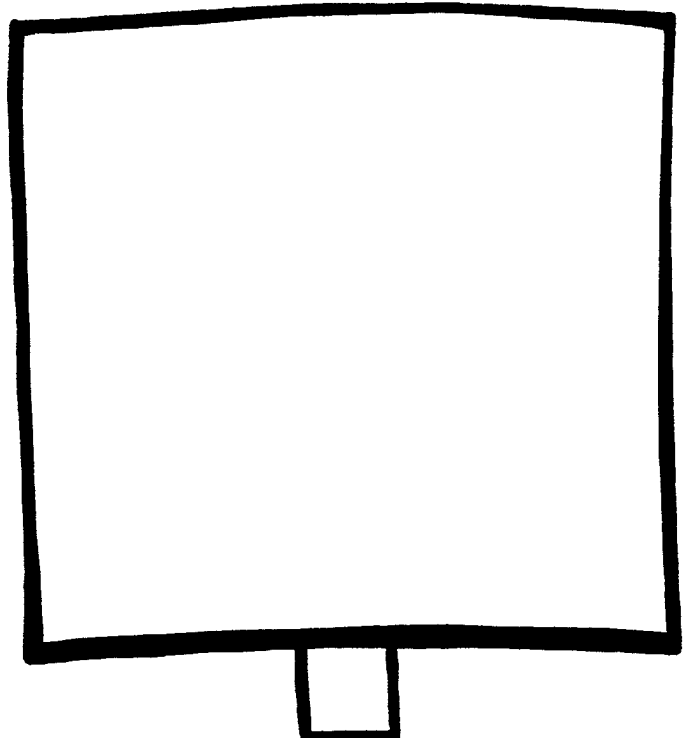
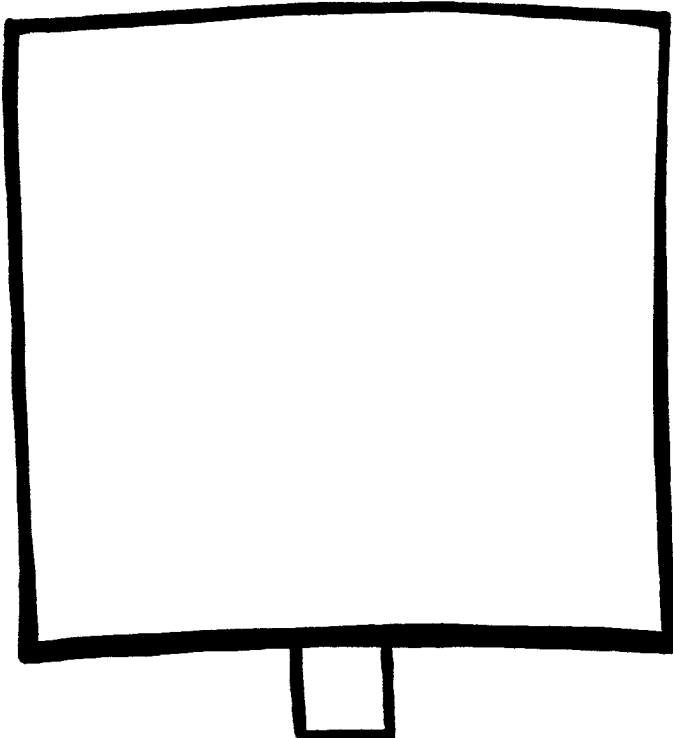
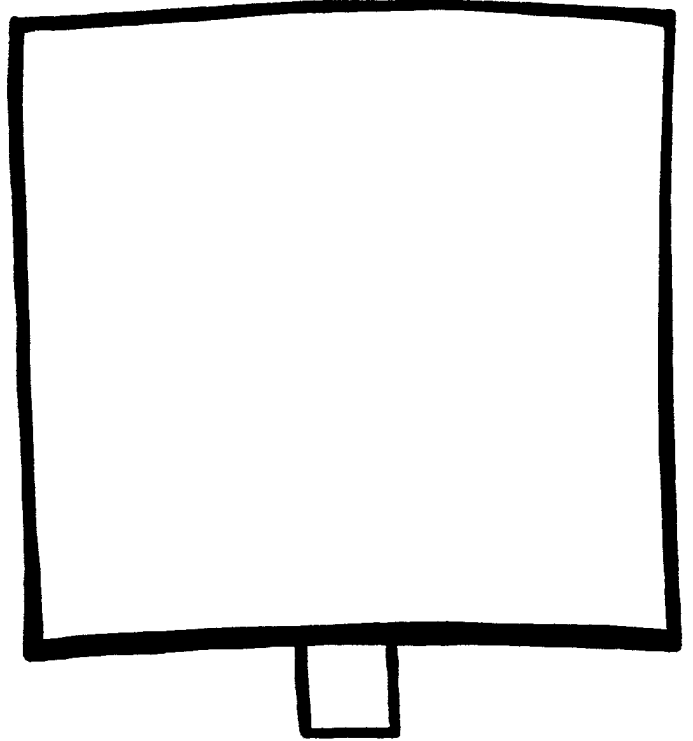
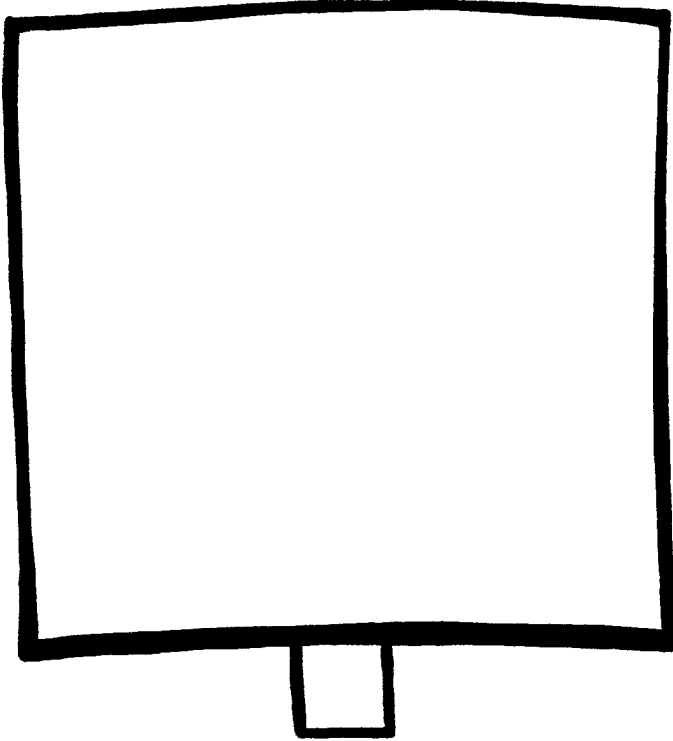
- ♦ *Cesar Chavez* by David Seidman (Scholastic, 2004)
- ♦ *Cesar Chavez* by Kitty Shea (Capstone, 2004)
- ♦ *Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez* by Kathleen Krull (Harcourt, 2003)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Signs of Change

Cesar Chavez helped change farmworkers' lives. In each sign, write something he did that helped improve their lives.

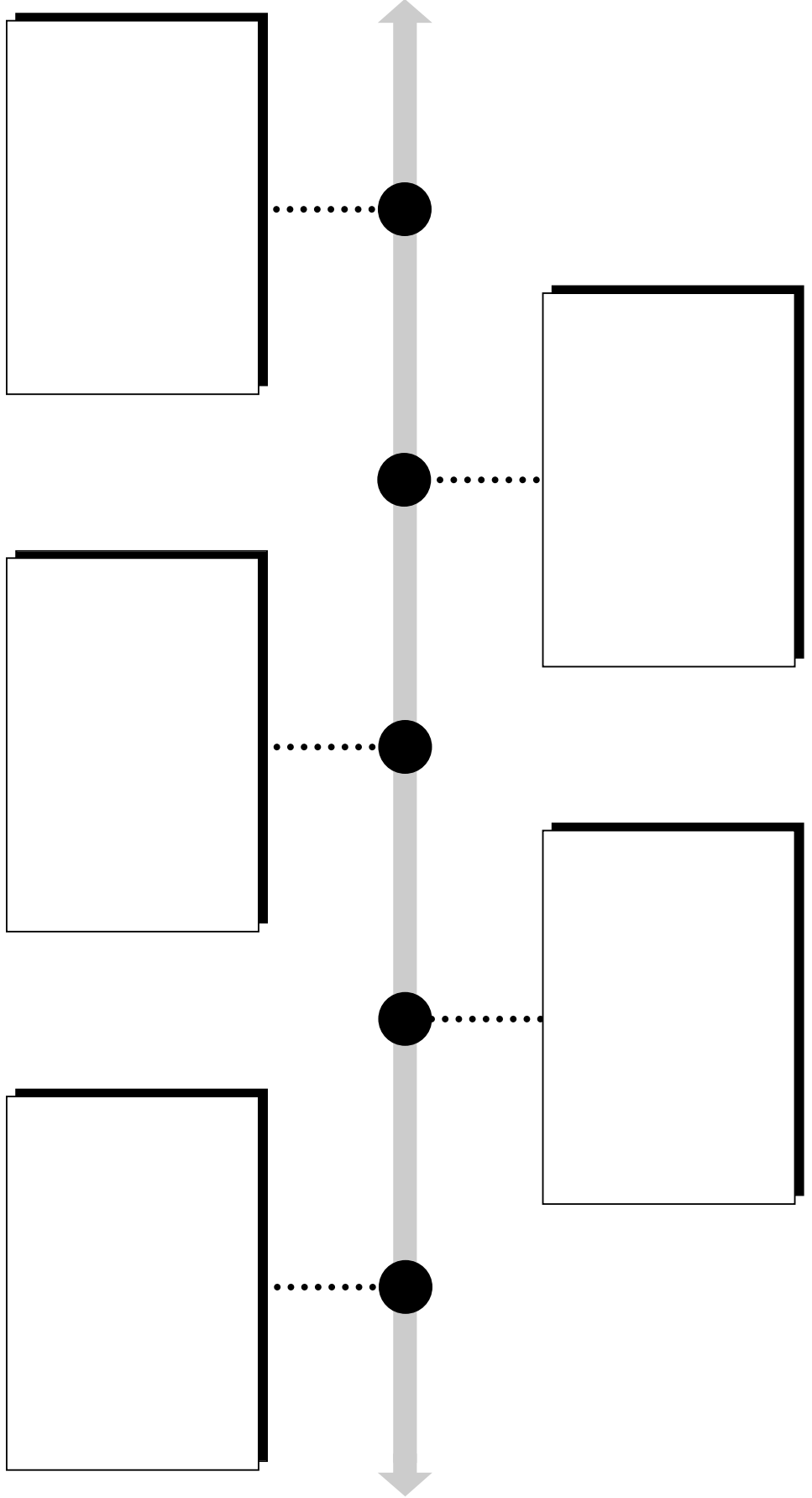


Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Sequencing Timeline

Write the person's name on the line. Then write important events in the order in which they happened.

Important Events in \_\_\_\_\_'s Life



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Vocabulary Chart

Record new words on the chart. First, write the vocabulary word. Next, write what it means. Then, use the word in your own sentence.

<b>Word</b>	<b>What It Means</b>	<b>Sentence Using Word</b>

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Character Map

Write the person's name in the center box. Then fill in the other boxes.

**Important Events in the Person's Life:**

**His or Her Accomplishments:**

**Name:**

**What the Person Was Like:**

**How I Feel About the Person:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Venn Diagram

Write one person's name over each circle. Write facts about this person in that circle.  
In the center, write what the two people had in common.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

