

Viva La Causa

Purpose:

Students may or may not be aware of the fact that citizens are honored by our President and Congress for exceptional accomplishments both in the military and in private life. Using the example of the life of Cesar Chavez, students will understand the historic role the First Amendment has played in bringing about needed change in our communities and society- changes which are often recognized through national recognition, such as the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The lesson may also serve to enhance Hispanic Heritage Month commemorations.

Procedure:

1. Ask students if they have ever received a medal or award. Would they like to share what they did or accomplished to deserve the award? Inform students that this lesson will introduce them to an American who was given a very special award- the highest award our President can give to a public citizens- the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Ask students what a person might do to deserve an award whose title includes the idea of "freedom"?
2. Preview a reading about Cesar Chavez by conducting a class discussion, utilizing the "Pre-Learning Concept Checklist" strategy and the handout "My Pre-Reading Checklist."
(The "Pre-Learning Concept" checklist is an effective way to engage student knowledge prior to reading or studying a particular subject. Students are asked to read questions silently, asking themselves how much they think they already know about a key vocabulary word or phrase taken from the reading or lesson. By activating learning through informally assessing what they already know, students will be more focused during the reading or lesson. This strategy also allows students the opportunity to measure the growth of understanding upon completion of the reading or lesson.)
3. Give each student a copy of the "My Pre-Reading Checklist". (Option: The list can be presented to students in the format of an overhead transparency or written on the blackboard, which would require individual students to jot down the list of terms or phrases on their own paper.) Ask students to independently consider what they already understand about each word or idea listed on the checklist. Instruct students to make one of three types of marks in the left hand column of the checklist:
 - If they believe themselves to be very familiar or knowledgeable, they will place a plus sign (+) in a space next to the statement, word, or phrase.
 - If they know a little about the concept, but don't consider themselves to be "experts", they will place a check (√) in the space.
 - If they know very little or nothing about the statement, word, or phrase, they will place a zero (0) next to it.
4. Conduct a brief discussion, allowing students to share what they believe they already know about particular terms and concepts. Ask students to predict what they think the story will be about. What clues are they using to make their predictions?

5. Read aloud to the class the story entitled "Viva La Causa: The Story of a Hispanic Leader Who Believed in the First Amendment. Every time a word or phrase from the checklist is heard, students should raise their hands. Be sure to pause periodically to check for understanding of the events of the story or to clarify necessary vocabulary.

6. Following the reading, ask students to return to their own checklists and measure his or her growth in learning by responding with the same symbols (as in step 3.) in the right hand column of the checklist. Allow time for a de-briefing discussion, encouraging students to share what they have learned. What additional questions might they have about the life of Cesar Chavez? How did he use the rights of the First Amendment to bring about change for migrant workers of the United States? Why do they believe President Clinton considered Mr. Chavez deserving of such a high honor as the Presidential Medal of Freedom?

7. Give each pair of students one copy of the "Medal of Freedom Nomination" template. Ask student pairs to imagine they are the President of the United States and his Press Secretary. They will be writing a joint statement, summarizing why Cesar Chavez is deserving of the award. Allow time for student volunteers to read their statements aloud.

8. Extension: Using the handout "A Medal Worth More Than Gold", review other individuals who have been awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Ask students if they have heard of any of these individuals? What do they share in common? How have these individuals used their right to freedom of speech and expression? Interested students might be encouraged to research the lives and accomplishments of individuals on the list and share their findings with the class.

9. Option: This lesson can be an effective supplement to the celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month every September and October. A Power Point presentation is offered to commemorate the contributions of Hispanic Americans, including reference to Cesar Chavez.

My Pre-Reading Checklist



Before Reading

After Reading

- | | | |
|-------|-----------------------------|-------|
| _____ | 1. a cause | _____ |
| _____ | 2. farm worker | _____ |
| _____ | 3. petition | _____ |
| _____ | 4. violence | _____ |
| _____ | 5. peaceful | _____ |
| _____ | 6. justice | _____ |
| _____ | 7. migrant | _____ |
| _____ | 8. Hispanic | _____ |
| _____ | 9. wages | _____ |
| _____ | 10. newspaper | _____ |
| _____ | 11. barrio | _____ |
| _____ | 12. poverty | _____ |
| _____ | 13. public service | _____ |
| _____ | 14. Medal of Freedom | _____ |

VIVA LA CAUSA: The Story of a Hispanic Leader Who Believed in the First Amendment

The story of Cesar Chavez begins near Yuma, Arizona, where he was born. But soon, his family moved to California, living in a “barrio” called Sal Si Puedes -"Get Out If You Can." Cesar thought the only way to get out of poverty was to work hard.

Cesar and his family worked in the fruit and vegetable farms of California from sunrise to sunset. He did not learn much in school, because he only knew Spanish. He felt that education had nothing to do with a migrant farm worker’s way of life.



While his childhood education was not the best, later in life, he learned to love reading. His home was filled with hundreds of books. He believed that the purpose of education should be service to others.

In order to speak for the needs of the migrant workers who were being treated unfairly, Cesar started the National Farm Workers Association. Workers were paid very low wages and worked long hours into the night. Even small children were working in the fields instead of getting to go to school.

Cesar read about the First Amendment’s right to free speech, assembly, and petition. He used what he had learned to gather the farm workers together into parades and marches. They carried banners, saying “VIVA LA CAUSA” (long live the cause).



The marchers wanted the government to pass laws which would make sure workers were treated justly. Cesar succeeded through nonviolent ways, such as parades and marches, using his and his followers’ First Amendment rights. Other famous Americans joined Cesar’s efforts, until soon newspapers printed stories about migrant workers in the fields of America.

When he died, more than 50,000 people came to his funeral. For the last time, they came to march side-by-side of the man who had taught them to stand up for their rights through peaceful ways.

Years later, Helen Chavez, Cesar's wife, accepted the Medal of Freedom for her late husband from President Clinton. Cesar would be remembered for supporting farm workers’ First Amendment right to speak out for them.

*From the Office of the President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C.*

I bestow to Mr. Cesar Chavez this Presidential Medal of Freedom



A Medal Worth More Than Gold

The Presidential Medal of Freedom is an award given by the President of the United States. It is the highest civilian award offered. It is given to individuals who have made a contribution to the United States, world peace, or other significant public endeavors.

The following is a list of some of the winners of this award.

What do they have in common with the liberties protected by the First Amendment?

Name:	Occupation:
David Brinkley	Newspaper and Television reporter
Rachel Carson	Scientist and non-fiction author
Will Durant	Historian and author
Duke Ellington	Music composer
Billy Graham	Minister and author
Bob Hope	Comedian and entertainer
Helen Keller	Author and political activist
Edward Murrow	Newspaper, radio, and television reporter
Paul Harvey	Radio journalist
Norman Rockwell	Artist
John Steinbeck	Novelist
Elie Wiesel	Author and Human Rights activist

