

Name: _____ Class: _____

Dolores Huerta, Leader and Activist

By Diane L. Brooks
2002

Dolores Huerta (born 1930) is an American labor leader and civil rights activist. In this informational text, Diane L. Brooks further explores the work and accomplishments of Dolores. As you read, take notes on what drives Dolores' actions in the text.

- [1] Dolores Huerta, who was born in New Mexico in 1930, was always concerned about civil rights. Everyone should be treated with respect, she believed. Her mother and family moved to Stockton, California, when she was young. She was fortunate¹ to go to college, and then became a teacher. But she had another concern: "I couldn't stand seeing kids come to class hungry and needing shoes. I thought I could do more by organizing farm workers than by trying to teach their hungry children."



["Building Networks for Leading Change - Day 2 - Dolores Huerta 1"](#)
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So Huerta became a leader and got involved in a local Community Service Organization. She helped poor people register to vote, become citizens, and get better services. She became a fearless lobbyist (a person who works to get laws of their interest passed). Then she met Cesar E. Chavez,² and both of them knew that farm workers needed to be organized in order to improve their lives. Together, they started the National Farm Workers Association in Delano, California, in 1962.

Chavez was president and Huerta was second-in-command of the new union. Together, they talked to migrant workers³ and their families about how to get a better life. They brought lots of people together and helped them stand up for their rights. They organized boycotts (asking people not to buy a product if workers were not treated well), and led strikes if workers were not treated fairly. Being an activist (someone who takes action) was a dangerous job; she got hurt, and she was put in jail. But she really believed in what she was doing and brought her children to the UFW activities so that others could see that the problems were not just about workers, they were about families!

Today Dolores Huerta is remembered as one of the "100 Most Important Women of the 20th Century."

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1. **Fortunate (adjective):** having good luck
2. an American labor leader and civil rights activist
3. a worker who moves from place to place for seasonal work

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement identifies the central idea of the text?
 - A. Huerta was driven to help improve the lives of farm workers because of her family's personal struggles as farmers.
 - B. Most people didn't take Huerta's activism or accomplishments seriously because she is a woman.
 - C. While Huerta supported workers' rights, she thought there was nothing more important than a child's education.
 - D. Huerta's desire to help others contributed to a movement to improve the lives of farm workers.

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "She was fortunate to go to college, and then became a teacher. But she had another concern" (Paragraph 1)
 - B. "Chavez was president and Huerta was second-in-command of the new union. Together, they talked to migrant workers and their families about how to get a better life." (Paragraph 3)
 - C. "Being an activist (someone who takes action) was a dangerous job; she got hurt, and she was put in jail." (Paragraph 3)
 - D. "Today Dolores Huerta is remembered as one of the '100 Most Important Women of the 20th Century.'" (Paragraph 4)

3. Which of the following describes the structure of the information in the text?
 - A. The author describes how Huerta became an activist, and the important changes she made happen.
 - B. The author begins with what Huerta is famous for, and then describes how she became a well-known activist.
 - C. The author emphasizes Huerta's personal struggles growing up, and how they drove her activism work.
 - D. The author discusses Huerta's achievements as a labor activist, and then compares them to the achievements of Chavez.

4. According to the author, how did organizing farm workers help them get the services and rights they deserved?

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. In the context of the text, how did Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez go about creating positive social change for farm workers? How are some of their strategies still used today to improve the lives of workers? Out of the strategies discussed in the text, which do you think is the most effective and why?
2. In what ways is Dolores Huerta a hero? How did she improve people's lives? What other characteristics do you think are important for a hero to possess?
3. In the text, Dolores Huerta is described as a leader in the movement to improve workers' rights. How did she become a leader? What qualities do you think a leader needs in order to create positive change?