

César Chávez: An Instrument of Change Grade 3



“Society is made up of groups, and as long as the smaller groups do not have the same rights and the same protection as others ... it is not going to work. Somehow, the guys in power have to be reached by counter power, or through a change in their hearts and minds, or change will not come.”

—César Chávez

What does “society” mean? Who makes up a society?

[Answer: Societies are communities made up of various groups of individuals with a common interest, culture, or relationship.]

What does it mean when a group of people are “oppressed”?

[Answer: They do not have the same rights and privileges as everyone else.]

Name three groups who have not had, or do not now have, rights equal to others in society.

[Answers will vary. Answers may include: African-Americans, women, children, animals, immigrants, migrant workers, etc.]

How have these groups fought to gain protection?

[Answer: People refused to remain oppressed or to watch others remain oppressed by those in power. The oppressed groups held protests, demonstrations, pickets, and marches. They fasted (discuss the meaning of fasting), wrote letters, and organized unions and groups of people who supported their campaigns for change.]

If someone is “different,” does that mean that he or she should be treated with less respect or be given fewer rights than others? Why or why not?

[Answer: No. Regardless of religion, gender, ethnicity, or even species, all living beings—people and other animals—deserve to be protected from unnecessary harm.]

Chávez hoped to influence the “hearts and minds” of “the guys in power” by using peaceful protests to demonstrate his belief that everyone deserves equal protection. He believed that “[k]indness and compassion toward all living things [are the] mark[s] of a civilized society.” Chávez said, “What benefits the animals, benefits the people, too.”

Who are the “guys in power” Chávez is referring to?

[Answer: Lawmakers, politicians, and business owners; Humans, in relation to other animals]

How did Chávez show compassion for animals?

[Answer: He became a vegetarian and an advocate for animals and their rights.]

[Teachers: Explain that Chávez grew up on a farm, where his mother would tell him, "You are the last to eat. You feed the animals first; when they've been taken care of, then you eat. ... It's because they're dependent on you. When you bring them in, you make a commitment to them, and you gotta keep that commitment. The best way to keep that commitment is by having the simple rule: if you're hungry, that's the best way to remind you that they're also hungry."]

What are some things that you can do to show kindness to animals?

[Answers will vary. Possible answers include: Volunteer to walk a lonely dog or to play with animals at a local shelter, stop eating animals, or ask your parents to buy household products, soaps, and shampoos that have not been tested on animals.]

Read the attached letter that César Chávez sent to Action for Animals, a California-based animal rights organization. After reading the letter, explain why you think that Chávez believed that animals deserve to be protected.

[Answer: Chavez believes that the inhumane treatment of animals contributes to a wide range of violence in our society and that the only way to have a "civilized society" is to use nonviolent methods in our interactions with all living beings.]

What does "empathy" mean?

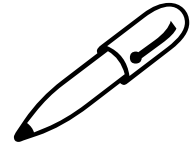
[Answer: The ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes]

How does treating animals with kindness teach people to be kind to one another? What happens when people are not taught to be kind to animals?

[Answers will vary. Example: Teaching people to respect animals is the first step toward teaching empathy. Chávez believed that kindness and compassion were the marks of a truly civilized society and that "[w]hat benefits the animals, benefits the people, too." Experts agree that many people hurt and kill humans as well as animals because they have never learned empathy: All the kids involved in the devastating school shootings of recent years "practiced" on animals before bringing guns to school.]

Name: _____ Date: _____

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