Agricultural Workers Lesson Plan
The Oregon Story: Introduction

The Oregon Public Broadcasting video program, The Oregon Story: Agricultural Workers, contributes to understanding the land we know as Oregon today and the history of our involvement with it. It also raises important issues about the role of development in Oregon. Suggestions (1) provided in this guide demonstrate ways to support and supplement the exploration of this history in the context of Oregon Department of Education Content Standards and Benchmarks. Suggestions include activities, explorations, field excursions, and further adventures in reading and viewing.

OBJECTIVES

The Oregon Story: Agricultural Workers has five major objectives, which are to promote:

• Understanding about how agricultural workers, especially those of Hispanic descent, have contributed to Oregon’s history and development;
• Awareness about the traditions and way of life of agricultural workers who live and work in Oregon;
• A perspective about change that is occurring in living and working conditions for agricultural workers in Oregon;
• Critical thinking about the care, use, and management of Oregon’s natural resources;
• Incentive to celebrate the history, celebrate the present, and appreciate the possibilities of the future of Oregon.

Many of the suggestions support Oregon Department of Education CIM and CAM benchmarks.
PREVIEW IT
PREVIEW the program for specific information and concepts relevant to your goals and materials, and to current events. Adapt the following suggestions for previewing activities, or create your own activities.

Synopsis of video: The Oregon Story: Agricultural Workers deals with the role of agricultural workers, especially those of Hispanic descent, in the history and economy of Oregon, as well as the social, health, and human rights issues facing them.

WHERE does the food you eat come from? Who worked in the fields and harvested the agricultural products? Trace the production chain from the farm to your table. How are agricultural and migrant workers involved in this process?

DO you live near an agricultural area in Oregon that relies on the work of Hispanic agricultural workers? What do you know about the life and work of agricultural workers? What do you think makes life as a farmworker unique?

USE a road map to locate places considered in the video program. These places include: Independence, Woodburn, Hood River, Nyssa, Boardman, and Ontario. Which of these places are located near you?

BRAINSTORM how your life is impacted by the work of agricultural workers in Oregon.

FIND out which agricultural crops are grown, harvested, and processed near you. In what ways are migrant farmworkers involved in the agricultural cycle?

DEFINE what the word “migrant” means. How would a migrant farmworker’s life be the same as and different from your life?

HOW has life in Oregon been changed by the addition of new traditions and culture from the Hispanic community?

BRAINSTORM the challenges and opportunities that face children from Hispanic families as reflected in this statement from the video: “They are in two cultures, and they are expected to not only fulfill everything that their family wants them to fulfill … but they’re also expected to integrate perfectly into the American society.”
ADAPT the following suggestions for emphasis while viewing the program or create your own activities, suggestions, and areas of focus. Remember to stop or pause, back up and review, and take time to replay the video to enhance the learning experience.

ANALYZE a map of Oregon to see where agricultural products are raised today. What land, water, and other natural resources are located on these lands?

IN WHAT ways is agriculture a “mighty engine of the Oregon economy”? What evidence can you find to support the statement that “the public understands the importance of the farmer … but not the farmworker?”

FOCUS on the “Latinization of Oregon” and the values of traditional Hispanic culture as they relate to time, ownership, nature, and the land. Consider, for example, the concept of “aguante,” which means endurance and patience, cooperation, giving, love of family, respect for rules, and harmony with nature. How do these values compare with the “typical lifestyle” of twenty-first century Oregon? Which particular values do you want to enhance in your life and why?

REVIEW the life and accomplishments of César Chávez and his work in promoting better living, health, and work conditions for migrant farmworkers in the U.S.

COMPARE the meaning of the following terms: Anglos, Latinos, Hispanics, Mexican nationals, Mexican-Americans, and Chicanos.

INVITE a member of a farmworker family to visit your classroom to discuss how his or her family has been affected by the United Farm Workers Union, the braceros program, Public Law 78, and other landmark events in farming history.

RESEARCH examples of nonviolent protests in world history (e.g., Gandhi in India, Martin Luther King Jr. in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, and César Chávez in the farmworker movement.) How effective do you think nonviolence has been and will be in future protests?

READ or view The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck. Compare and contrast the story of the fictional Joad family with those of the migrant agricultural families portrayed in the video. How has the migrant experience changed and/or remained the same during the 60 years since Steinbeck wrote this novel?

FIND evidence in the video that shows that agricultural growth in Oregon is also shadowed by poverty.
REVIEW the traditional stereotype of a migrant worker. In what ways is it inaccurate and oversimplified? What evidence is there in the video that counteracts this stereotype today? What harmful effects do you think this stereotype has caused for migrant workers and their families in Oregon?

BRAINSTORM ways in which living and working conditions might be improved for farmworkers and their families in Oregon. How might these improvements help foster economic development in Oregon while preserving the farmworkers’ traditional values at the same time?

DEBATE the pros and cons of recent proposals for collective bargaining for agricultural workers.

COMPARE several of the picture books in the resources list (for example, *Going Home*) about the life and values of migrant workers. “Opportunities” is a theme that is reiterated throughout many of these books. What opportunities do you think migrant workers are gaining? What losses do you think they are experiencing?
ADAPT the following extensions or create new ones! Remember, the best extension is the direct experience of Oregon’s land and people!

EXPLORE the net at: http://www.opb.org/oregonstory

AGRICULTURAL WORKERS AND THE MAKING OF OREGON
WRITE a fictional story or stage a play that shows how a child in a farm family might have experienced one of the following events in Oregon history: the Great Depression, World War II and the Braceros Program, Public Law 78, or César Chávez’s table grape boycott.

COMPARE the goal of assimilating people into the dominant American culture with the goal of preserving the cultural diversity of all people in Oregon. What do you think/hope the goal will be in the future and why?

REFLECT on the statement that defines migrant farmworkers as “the most unorganizable, most powerless people on earth.” Find evidence in the video that supports or refutes this statement.

DEVELOP a series of maps of the area defined as Oregon today, from the time prior to European settlement to the present. Include the locations of traditional agricultural migrant routes and the crops harvested.

RESEARCH the Mexican American Political Association and its role in helping or hindering migrant farmworkers in Oregon.

LEARN more about the traditions of Hispanic Americans in Oregon by attending Hispanic cultural events and celebrations.¹

EXPLORE museums and exhibits that portray local histories of Hispanic people of Oregon.² Keep a list of “I didn’t know that!” statements about what you gleaned from the displays and artifacts.

RESEARCH the “braceros” or guest worker program of World War II. What benefits and problems did it produce for the farmowners, guest workers, Mexican-Americans, and the United States in general?

RESPOND to the statement/feeling of many migrant workers that “Our roots are in México, but our lives are here.”
AGRICULTURAL WORKER ACTIVITIES AND MANAGEMENT

DRAW a yearly map to show the time of harvests and a typical migratory route of farm-workers in different regions of Oregon.

LIST the challenges that face agricultural workers and their families as they seek to provide schooling for their children. What should school districts and other agencies do to help ensure that these children receive the education that they are entitled to by the Constitution?

ROLE-PLAY a dialogue between yourself and another person, one of you taking the role of a person living in a city and one of you taking the role of a person living in a migrant labor camp. Discuss the similarities and differences in your lives by considering typical activities, pace of life, amount of time spent outdoors, viewscape, common sounds, concerns and values, use of technology, and recreational opportunities. What would each of you miss if you were to exchange places with one another?

INVESTIGATE the role of other immigrant groups that have been part of the history and economic development of Oregon: Hawaiians, Japanese, Chinese, Irish, African-Americans, etc. Compare and contrast their experiences with those of Hispanic immigrants to Oregon.

DEVELOP a decision tree laying out different alternatives for promoting awareness about the issues facing agricultural workers in Oregon: housing, health care, education, pesticides, fair wages, etc.
AGRICULTURAL WORKERS AND ECOLOGY
DISCUSS how policies related to timber, salmon, mining, clean water, and other natural resources intersect with the lives and work of agricultural workers in Oregon.

INVESTIGATE the use of pesticides in agricultural areas of Oregon. Do you agree with the statement by Piñeros y Campesinos Unidos de Noroeste (PCUN) (Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United) that “Oregon agriculture depends on pesticides”? What protections are in place to protect the health and safety of farmworkers using pesticides and of the consumers who eat the agricultural products?

DEVELOP a set of guidelines that you think are necessary for both protecting the agri-business future of Oregon and for protecting the health and safety of agricultural workers.

EXPLAIN how Oregon’s habitat is being affected by pesticides. Do you believe these safeguards are adequate?

INVITE guest speakers to visit your classroom to discuss the interconnections of the agricultural and ecological “web” in Oregon. Include representatives of the farming community, farmworkers union, food processing plants, grocery stores, and consumers and compare their points of view. What compromises have been necessary for agriculture in Oregon?

VISIT one of the farm labor camps in Oregon. Prepare a slide report showing the living situation for the workers as well as the habitat, plants, and animals of the area. What was the condition of this ecosystem 100 years ago? What is the current condition of this ecosystem? What protections are in place to ensure the health for all involved in this ecosystem?
INNOVATION AND CHANGE
SELECT an important problem facing agricultural workers of Hispanic descent in Oregon today, for example high rural unemployment, poor health, unsanitary living conditions in labor camps, pesticide exposure, and lack of educational resources. Outline a plan to help solve it. Send your plan to the appropriate government agency or your local newspaper.

DEBATE the controversies that have arisen about providing educational, medical, workers’ compensation insurance, and other benefits to farmworkers.

REACT to the statement by Rose Lewis of Brooks, Oregon: “There is a squeeze on the farmer and a bigger squeeze on the farm worker.” Do you agree or disagree with the conclusion of the League of Women Voters that higher food prices may be needed to help solve the problems facing farmers and farm workers in Oregon?

PREPARE a set of questions and use them to interview an agricultural worker about changes that have occurred in his/her life, work, family situation, traditions, and relationship to natural resources. Write an article about this person and submit it to a local magazine or newspaper.

CONSIDER the demographics of Oregon today. Develop and present a slide program that details what you think the future of agricultural workers in Oregon will be as the state continues to move toward an economy that is less resource-based. Provide support for your position(s).

RESEARCH how technological changes (transportation, farm equipment, harvesting and food processing equipment, fax machines, the Internet, and use of chemicals, etc.) are affecting agricultural workers and their families in Oregon.

REVIEW the history of labor unions in the United States, up to the present time. For what reasons were they created? What similarities and differences are there between industrial labor unions and farmworkers unions? Are they still needed today? Find evidence and statistics to support your answer.
THE SAVVY CITIZEN
SPECULATE about how you think changes in the economy, for example, a weakened stock market, inflation, recession, or rise in state population, might affect agricultural workers and immigration in Oregon.

SURVEY students in your school and adults in your community about whether they would be willing to pay more for their food in order to provide better wages for the agricultural workers involved in producing the crops.

RESEARCH and debate the Agricultural Job Opportunity Benefits and Security Act, which Florida Senator Bob Graham and Oregon Senator Gordon Smith are proposing to replace H-2A, the current foreign guest-worker program. Write a letter to your Senator explaining what you think the advantages and disadvantages of passing this new legislation would be for farmworkers, farm owners, consumers, and other affected groups.

EVALUATE the 2000 Census data and prepare posters with pie charts to show how the ethnic make-up of the population of Oregon has changed between 1990 and 2000. What do local and state governments, school districts, businesses, and other organizations need to do to respond to these new statistics?

BRAINSTORM some conclusions about the future of agricultural workers and agricultural development in the U.S. and in Oregon.

EXAMINE the black eagle symbol of the National Farm Workers Union of America and their slogan “When that eagle flies, the farm workers’ problems will be solved!” What images and values does it symbolize? What do you foresee as the future of farmworkers in the U.S.?

REFLECT on the statement by Professor Erasmo Gamboa in the video: “We are a different Oregon and I think we’re a better Oregon, but not just because of Mexican people or persons of Mexican descent, but because of Asian immigration, of Middle Eastern immigration, of European immigrants. I think this is a healthier state than it was — socially speaking, than it was 30 or 40 years ago.”

WRITE a poem or draw a picture to express the feelings stated by Felix Oliveros in the video: “When my father would take us out to the fields, we would work and … that’s one of the things that I look back at now is that there was this pride, but also this contentment that you are providing for yourself. That you’re working to better yourself.” How does the work of Hispanic agricultural workers “transform Oregon” and how does Oregon also “reinvent” Hispanic workers?
VIEW IT:
Supplies: Map of Oregon, Map Pins

Find on the map these towns, counties, and rivers
Independence,
Woodburn,
Nyssa,
Hood River,
Boardman,
Ontario

EXTEND IT:
Plan to visit these special places to find out more about The Oregon Story:
Agricultural Workers

PROGRAMS, EXHIBITS AND SPECIAL SITES FOR LEARNING MORE
1. Collegio César Chávez, Mt. Angel
2. Woodburn: PCUN, Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United
3. Woodburn: “Nuevo Amanecer” housing project
4. Portland: Centro México
5. Portland: Consulate of México
7. Canby: Catholic Charities
8. Woodburn: Salud Medical Clinic
9. Cornelius: Virginia García Memorial Health Center

1 For example, Fiesta Mexicana in Woodburn, Fiesta Latina in Eugene, Portland, and other communities, Cinco de Mayo (May 5), Dieciséis de Septiembre (September 16) or Mexican Independence Day celebrations, concerts of Hermiston’s Grupo Folklórico Quetzalcoatl or Ballet Folklórico de Woodburn, Día de Los Muertos, and El Día de la Cosecha, the harvest, outdoor Mass in Hermiston.
2 Some locations to visit are listed on pages 10-11 of this guide. Also contact your local chamber of commerce.