Labour History Project Working People: A History of Labour in BC



**Farmworkers**

Film Summary: This film examines the working lives of “Canada’s Forgotten Workers,” the farmworkers whose labour fell outside much of the protective labour legislation. Provides an overview of their living and working conditions in the 1970s and invites students to compare with those of modern farmworkers and migrant workers in BC

**Curriculum Application:**

Social Studies 11 and Social Justice 12 and English

**The Essential Question:** Why have farmworkers been termed “Canada’s Forgotten Workers?” and how do their working and living conditions compare to other working Canadians?

What historical factors

**Summary of the Lesson Activities**

1. Focus questions for the vignette provide a short lesson option. (15 minutes)
2. Students will investigate the marginalization of farmworkers.
3. Activity for the application of higher order thinking concepts to personal narratives and the creation of a personal point of view statement.
4. Students will undertake a personal inquiry into the lives of farmworkers.
5. A simplified or classic jigsaw activity to promote engaging student discussion on the topic.

1. To be able to describe living and working conditions of farmworkers in British Columbia during the 1970s and 1980s.

2. To suggest and defend reasons for historical injustices in the struggle to gain better working conditions.

3. To compare and contrast the lives of farmworkers in the 1970s with those of modern farmworkers and “migrant workers.”

4. To conduct a deeper guided inquiry into one of the objectives listed above, or into a research question of their choice.

Learning Objectives

**Materials and Resources Provided**

[“Farmworkers” Episode 3 Working People- A History of British Columbia](https://www.knowledge.ca/program/working-people-history-labour-british-columbia)

Appendix 1: Teaching Strategies

Lesson Activity 1: Historical Context

Lesson Activity 2: Perspectives and point of view

Lesson Activity 3: Student Inquiry

Lesson Activity 4: Jigsaw Activity and Discussion

**Additional Suggested Materials**

[Raj Chouhan MLA for Burnaby Edmonds](http://www.rajchouhan.ca/about-raj)

Fraser Valley farmworkers and the Canadian Farmworkers’ Union. “Zindabad!”<http://www.vcn.bc.ca/cfu/intro.htm>

Canadian Farm Workers Project at SFU <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/special-collections/canadian-farmworkers-union>

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**Vignette Questions**

1. Which immigrant group made up the majority of BC farm workers in the 1970’s?
2. What examples were given as to how farm workers were exploited by their employers?
3. Raj Chouhan became the 1st president of what union in April 1980?
4. What working conditions were made public during the early years of the Canadian Farm Workers Union in the early 1980’s?
5. What happened in July 1981 when the Workers’ Compensation Board extended coverage to farm workers? How did the farm workers respond?
6. In what year did farm workers get health and safety standards extended to their work place?
7. What evidence can you cite to support the claim that Farm workers are Canada’s Forgotten workers?

**Lesson Activities**

1. Refer to Appendix 1 for more detailed lesson ideas. To extend the short lesson option, a reading outlining the historical context of Farmwork in BC can be followed by with the provided worksheet activity. (Lesson Activity 1) An additional lesson option provides an opportunity for students to develop empathy for farmworkers through a writing exercise or class discussion. (Lesson Activity 2)
2. Students can be given a choice of two inquiry questions. Students can proceed with research, consider the Farmworkers vignette, photographs, narratives, and suggested sources in this lesson before investigating their own sources. ( Lesson Activity 3)
3. Inquiry Question 1: ***“****Farmworkers are Canada’s Forgotten Workers.” To what extent is this statement true?” Support or refute this statement with specific examples.*
4. Inquiry Question 2***: “****What other workers in Canada appear as ignored or “forgotten?” Justify your position. Make specific references to the sources you selected*.
5. Students can use the provided quotations and photographs to explore a number of perspectives on farmwork in the Jigsaw activity detailed in Lesson Activity 4; a shortened version and an extended version are provided for in the instructions.

Credit: Teaching Activities and Lesson Plan developed by Tony F. Arruda