

## **The Story of a Bracero**

Intermediate Level ELLs

### **Overview:**

Students read a first hand account of a migrant worker from Mexico and write a reaction.

### **Discussion:**

How does the need for labor impact patterns of immigration to the US?

### **Materials:**

1. Paper
2. Pen or pencil

### **Time:**

½ class period

### **Learning Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- Listen to a first hand account of a Mexican immigrant
- Take notes on the important elements of the story
- Answer questions from the information that they remember from the story and from looking at their notes
- Improve their writing skills by generating a fictional interview following the model provided in the first-hand account.

### **Procedure:**

1. Read aloud Appendix 1: ‘The Story of a Bracero’
2. Have students take notes on the story
3. Ask if there are any questions about the account.
4. Discuss student’s reaction to the document.
  - Why did Mr. Suzuki treat the people who worked on the ranch well?
  - Why might Rigoberto Garcia Perez have chosen to stay in the USA instead of returning to Mexico?
  - Why did Mr. Perez like living in the USA? What did he miss about Mexico?
  - What does he mean when he says, “I have two countries”?
  - Which human rights did Mr. Perez enjoy as a bracero? Which was he denied?
  - Why does the USA allow some migrants to enter the country and deny others?
  - What was the Bracero Program?
  - What role did the demand for laborers in the USA play in Mr. Perez’s ability to come to this country?
  - Have labor laws changed? How does that affect people who want to immigrate today?

**Assignment:**

1. Have students write a first-hand account with a migrant worker from any country living in the United States.
  - What is their life like?
  - Who do they live with?
  - Is there family with them?
  - Where do they live?
  - Where do they work?
  - Are they in the US legally? Illegally?
  - Do they miss where they are from?
  - Do they own land/a home?
  - How did they get here?
  - Do they like living in the US?
2. Have students submit papers. Shuffle them, then redistribute to the class for peer proofreading and editing.
3. Ask students to incorporate changes appropriately and re-submit.
4. Correct and return students papers for them to re-write

**Source:**

Amnesty International, USA

“Bracero Story” adapted from an interview with David Bacon in Blythe, California (4/18/01). Located at: <http://dbacon.igc.org/Imigrants/24BraceroStory.htm>

## APPENDIX II

### The Story of a Bracero

By: Rigoberto Garcia Perez

The last time I came as a bracero, I was in San Diego. There I worked for a Japanese grower named Suzuki, a good man. During the war they had put him into one of the camps. He talked a lot about it. He told us, "I know what your life is like, because we lived that way too, in concentration camps. They watched over us with rifles." So he got papers for all of us. He fixed us up, and told us to come work with him. That was the last contract I worked.

When I fixed my immigration status. I decided I wouldn't go back, because my father had died, and I decided to bring my wife here instead. I was tired of being alone. That was the hardest thing -- the loneliness. You have the security of three meals, a place to stay, your job. But you get depressed anyway. I missed my land and my wife. And since I met her, I can't go with another woman. My parents and grandparents gave me that tradition. One wife for one strong family.

But it was important to send my kids to school. That's what I was trying to do as a bracero. I wanted a real future, and we knew that we were just casual workers - I would never be able to stay. I had to look for another future.

It was the beginning of the life I'm leading now. Thanks to those experiences, we survived, and here I am. I have two countries, just me, one person. I can cross the border, and live in my own land, and I can live happily in this country too. I came as an alambriista, and then back came as a bracero. Eventually I got my papers and lived like any other person. But I always remembered how I got here. Illegal, a bracero.

I still have a house on the land my father gave me. And I haven't let it go, because that's where all my children were born. Anytime we want to go to Mexico, we have a place there. I tell my son, your grandfather was a visionary. Don't sell it, he said, because we don't know what will happen. Maybe one day we'll go back.

## **APPENDIX II: English Language Arts Learning Standards**

Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding

Intermediate Level *Listening & Reading*:

- a) Gather and interpret information
- c) Select and use strategies taught for note-taking, organizing and categorizing information
- d) Ask specific questions to clarify and extend meaning

Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding

Intermediate Level *Speaking & Writing*:

- a) Present information clearly
- b) Select a focus, organization and point of view that suits the presentation
- c) Use a few traditional structures for conveying information such as chronological order and cause and effect
- f) Use pre-writing, drafting, revising and proofreading to construct quality text
- g) Observe basic writing conventions

Standard 2: Language for Literary Response and Expression

Intermediate Level *Listening & Reading*:

- a) Read a variety of literature of different genres, such as first hand accounts
- b) Recognize features that distinguish that genre

Standard 2: Language for Literary Response and Expression

Elementary Level *Speaking & Writing*:

- c) Create their own stories using elements of to literature they have read
- d) Observe the conventions of grammar usage, spelling, and punctuation

Standard 3: Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

Elementary Level *Listening & Reading*:

- a) Read and form opinions about a variety of texts

Standard 3: Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

Elementary Level *Speaking & Writing*:

- a) Express opinions
- b) Present and support arguments
- d) Use effective vocabulary grammar

Standard 4: Language for Social Interaction

Elementary Level *Oral Communication*:

- a) Listen attentively and recognize when it is appropriate to speak
- b) Take turns speaking and respond to each others' ideas

Standard 4: Language for Social Interaction

Elementary Level *Written Communication*:

- c) Read and discuss published materials to learn the conventions of social writing

