First Day in Grapes by King Pérez, illustrated by Robert Casilla

Identities & Themes

- Latinx/e/o/a
- Socioeconomic status
- Immigration/Migration
- Feelings
- Standing up for self/others
- School success
- Identity safety
- Identity affirmation

Teacher Reflection Questions

1. How was your upbringing similar to or different from Chico's as part of a family of migrant workers?

2. What stereotypes or negative messages did you receive from home, school, society, and/or media about yourself or those who were not your childhood version of "normal" or "ordinary"?

3. How did these messages help shape the value you put on yourself and/or other people?

Background Information for Teacher

The agriculture industry in the United States relies on between 1 and 3 million migrant farm workers every year. Some come from states within the U.S. and are citizens or permanent residents, but most come from Mexico and other Latin American countries.

Migrant workers are often invisible to much of the rest of society, as they work in rural agricultural areas and sometimes live in camps that provide temporary housing for migrant workers and families. Some migrant workers have legal status to work in the U.S., while others do not. Many fear being taken into custody or deported by immigration officers. Many are subject to abuse, unfair and unsafe labor practices, prejudice and discrimination, and inadequate housing, but fear of displacement or deportation keeps them from protesting/advocating for change or reporting their conditions. This further separates them from dominant society and contributes to their invisibility.

You may have children of migrant farm workers in your classroom. It's important to not assume a family's immigration status, and all children (regardless of immigration status) have the constitutional right to public education in the United States. For more information on how to best support immigrant students and families, see the Immigration/Migration Primer in this guide.

With every new environment comes new challenges and possible conflicts. Being a new student and having a background different from many of one's classmates can cause feelings of isolation for children. The teacher in this story encourages Chico, and this gives him the courage to reject mistreatment. Chico uses his problem solving abilities and creativity to address the conflict and mistreatment he faces.

See also the **Racial Identity/Racial Bias Primer** in this guide.

Anti-Bias Education Tenets

- ▣ **Empathy & Understanding**
- ▣ **Healthy Complex Identities**
- ▣ **Respect Across Differences**
- ▣ **Notice, Name, & Reject Bias**
- ▣ **Responsiveness & Action**

Social-Emotional Learning Competencies

- ▣ **Self-Awareness**
- ▣ **Self-Management**
- ▣ **Social Awareness**
- ▣ **Responsible Decision Making**
- ☐ **Relationship Skills**

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## Read this to the students before reading the book:

Chico and his family are migrant farm workers in California, so he is often the new kid in school. When Chico's fourth grade teacher recognizes his excellent math skills, he feels excited about his new class. Some of his classmates start picking on Chico, but he figures out a way to respond wisely.

Discussion Questions (essential questions bolded)

1. **Chico and his family are migrant farmers. What does that mean?**

2. **Why does Chico not want to go to school? What kind of prejudice, stereotypes, or discrimination might he have experienced in the past?**

3. **Chico's mother stands him up tall and straight before each "first day". What messages do you think she sends him by doing this? Why?**

4. When Chico's teacher asked him to tell about himself, why do you think he didn't share about the bull dance and how he wanted to be a race car driver?

5. **Chico will most likely have many more "first days". What are some of the character traits a person would need to be able to start over in a new school as many times as Chico?**

6. Mike and Tony make fun of the food Chico eats. Why do you think this upsets Chico so much? How is the food we eat connected to our culture?

7. **What does Chico do to stand up for himself? What are some other positive ways he could have dealt with Tony and Mike's teasing?**

8. **What messages was the author sending us through Chico's behavior?**

9. **How does our class welcome new students? After learning about Chico's first day from his perspective, what could we do differently?**

Journal Prompts & Extension Activities

1. Write about a time when you felt nervous about sharing parts of your identity, family, or background to new people. How did you feel in that situation? What choices did you make about what you shared and what you kept to yourself? What influenced those choices?

2. Chico has had a lot of first days. Tell about a first day that you have had. What do you remember from that day? How did you feel beforehand? What did you learn about yourself from that experience?

3. **T-Chart**: Give each student two sticky notes. Draw a T chart on the board, with the word "Feeling/Emotions" on one side and "Characteristics/Values" on the other. Students should write one feeling word that they think Chico experienced at some point in his day (from the time he awoke until the time he came home) and one character trait (something more permanent than feelings, like resilience, self pride, confidence, etc.) that Chico displayed throughout the day. Once students quickly place their sticky notes, have a whole class discussion about how one's character and the values we learn from our loved ones (i.e. Chico's mother's hands helping him stand tall) help us overcome challenges. Draw connections to show how Chico's feelings and character traits are related (ie. feeling pride-- confidence).
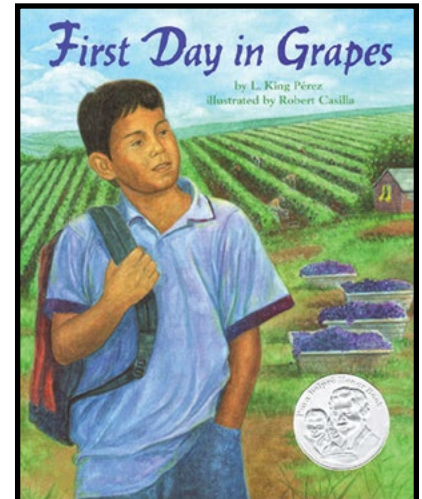
Literacy Connections

- Realistic fiction
- Identify details in the text
- Compare and contrast settings
- Identify theme or main message
- Describe setting
- Describe characters/ Character development
- Use illustrations/pictures/ photos to gain information
- Make predictions
- Make inferences
- Make text connections (to self, text, the world)
- Describe major plot events
- Sequence events
- Vocabulary in context
- Figurative language