

Name _____ Date _____

Larry Itliong

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. b’

A migrant worker is someone who moves from place to place in search of employment, often moving depending on the season. In the early 20th century, labor conditions for migrant workers, many of them immigrants, were dangerous and inhumane. Wages were low, hours were long, and breaks were nonexistent. To make things worse, the work itself was often dangerous. These unsafe working conditions killed or seriously injured many migrant workers. Because many of the workers were not US citizens, bosses could threaten them with deportation if they asked for better treatment.

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Notes

2. b'

Larry Itliong immigrated to the United States from the Philippines in 1913. He worked difficult jobs on farms and in canning factories. He lost three of his fingers in an accident at a cannery in Alaska, which moved him to action.

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In 1930, Itliong founded the Alaska Cannery Workers Union, a labor union that advocated for an eight-hour workday and paid overtime. He learned to speak several Filipino dialects, as well as English, Japanese, Cantonese, and Spanish, so that he could communicate with other migrant workers and organize alongside them.

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After serving in World War II, Itliong continued the fight for workers' rights. He founded two more labor unions and organized strikes to protest low wages and poor working conditions for workers in many migrant industries. Famously, he was a key figure, alongside Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, in the Delano grape strike, which lasted for five years.

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3. b'

Today, things like eight-hour work days, fair wages, healthcare, and access to toilets and clean drinking water seem like common sense to provide to workers. But this was not the reality for migrant workers in the early 20th century. The Delano grape strike may have lasted five long years, but the struggle paid off when a new contract ensured better conditions for farm workers.

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Larry Itliong recognized that as an individual he could do little to change conditions on his own. By spreading his ideas to his fellow laborers and enlisting the help of other influential labor activists, he found power in collective, or group, action.

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