

TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK ACTIVITY

A free [Online Learning](#) activity aligned with
Common Core & State Content standards for K-5th grades

OVERVIEW:

In honor of Teacher Appreciation Week, we highlight some of the teachers who are celebrated in the California Museum, in exhibits like the [California Hall of Fame](#), [Unity Center at the California Museum](#), [Uprooted! Japanese Americans During WWII](#), and forthcoming [Women Inspire: California Women Changing Our World](#). In this activity, learners will read about four teachers from across California history and the impact they have made on their communities. They will then choose two of these teachers to reflect on, and write about a teacher who inspires them.

APPROPRIATE FOR:

K-5th grades

OBJECTIVES:

In this activity, learners will:

- Read biographies of California teachers
- Summarize the contributions teachers have made to their communities
- Reflect on a teacher who has inspired them

DIRECTIONS:

Read the biographies of the four teachers and then select two teachers to reflect on in the table provided.

TIME:

1 hour

MATERIALS:

- Biographies on pages 2-3

STANDARDS:**Common Core***Reading Informational Text - Key Ideas and details*

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| K-2 | Describe the connections between two individuals, events, ideas or pieces of information in a text |
| 3-5 | Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text |

History-Social Science California State Content Standards*Grade Level Content Area Connections*

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| 2.5 | Students understand the importance of individual action and character and explain how heroes from long ago and the recent past have made a difference in others' lives |
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PART 1: Teacher Biographies

DIRECTIONS:

Choose two of the inspiring teachers based on their biographies and analyze them using the tables below.

Mary Tsukamoto, featured in *Uprooted! Japanese Americans During WWII*

In 1942, Mary Tsukamoto and approximately 110,000 other Japanese Americans were forcibly removed from their homes on the west coast of the United States into incarceration camps by the United States government. Around 70% of these incarcerated, like Mary, were American citizens. They were imprisoned not because they had done anything wrong, but because they were of Japanese descent, and the United States was at war with the Japanese government.

When Mary and her family were allowed to return to their home in Florin, California, she decided to become a teacher. She had wanted to teach before the war, but was told she wouldn't be allowed to teach because she was Japanese. After the war, she got a job in the Elk Grove Unified School District, and became one of the most loved teachers in the district. There is now even a school named in her honor.



Mary believed that the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II held valuable lessons for the present. She was a leader in the fight for redress, helped develop an exhibit at the Smithsonian on the internment, co-wrote a book about the camps, and started an oral history program to record the experiences of Japanese Americans. For her Elk Grove students, she developed the "Time of Remembrance," [the annual field trip tour program](#) about the incarceration that is now held annually at the California Museum. Her daughter, Marielle Tsukamoto, continues to spearhead the program each year to carry on Mary's legacy.

Laurence Tan, featured in the Unity Center at the California Museum

Laurence Tan is a 5th grade teacher in South Los Angeles and the founder of Watts Youth Collective, an organization that empowers students to create social change using social media.



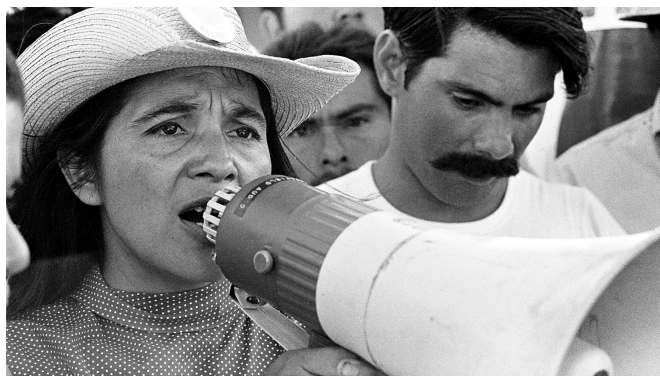
In his teaching, Laurence engages his students by making the curriculum reflect their cultural identity and interests. He recognizes that each student has something unique to contribute. Laurence believes many of the most valuable lessons his students will learn come from outside the four walls of the classroom, so he applies for grants each year to get his students out on field trips. At the same time, he holds his students to a high standard and equips them with the tools they need to excel beyond

expectations. His unconventional style of teaching has earned him many awards, but more importantly, the respect and trust of his students.

Laurence brings the same care to his work with the Watts Youth Collective. He recognizes his students' lives are surrounded by social media and that they are constant consumers of it. Watts Youth Collective's signature project is *Watts Profiled*, a documentary focusing on the negative impact of racial profiling of black and brown communities in South Los Angeles. By providing his students with the skills to create media content, Laurence empowers his students to become producers of their own story.

Dolores Huerta, featured in the California Hall of Fame, the Unity Center at the California Museum, and *Women Inspire: California Women Changing Our World*

Dolores Huerta is well known as a labor rights activist and community organizer, but she was also a teacher. As a child, Dolores experienced discrimination when a teacher accused her of cheating. Her teacher thought her papers were too well written for a daughter of Mexican immigrants. Dolores became a teacher so that kids like her wouldn't face the same discrimination.



Dolores earned her teaching credential from the University of the Pacific, a major achievement for a Mexican American woman at the time. In the early 1950s, she began teaching in Stockton, California. She was inspired to teach with compassion and create positive change for her students in and out of the classroom. Her students often came to school hungry and with no shoes. She decided the best way to support these students was to be an advocate for their parents. This was the start of her lifelong career of social activism. She played a major role in the American civil rights movement and as a community organizer.

Bell Gardens 5th grade class, featured in the Unity Center at the California Museum

Students can play a major role in deciding what is taught in classrooms too. Students at Bell Gardens Elementary in Los Angeles County found this out first hand when they learned about an important part of history left out of their textbooks and decided to do something about it.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, government authorities in California and elsewhere rounded up and deported over 1 million residents of Mexican ancestry. More than half of those deported were U.S. citizens. Even in California, where a third of the state's residents are of Latinx ancestry, many people do not know this history.

When a Bell Gardens 5th grade class learned about this mass deportation, they were shocked that it wasn't discussed in their textbooks. They petitioned their state representative, Assemblymember Cristina Garcia, to sponsor a bill encouraging California schools to teach this history. The students' demand became law in 2015.

Choose two teachers described above and answer the following questions:

Name

Name

What are they known for?

What are they known for?

How did they make an impact on their community?

How did they make an impact on their community?

What are some important characteristics they showed?

What are some important characteristics they showed?

Questions:

1. Who is a teacher that inspires you?
2. What do they do that inspires you?
3. What impact do they have?
4. What are some important characteristics they show?