

# VICTOR STEINBRUECK LESSON: Tale of a Market Hero

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Objective: Students will recount Victor Steinbrueck’s role in the preservation of the Pike Place Market. Students will analyze the importance of believing in a “cause” as well as having heroes in one’s life.

Supplies: Computer and Projector; PDFs of sketches from his book, *Market Sketchbook* (University of Washington Press, 1996)

Key Concepts: Civics, History, Politics

Class Time: 30-45 minutes min.

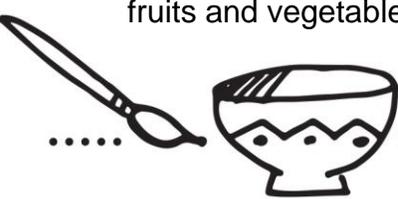
Lesson Opening: Since its beginnings in 1907 there have been many challenges to the Market’s existence. Most challenging was the 1960s plan to tear down the Market’s buildings and replace them with high-rise condos, hotels, shops, restaurants, parking, and more.

Victor Steinbrueck, a professor of architecture and urban planning at the University of Washington (see Photo #1), recognized the importance of the Pike Place Market as a place where each day people do ordinary tasks to lead ordinary lives in a working marketplace. He once wrote, “...I am interested in the physical aspects of the place and in the people and their activities....Part of the subtle charm of the market is the intrigue of exploration and the element of surprise as one moves through the various streets, lanes, passageways, ramps, and stairs.” He believed it would be wrong to destroy a place where people, many of whom didn’t have much money, could buy life’s necessities.

He banded together with others who had similar feelings. They called their group Friends of the Market. Even though the plan to replace the Market had the support of the city’s mayor, newspapers, and many business leaders, Victor and Friends felt they had to do something to prevent the Market’s destruction.

So they went to others and asked for help. They protested in front of City Hall in the spring and handed out daffodils (see Photo #2). They also gathered enough signatures from Seattle voters to place an initiative on the ballot. The initiative was not expected to be approved by voters. The mayor did not favor it. Many members of the City Council did not favor it. Both Seattle newspapers did not favor it. One could say Friends of the Market was an “underdog.”

Guess what? They won! In November, 1971, Seattle voters voted in favor of preserving the traditions of the Market. The Market would remain a public farmers market, and its buildings would be repaired so that the Market could look much the way it did in the early days. Shoppers would still be able to buy specialty foods and fresh fruits and vegetables from farmers and highstalls! Mom-and-pop businesses



could continue.

Thanks to the dedication of Victor and many others, we have the Pike Place Market today and we will be able to appreciate this community for generations to come.

In his vision of the Market he also saw the opportunity to teach and learn. “The market offers an urban educational experience in the broadest sense by enabling people, and especially children, to see facets of humanity, activities, and aspects of the city not easily accessible elsewhere.”

Victor loved the Market, and his sketchbook is one man’s journal of life at the Market, captured in fountain-pen drawings and vivid descriptions of market businesses and the people of the Market community.

### **ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASS:**

**Role Plays:** What things are worth saving?

- Pick one issue that you’d like the class to vote about, related to school or home life. Perhaps choose a tradition.
- Divide the class into two camps: one “for,” one “against.”
- Guide students in a discussion of the issue. Then have the class vote.

Further topics for discussion:

- Mom-and-pop businesses (“Meet the Producer”).
- “Heroes--why is it important to have heroes in your life? What heroes do you know? What heroes have you studied?”

**Unit Extension:** Have students study line and form, and then do their own pen and ink drawings while at the Market.

