

Labor Day Reading Comprehension

For Middle School



A reading comprehension passage for middle school students written at a 6th grade reading level. It comes with 4 multiple choice questions and 3 short answer questions.



Name _____

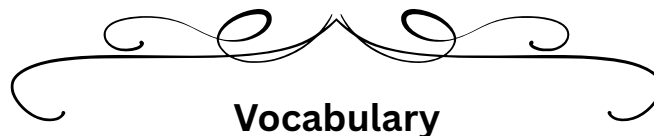
Labor Day: More Than Just a Long Weekend

Every year on the first Monday in September, Americans celebrate Labor Day. For many people, the holiday means the end of summer, backyard barbecues, and an extra day off from school or work. But the history of Labor Day is much more than a chance to relax—it's about recognizing the hard work of everyday people.

In the late 1800s, many workers in the United States worked long hours in unsafe conditions. Factories, mines, and railroads were often dangerous, and workers had little protection. People sometimes worked 12 hours a day, 6 or 7 days a week, for very low pay. Children also worked in factories, missing out on school and facing the same risks as adults.

Workers began to organize themselves into labor unions—groups that fought for better wages, shorter hours, and safer workplaces. They held strikes and marches to demand change. One of these events, the Pullman Strike of 1894, turned violent and caught the nation's attention. Soon after, President Grover Cleveland signed a law making Labor Day a national holiday to honor the contributions of workers.

Today, many workers enjoy safer conditions, fair pay, and reasonable hours—thanks in part to the efforts of those early labor unions. Labor Day is a reminder to appreciate the people who keep our communities running, from teachers and nurses to delivery drivers and construction workers. While the holiday is often seen as a celebration of the end of summer, it's also a time to remember the struggles and victories of the labor movement.



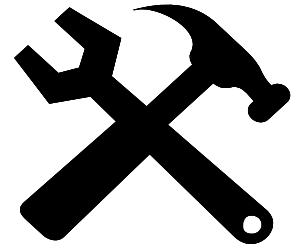
Vocabulary

- **Labor unions** – organized groups of workers who fight for better working conditions
- **Wages** – the money workers earn for their jobs
- **Strike** – when workers refuse to work until their demands are met

Multiple Choice Questions: circle the best answer.

1. When is Labor Day celebrated in the United States?

- a) The first Monday in May
- b) The first Monday in September
- c) September 1st every year
- d) The last Friday in August



2. Which problem did workers face in the late 1800s?

- a) Too much vacation time
- b) Unsafe working conditions
- c) Low prices for goods
- d) Too short workdays

3. What was the main purpose of early labor unions?

- a) To stop people from working
- b) To help factories hire more workers
- c) To fight for better pay and working conditions
- d) To plan holiday celebrations

4. Which event helped lead to Labor Day becoming a holiday?

- a) The Boston Tea Party
- b) The Pullman Strike
- c) The Civil War
- d) The invention of the steam engine

Short Answer: answer in complete sentences.

5. Name two ways the labor movement helped improve working conditions.

6. Why do you think it's important to remember the history of Labor Day instead of just treating it as a day off?

7. List three types of workers mentioned in the passage who help keep communities running.