

LABOR DAY READING COMPREHENSION

Passage

Semantic Map

Vocabulary

Multiple choice

Labor Day Comprehension Questions

1. What were working conditions like in the 1800s?
a. Better

2. Why did the workers of the PPCC go on strike?
a. They were being paid less than

Name: _____

The History of Labor Day

It's usually the first holiday of the school year. Sometimes we start school and a holiday happens the next week! Many people fill this day with picnics, family time, shopping and the last day of swimming! But why is the first Monday in September so important that many of us get a day off from school?

Nowadays, many people have holidays from work throughout the year, but this wasn't always the case. During most of the 1800s, workers didn't have time off from work very often. They weren't guaranteed rights like paid time off, sick leave, and safety at work. People, including children, worked around twelve hours a day for six or seven days a week. They could lose their jobs if they had an unexpected illness and weren't able to work. They didn't have proper safety equipment, and if they were injured at work, the company didn't have to help them.

Activists, or people who work to make political or social change happen for the country, came together to work towards worker's rights. One of the changes activists were fighting for was the "Eight Hour Day". This plan explained that workers should have eight hours for work, eight hours for rest, and eight hours for "what we will", which could be family, friends, hobbies, or other free time. The National Labor Union first took this Eight Hour Day Movement to Congress in 1866, but it failed to pass any laws to support workers.

On September 5, 1882, the first Labor Day holiday took place in New York City. There was a parade organized by the Central Labor Union and the Knights of Labor. Tens of thousands of workers took an unpaid day from work and marched down Broadway Street to mark the day! Afterwards, they celebrated with fireworks, picnics, speeches, and dancing. The federal government still didn't pass a law to make Labor Day a holiday.



Labor Day Semantic Map

PPCC Strike



Working Conditions in the Past



Modern Day



5 PAGES FOR 4TH & 5TH GRADE

ONE PAGE PASSAGE WITH 4 QUESTIONS



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For years, workers continued to strike and march for their rights, but the government didn't respond to their efforts. In May of 1894, workers near Chicago went on strike to protest the 16 hour days they were forced to work for the Pullman Palace Car Company. The PPCC had cut also their wages, or pay. They refused to work, stopping production on railroad cars and demanding an eight hour day. Workers from the American Railway Union joined the strike and the railroad industry was forced to shut down.

President Grover Cleveland finally signed the Labor Day Holiday bill, making Labor Day a national holiday. He also sent troops to Chicago to end the strike, and many people were killed. The strike ended and things didn't improve right away. However, unions kept fighting and over time, worker's rights have improved.

Now we celebrate Labor Day to show respect and appreciation for the hard work of people across the country. Take a moment to think about how your life is different because of the unions who fought for worker's rights throughout the years!



Labor Day Comprehension Questions

1. What were working conditions like in the 1800s?

- a. Better than the are now
- b. Worse than they are now
- c. About the same as they are now

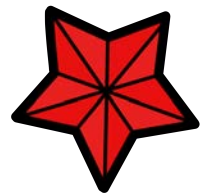
2. Why did the workers of the PPCC go on strike?

- a. They were being paid less than before and they were working long hours
- b. They wanted to make Labor Day a national holiday
- c. They took a bill to Congress but it failed

3. How did the US government respond to the PPCC strike in 1894?

They improved their working conditions.
They had a parade and celebrated with speeches.
They signed the Labor Day bill and sent troops to kill strikers.

4. Why do we celebrate Labor Day?



Answer key included!



SEMANTIC MAP: CONNECT IDEAS



Answer key
included!

Name: _____

Labor Day Semantic Mapping

Use the vocabulary words and ideas from below to fill in the semantic map.
Think of other words and information you can add to the web and add them too!

Word list:

Union	Train cars	President Cleveland	Fireworks
Marching	16 hour days	American Railway	Day off from school
Picnic	8 hour workday	12 hour workday	and work
	Unsafe conditions	National holiday	6 or 7 days a week
	September 5, 1882	Chicago	Strike

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LEARN IMPORTANT VOCABULARY

Name: _____

Labor Day Vocabulary

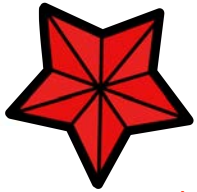
These are important vocabulary words you will need to look out for as you read the article. As you read, make a sketch in the column labeled "Picture".



Vocabulary Word	Meaning	Picture
union		
strike		
activist		
worker's rights		
national holiday		
pull		

Answer key
included!

TIMELINE OF EVENTS



Answer key
included!



Name: _____

Labor Day Timeline of Events

☐	
☐	
☐	

