The History of Labor Day

For most of history, people worked on farms or made things out of their homes, or they lived in the home of their employer. In the 1820s, new technology allowed for the creation of factories. People who worked in factories were usually the poorest members of the population, as well as people who could not vote, like immigrants, ethnic minorities, women, and children. Many factory owners took advantage of workers and paid them just enough money to cover rent in a building where ten people shared a room, and just enough for food to keep themselves alive but always hungry. Some factories used machines that worked quickly and could be dangerous to use. Sometimes a hand or arm would get caught in a machine and have to be removed. People who worked in food production often got diseases from unsafe conditions. Young children climbed chimneys to clean them or squeezed into tight tunnels in coal mines. The workweek was six and-a-half days, and the workday was about twelve hours.

In the 1880s, labor activitists began petitioning the government to create laws that would protect workers. Many workers created unions so that they could all bargain for better wages together, since when they tried to get more money individually, they were usually turned down. The first Labor Day holiday was celebrated on September 5th, 1882 in New York City. 10,000 workers took an unpaid day off, and marched in a parade from City Hall to Union Square. Speeches were given and people had picnics in the park to enjoy their day of rest. In 1894, President Grover Cleveland made Labor Day a federal holiday. In 1938, the Child Labor Law was passed saying children have to go to school instead of working in factories. If children work after school hours, it cannot be in a place with dangerous conditions.

Today, many Americans enjoy Labor Day as a day off of work and consider it the unofficial "end of summer." There is an old joke that you shouldn't dress all in white after Labor Day. When you start the school year around Labor Day, instead of feeling frustated that you have to go to school seven hours a day, five days a week, remember how only a hundred years ago many children worked in miserable and unsafe places for 12 hours a day, 6 and-a-half days a week.

Labor Day Timeline

Most of History	
1820s	
1880s	
1882	
1894	
1938	
Today	

Labor Day Timeline

Cut out strips and glue onto the following page next to the year each event happened.

Many Americans enjoy Labor Day as a day off of work and consider it the unofficial "end of summer."
Labor activitists began petitioning the government to create laws that would protect workers.
The Child Labor Law was passed saying children have to go to school instead of working in factories.
New technology allowed for the creation of factories.
President Grover Cleveland made Labor Day a federal holiday.
People worked on farms or made things out of their homes.
10,000 workers took an unpaid day off, and marched in a parade from City Hall to Union Square in New York City.

Labor Day Activities

Teach Grow Sow

Here are some fun ways to celebrate Labor Day:

❖ Have children dress as the job they would like to have when you grow up.

❖ Invite parents to speak to children about their jobs.

❖ Have children research different kinds of jobs: what work conditions are like, how much they are paid, how long they have to study, etc.

❖ Have children write thank-you cards to people in their community whose labor affects them:

    ❖ Write to local firefighters and police officers.

    ❖ If dining out on Labor Day, give a card to the server.

    ❖ Have children mail thank-you cards to their pediatrician/nurse, vet, and dentist.

    ❖ Attach a thank-you card to the trash and recycling bins for the people who collect them.

    ❖ Give a thank-you card to the next repair person who comes to the house.

    ❖ Give a thank-you card to the mechanic the next time the car gets checked.

    ❖ Hand a thank-you card to the clerk when buying groceries.

    ❖ Give thank-you cards to the school custodian, cafeteria workers, and specials teachers.

    ❖ Mail thank-you cards to members of the military.

    ❖ Give a thank-you card to a school or city bus driver.

    ❖ Mail a thank-you card to a local farm.

    ❖ Mail thank-you cards to the nurses, doctors, and ambulance drivers at a local hospital.

Labor Day Word Search

Q	M	E	C	H	A	N	I	C	A	K	J	H	G	F	D
W	J	A	N	I	T	O	R	L	M	Q	W	E	J	K	L
E	Y	F	U	N	I	S	O	P	B	A	S	R	D	F	G
R	T	I	U	Z	X	R	C	S	U	V	B	T	Y	P	D
G	A	R	B	A	G	E	C	O	L	L	E	C	T	O	R
T	S	E	Q	Z	P	P	A	L	A	L	K	J	C	L	H
E	I	F	W	X	O	R	S	D	N	I	U	T	N	I	G
A	O	I	E	C	I	I	D	I	C	T	O	T	G	C	F
C	P	G	R	V	U	A	F	E	E	R	I	Y	U	E	D
H	A	H	T	B	Y	P	G	R	D	G	H	J	T	O	S
E	S	T	Y	N	T	E	H	Y	R	V	B	N	S	F	A
R	D	E	U	M	R	R	J	H	I	C	X	Z	I	F	Z
F	A	R	M	E	R	S	K	N	V	O	K	P	T	I	X
U	F	G	S	A	L	E	S	P	E	R	S	O	N	C	C
H	B	U	S	D	R	I	V	E	R	H	J	K	E	E	V
V	E	T	E	R	I	N	A	R	I	A	N	M	D	R	B

DOCTOR
NURSE
AMBULANCE DRIVER
FIRE FIGHTER
SOLDIER
MECHANIC
VETERINARIAN
BUS DRIVER

REPAIR PERSON
SALESPERSON
JANITOR
GARBAGE COLLECTOR
POLICE OFFICER
TEACHER
DENTIST
FARMER

Teach Grow Sow

Labor Day Word Jumble

ambulance driver, firefighter, police officer, mechanic, bus driver, garbage collector, repair person, teacher, farmer, janitor, soldier

fipeolceficro

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rgbaeaoecolrlcgt

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carheet

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vaemruecanbrdli

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