

SummerReads: Labor Day - What is Labor Day?

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This text is provided courtesy of Elfrieda H. Hiebert and TextProject.



Historic image of child laborers at midnight at a glass and bottle factory in Indiana, August 1908.

Taken by Lewis Wickes Hine. Restored by Michel Vuijlsteke. Released into the public domain by the Library of Congress.

The first Labor Day was held on September 5th, 1882 in New York City. It was planned by a group of workers who wanted to show everyone the different kinds of jobs and workers in New York City. They also wanted to show everyone how they made their hometown a nice place to live and work.

One hundred and twenty years ago, working was very different than it is today. For one thing, most children did not spend their summer reading or playing because many worked in factories. People, both young and old, worked long hours; some as long as 12 hours each day. Many workers fell asleep at their work because they were so tired. Some workers were hurt or killed because they were too tired to be careful at their work.

Workers were upset at how badly they were being treated. They decided to form unions. A union is made up of workers in a city, or workers who do the same kind of work. For example, many teachers may belong to a teachers' union. As a union, workers have more power to make changes to their workplace. Unions worked with businesses to make all the changes we have today. The first Labor Day parade was to show how unions had the power to make good changes. Unions made it possible for children like you to spend your summer reading and playing.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

1. The first Labor Day was held on September 5th, 1882. What did the workers who planned it want to show everyone?

2. Read these sentences from the text.

"The first Labor Day parade was to show how unions had the power to make good changes."

Explain how unions helped workers make changes to their workplace.

Support your answer with evidence from the text.

3. What is the main idea of this text?
