



The History Channel Presents "The Story of Labor Day," part of the History of the Holidays series. It airs on Monday, September 6th at 2 PM/1c.

The History Channel Presents THE HISTORY OF THE HOLIDAYS "The Story of Labor Day"

The History Channel is proud to join together with the U.S. Department of Education in celebration of Labor Day with a special presentation devoted to this holiday honoring the American workforce. As with many national holidays, the average person tends to spend Labor Day shopping, picnicking, or relaxing, without reflecting on the meaning and significance of the holiday and its history. *The Story of Labor Day* steps back into the 19th century to retrace the history of this day honoring American workers and their occupations. This upbeat and informative documentary invites viewers into American workplaces as workers define in their own words the relevance of their jobs to their lives, to the economy, and to the visions of future success which drive them.

This half-hour special provides viewers with the historical background which has informed the contemporary workplace and enabled the quality of life many Americans have gained as a result of union organizing and reform movements of the past. Featuring interviews with historians and young people, this program captures workers on the job as they describe their diverse occupations and the satisfaction their careers provide. Taking students from a guitar factory to an airplane runway, *The Story of Labor Day* shows how the story of American labor is one of determination, strife, and the pride that comes from hard work and human ingenuity. Watching this documentary, students will broaden their understanding of the importance of Labor Day and will hear from their peers why this holiday is so much more than a day away from school. Students will learn how workers throughout history have contributed to the ability of young people today to follow careers of their choosing, to pursue an education, and to enjoy the weekend!

Note: Students may want to take notes on important dates and ideas while watching the documentary; they will be a helpful reference for some of the activities in this study guide. We would also suggest a pre-viewing activity in which students define the vocabulary terms below in order to determine their level of previous knowledge.





Curriculum Links:

The Story of Labor Day is useful for history, social studies and civics courses, as well as lesson plans which incorporate current events. It is an excellent resource for Labor Day events, and would be useful as well for youth group programs and activities. It is appropriate for middle and high school students. This documentary fulfills several National Standards guidelines as outlined by the National Council for History Education including: Values, Beliefs, Political Ideas and Institutions, Conflict and Cooperation, and Comparative History of Major Developments. Nothing herein shall be construed as a U.S. Department of Education endorsement, sanction, or control over curriculum or any program of instruction.

Family Viewing Suggestions:

Families may want to watch *The Story of Labor Day* together, comparing their reactions to the program and sharing their own ideas about what Labor Day means to them. This is also a great opportunity for students to consider their own career plans and expectations, and to hear the paths their family members have taken over the years. Together, viewers can assess the legacy of the labor movement and the nation's immigration history, seeing how their personal stories connect with those featured in the documentary.

Vocabulary:

assembly line- an arrangement of machines, equipment, and workers in which work passes from operation to operation in direct line until the product is assembled **automation-** the technique of making an apparatus, a process, or a system operate by mechanical or electronic means

collective bargaining- negotiation between an employer and a labor union usually on wages, hours, and working conditions

craft- an occupation or trade requiring manual dexterity or artistic skill

Industrial Revolution- a rapid major change in an marked by the general introduction of power-driven machinery or by an important change in the prevailing types and methods of use of such machines

labor union- an organization of workers formed for the purpose of advancing its members' interests in respect to wages, benefits, working conditions

muckrakers- journalists whose goal is to search out and publicly expose real or apparent misconduct in social institutions and communities

occupation- the work in which a person is regularly employed or engaged **reform**- to put an end to or transform by enforcing or introducing a better method or course of action

regulation- a rule or order issued by an executive authority or agency of a government and having the force of law





wage- a payment usually of money for labor or services usually according to contract and on an hourly, daily, or piecework basis

Discussion Questions:

- 1. How was Labor Day first established as a holiday and what year did it officially become a national holiday? What was it meant to celebrate?
- 2. What kinds of workers formed the first unions? What kinds of issues were they most concerned about?
- 3. What years, according to the documentary, were the peak years of immigration to the United States? In what ways did this influx of immigrants change the country?
- 4. What was the Industrial Revolution? When did it occur in the U.S.?
- 5. What kind of changes did President Theodore Roosevelt advocate for workers? Why did these issues become of such urgency around the turn of the 20th century?
- 6. How did the development of the power driven assembly line change the way Americans work?
- 7. What do people mean when they talk about the "American Dream"? Do you think this is a term which is still relevant today?
- 8. What is the "digital factory" as shown in the documentary? Do you think computers have contributed to better working conditions?
- 9. Which of the occupations in the documentary did you find most interesting?
- 10. Sometimes it is easy to confuse Labor Day and Memorial Day. When is Memorial Day observed and what does it honor?
- 11. What is the difference between a "craft union" and an "industrial union." Do you think unions are still necessary?
- 12. The documentary describes the effort to end child labor. Does child labor still exist in the U.S. or elsewhere in the world?

The Story of Labor Day Timeline Guide and Quiz

This documentary encourages viewers to make connections between the history of the past one hundred years and the lives we live today. In order to chart the progress this program follows, it will be helpful to use this timeline and quiz as you are watching.

1.	A small parade in New York City he celebration of Labor Day.	eld in	_ marked the first informal	
2.	Labor Day officially became a national holiday when Congress passed it into law n Every year Labor Day is observed on the first Monday in			
				
3.	The Coal Strike during	was one of the la	argest in the nation's history.	





4.	The largest influx of immigrants to the United States took place between and These immigrants became a major force in the U.S. economy and played a pivotal role in the formation of labor unions.
5.	Labor unions were created to protect workers and win basic workplace rights including safe working conditions, better wages, and health benefits. In the documentary, the labor historian Kent Wong defines unions as
6.	Henry Ford transformed the workplace through the development of the (Bonus question: When did Ford invent this process?)
7.	Theodore Roosevelt became active in the campaign to help workers receive better protections on the job through the formation of the Party. (Extra question: During what years was the Progressive Party in existence?)

Extended Activities:

- 1. This documentary covers certain key events in U.S. labor history in the 19th and 20th centuries. There are many more events and stories which comprise the greater history behind Labor Day and which provide insights into the contemporary world we live in today. Write down the following terms and identifications on small pieces of paper and place them in a hat or box: Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, Samuel Gompers, AFL/CIO, Cesar Chavez, Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike, the New Deal, Taft/Hartley Act, "Five Dollar Day," and the Fair Labor Standards Act. Break up into groups of two or three. Have one member from each group pick a term out of the box or hat. At the library or using the Internet, find out ten interesting facts about your term, including when they were active or when they occurred. Write down your ten facts on a poster board, which you can also decorate with images or quotes you discover through your search. Have one member of your group share your findings with the class.
- 2. This documentary shows many individuals at their job sites as they discuss their career paths and the work they do every day. We all have stories right in our own families or communities which are part of the larger fabric of the history we celebrate on Labor Day. Labor Day is an ideal time for young people to learn the histories all around them by talking to family members and older members of the community. Find a parent, older sibling, grandparent, or older friend. Interview them about their jobs and how they found their careers. You can either take





notes or record them with a cassette player, but be sure to have a list of questions ready to ask before you start the interview. After you have finished, be sure to say thank you! Then, write a short essay about what you learned, describing the job or jobs of your interview subject and the broader industries or processes of which they are a part. (Note: This activity can be adapted for younger students. Teachers or group leaders can help younger students come up with a simple list of questions to ask their interview subjects and a worksheet to write down their responses.)

- 3. Labor Day is a great time to start thinking about the different career paths you could take and how you might achieve your goals. Choose one of the possible careers that interest you. At the library or using the Internet, research the education or training necessary for a career in this field. Share your ideas with your larger group in a short presentation of three minutes or less.
- 4. One of the key reforms of the 20th century was the effort to have restrictions placed on child labor in the United States. There were many ways labor reformers approached this issue in their campaign to have restrictions placed on the use of children for industrial labor, including photography. The photographer Lewis W. Hine, working for the Child Labor Bureau, captured the abuses of child labor by taking photos of children in their workplaces. At the library or using the Internet, locate one of Hine's photographs. Analyze this photograph. How does the technique Hine uses help him make an argument without words? What do you think the effect of these photographs could be? In a short essay, answer these questions and if possible the effect Hine's efforts had on the legislation devoted to ending child labor.
- 5. Note to teachers and group leaders: Labor Day is also an excellent time to invite parents and community members into your classroom or meeting place to discuss with students their career choices and how they arrived at them. You may want to use the holiday as an opportunity to have a few parents or community members come in to talk about their careers and how students can pursue these and other avenues in the future.

Primary Source Guide:

The following document is an excerpt from a radio address by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1936. In this speech, Roosevelt unveiled his plans for the second half of the New Deal, his political program to stimulate the economy after the Depression and provide safeguards for those most affected by the downturn in the economy. These protections included legislation providing better benefits and conditions for workers and the unemployed. This document and others can be found online at www.ourdocuments.gov. This web site is the home page for the Our Documents initiative, a cooperative effort among National History Day, the National Archives and Records Administration and USA Freedom Corps., and includes links and suggested resources for using primary sources.





Transcript of President Franklin Roosevelt's Radio Address unveiling the second half of the New Deal (1936)

Campaign Address at Madison Square Garden, New York City. "We Have Only Just Begun to Fight." October 31, 1936

Senator Wagner, Governor Lehman, ladies and gentlemen:

ON THE eve of a national election, it is well for us to stop for a moment and analyze calmly and without prejudice the effect on our Nation of a victory by either of the major political parties.

The problem of the electorate is far deeper, far more than the continuance in the Presidency of any individual. For the greater issue goes beyond units of humanity-it goes to humanity itself.

More than four years ago in accepting the Democratic nomination in Chicago, I said: "Give me your help not to win votes alone, but to win in this crusade to restore America to its own people."

The banners of that crusade still fly in the van of a Nation that is on the march....

For nearly four years you have had an Administration which instead of twirling its thumbs has rolled up its sleeves. We will keep our sleeves rolled up....

We had to struggle with the old enemies of peace—business and financial monopoly, speculation, reckless banking, class antagonism, sectionalism, war profiteering...

Here is an amazing paradox! The very employers and politicians and publishers who talk most loudly of class antagonism and the destruction of the American system now undermine that system by this attempt to coerce the votes of the wage earners of this country. It is the 1936 version of the old threat to close down the factory or the office if a particular candidate does not win. It is an old strategy of tyrants to delude their victims into fighting their battles for them.

Every message in a pay envelope, even if it is the truth, is a command to vote according to the will of the employer. But this propaganda is worse—it is deceit.

They tell the worker his wage will be reduced by a contribution to some vague form of old-age insurance. They carefully conceal from him the fact that for every dollar of premium he pays for that insurance, the employer pays another dollar. That omission is deceit.

They carefully conceal from him the fact that under the federal law, he receives another insurance policy to help him if he loses his job, and that the premium of that policy is paid 100 percent by the employer and not one cent by the worker. They do not tell him that the insurance policy that is bought for him is far more favorable to him than any policy that any private insurance company could afford to issue. That omission is deceit.

They imply to him that he pays all the cost of both forms of insurance. They carefully conceal from him the fact that for every dollar put up by him his employer puts up three dollars—three for one. And that omission is deceit...

It is because I have sought to think in terms of the whole Nation that I am confident that today, just as four years ago, the people want more than promises.

Our vision for the future contains more than promises.





This is our answer to those who, silent about their own plans, ask us to state our objectives.

Of course we will continue to seek to improve working conditions for the workers of America—to reduce hours over-long, to increase wages that spell starvation, to end the labor of children, to wipe out sweatshops. Of course we will continue every effort to end monopoly in business, to support collective bargaining, to stop unfair competition, to abolish dishonorable trade practices. For all these we have only just begun to fight.

Of course we will continue to work for cheaper electricity in the homes and on the farms of America, for better and cheaper transportation, for low interest rates, for sounder home financing, for better banking, for the regulation of security issues, for reciprocal trade among nations, for the wiping out of slums. For all these we have only just begun to fight.

Primary Source Questions:

Reading the transcript of this radio address and other primary sources presents an excellent opportunity to analyze how historical events are recorded and what we can learn from these documents. The questions below provide a guide for thinking about Roosevelt's speech and primary source documents in a variety of formats. Students will want to consider how the New Deal relates to the Labor Day celebrations of today.

- 1. Primary sources are eyewitness or first-hand accounts of events in written or other form; a primary source records an event as it occurred or is a documentation of an event from someone who witnessed or experienced it as it occurred. These sources are distinct from secondary sources, which are documents that are not original or first-hand accounts but which build upon primary sources to provide more context and analysis. Examples of primary sources: government documents, speeches (audio or in transcription), journals, photographs, and creative works such as art and music pieces. Examples of secondary sources: text books, reviews, encyclopedia entries, and newspaper articles which are published long after an event. Can you think of other examples of each kind of source?
- 2. Interpreting primary sources properly requires understanding the "historical context" or background to a document or event which shaped its creation and content. In order to more fully analyze and make sense of primary sources it is helpful to research the circumstances surrounding its historical moment. In analyzing the New Deal, for example, you would want to know what else was going on in the U.S. history during that time. After reading the above passage, research the events leading up to the radio address. What were the New Deal developments which led up to this speech? If this speech was the introduction of the second phase of the New Deal, what happened during the first? (Hint: The History Channel program *The Depression* is a great resource for understanding the political context behind the New Deal.)
- 3. How would this speech be experienced differently if you heard it rather than read it? What other kinds of sources could you consult in order to learn about the history of the New Deal?





- 4. Roosevelt's radio addresses were very popular with the American people, and his voice has been characterized as soothing and powerful. How do you think someone's voice influences the way the listener experiences hearing the words spoken?
- 5. In this speech, Roosevelt seems to be defending himself. Who is he responding to? (Hint: you may want to read the background information on this source available at www.ourdocuments.gov).
- 6. What kinds of changes does Roosevelt propose in order to give American workers a better quality of life both on the job and generally?
- 7. Who does Roosevelt identify as the foes of American working people?
- 8. How does this speech and the New Deal relate to Labor Day?
- 9. Who do you think was Roosevelt's intended audience for this speech? Was he connecting these ideas to a campaign for re-election?
- 10. How has the availability of digital sources changed the collection and maintenance of primary sources?

Web Resources:

The Education World web site has great background information on Labor Day and ideas for activities:

http://www.education-world.com/a sites/sites045.shtml

An excellent website with activities for younger students:

http://www.jeannepasero.com/ldaykids.html

This site includes a wealth of information on child labor in the U.S.:

http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/childlabor/index.html

The American Social History Project includes background information and links on U.S. labor history:

http://www.ashp.cuny.edu/

Fun and education craft activities related to the Labor Day holiday:

http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/laborday/

Books:

Blau, Francine, et al. *The Economics of Women, Men, and Work (4th Edition)*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001.

Clark, Christopher, et al. *Who Built America: Working People and the Nation's Economy, Politics, Culture, and Society,* New York: Worth Publishers, 2000.

Deitch, Joanne Weisman. *The Lowell Mill Girls: Life in the Factory (Perspectives of History Series)*, Discovery Enterprises, 1998.

Sinclair, Upton. *The Jungle*, New York: Modern Library, 2002.

Terkel, Studs. Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do, New York: New Press, 2004.

Trachtenberg, Alan, et al. *America and Lewis Hine: Photographs, 1904-1940*, Aperture Publications, 1997.



