

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



# Labor Day

Today, we're going to talk about Labor Day and labor unions...in just a minute.

During the Industrial Revolution, new machines changed the American economy forever. By the early 1800s, manufacturing had become centralized in large factories with hundreds of workers.

At this time, working in a factory was difficult and dangerous. Employees worked for long hours and received little pay in return. With virtually no laws in place to protect them, many workers suffered injuries or died due to fires or machinery accidents. And forget about taking a vacation or even a sick day — policies like that simply didn't exist.

In response, workers banded together against their abusive employers to advocate for better treatment. They organized strikes, work stoppages, and protests to attract public attention and force negotiations. These unions helped laborers win higher wages, improve working conditions, and enact laws to ban child labor and protect workers' civil rights, among many other achievements.

On September 5, 1882, more than 10,000 workers took to the streets of New York City for a parade in honor of the very first Labor Day celebration. In 1894, the federal government made Labor Day a national holiday — one we still observe on the first Monday of September.

Why do you think it's important to celebrate the history and achievements of American workers?