

Cal Learns About Labor Day

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It was the Friday before a long weekend, and Cal's teacher, Mrs. Carter, wrote **LABOR DAY** on the board in big red letters.

"Who knows why we have Monday off?" she asked with a smile.

A few hands shot up.

"It's the last big weekend of summer!" said Jordan.

"My family is going camping," added Emma.

"Isn't it for barbecues?" guessed Cal.

Mrs. Carter chuckled. "Those are great ways to celebrate, but Labor Day has a much deeper history."

She held up an old black-and-white photo of people marching down a busy street. They carried signs that read '**Fair Pay**' and '**Safe Conditions.**'

"Over a hundred years ago," Mrs. Carter explained, "workers in the United States had very tough jobs. Many worked six or even seven days a week, often more than 12 hours a day. Children had to work, too, and conditions in factories could be unsafe."

The class gasped. "Even kids had to work?" asked Cal.

"Yes," Mrs. Carter nodded. "So, workers decided they needed to stand together. They formed groups called *labor unions* to ask for fair wages, shorter hours, and safer workplaces. In 1882, in New York City, the very first **Labor Day parade** was held. Thousands of workers marched to show the importance of their work and to honor the strength of working people."

Cal leaned forward. "So, the holiday is really about all workers?"

"Exactly," Mrs. Carter said. "It became a national holiday in 1894. Today, it reminds us to appreciate the people who keep our country running—teachers, builders, doctors, farmers, mail carriers, and so many others."

Emma raised her hand. "So when we celebrate Labor Day, it's not just a day off. It's a way to thank everyone who works hard?"

"Right," said Mrs. Carter. "It's a day to recognize the dignity of work, the value of rest, and the progress people made by standing together."

Cal thought about his mom, who worked at the hospital, and his dad, who delivered packages. "I guess Labor Day is kind of for my parents, too," he said proudly.

Mrs. Carter smiled. "Yes, Cal. It's for all of us."

The bell rang, and the students packed their bags. As Cal walked home, he felt excited for the long weekend—but even more, he felt thankful for all the workers whose efforts made everyday life possible.

Labor Day - Writing Prompt

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Think about the story of Labor Day and why it is celebrated.

1. Choose one type of worker (like a teacher, doctor, farmer, firefighter, nurse, construction worker, mail carrier, or someone in your family).
2. Write a short paragraph about why their work is important.
3. Imagine you could make a special *thank-you card* for that worker. What would you write inside it?

Extra Challenge: If you were in the very first Labor Day parade in 1882, what kind of sign would you carry? What message would you want people to see?

