

Grades K-5
Mini-Lesson: “What is Labor Day?”

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

VIDEO 1

Hey, it's Danni! Ever since I was six years old, I knew I wanted to study the ocean. And in college, that's exactly what I did. But then, I faced a big decision. What kind of job would I do? You see, people who study the ocean have all kinds of jobs. Some take care of injured animals. Some use robots to explore deep ocean trenches. Others test water samples and work with cities to keep beaches clean and healthy. I chose a job that helps me connect with people around the world on ways we can protect the ocean. I use social media, TV shows, and videos like this to share information and get even more people involved. I'm a science communicator. That's my job, and I love it. Someone named Lily is curious about a holiday that has something to do with jobs. Let's give Lily a call now.

[Video Call]

- Hi, Danni.
- Hi, Lily.
- I have a question for you. What is Labor Day?
- That's a great question.

Labor Day is a US holiday on the first Monday in September. If you've heard of it before, you might be wondering what a holiday has to do with jobs. Well, the word labor is another way of saying work. So Labor Day is like saying work day. It's a holiday to celebrate workers, and it's a

day to think about all the different jobs people do. Before I go on, I'm curious how many jobs you can think of.

VIDEO 2

I'm not sure how you answered. After all, there are so many different jobs, everything from air traffic controllers to zookeepers. For instance, think about all the jobs at a school. There might be music teachers, custodians, and lunchroom cooks, just to name a few. At your school, there are probably people whose jobs help you every day, like maybe crossing guards and classroom teachers. Other people do jobs you might not see every day. Maybe your school has a nurse who helps kids when they feel sick or an IT specialist who sets up school computers or drivers who deliver school supplies. You might never get to meet these people, but their work helps you too. A school depends on lots of jobs, ones you see and ones you don't. Now back in the eighteen eighties, more than one hundred and forty years ago, some people wanted to get folks thinking about the many jobs that cities depend on and show appreciation and respect for workers. They needed a way to spread the word, but there was no social media or TV yet. They didn't have the same tools we use today to share information with lots of people. Instead, they decided to hold a public event, something big and eye catching that would attract lots of people. So they organized a parade. Maybe you've seen a parade before with people marching down the street. Maybe there were bands playing music and brightly decorated floats. The parade in this drawing might look a bit different, but there is a band playing music. And behind that are hundreds of marching workers. See how far that parade stretches down the street? And check out all the people who came to watch. A parade was a great way to get lots of people's attention. This parade was one of the first held by workers in New York City, and workers in other cities held parades too. The workers in parades often had signs that said there are

different jobs, like these shipsmiths who made metal parts for boats and these typographers who helped print newspapers. These workers are carrying a giant loaf of bread. Maybe you can guess what they do. They're bakers. By parading down the street, workers could remind everyone about the many jobs their city depends on and celebrate the real people who do those jobs. The parades were about work or labor. Remember that word? And labor parades led to the creation of Labor Day, which became an official US holiday in 1894. But labor parades weren't just for celebrating. Workers also marched with signs like this one. It says, eight hours to constitute a day's work. Basically, it means that a work day should be short enough to leave time for other activities like rest and being with friends and family. Long workdays was one of the issues workers highlighted at parades. And by calling attention to problems, they helped to create new laws over the years that made jobs safer and more fair, something we're still working on today. So in summary, Labor Day is a US holiday in September that celebrates workers in all kinds of jobs. It was inspired by labor parades, which were organized to show appreciation for the people behind the many jobs that cities depend on and to speak out about problems that workers face. Labor Day is a great day to thank someone for the work they do. Every place you go, whether it's school or the grocery store or the doctor's office, there are people whose jobs help you. You might not meet the person behind each job, but their work is a part of your life. Labor Day is also a great opportunity to learn more about people's jobs. Who knows? You might discover jobs that you'd like to do someday. That's all for this week's question. Thanks, Lily, for asking it.