



# LABOR DAY

Lesson Plan for Museum Educators

*Raising Citizens*—a partnership between Freedom's Feast and the Children's Museum of Manhattan

# Program Overview

- Children will discover the significance of Labor Day and the role unions played to protect the individual rights of workers and children. Children celebrate American workers and their contributions to our nation as they create collages featuring workers in their own neighborhoods.
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- Theme: Community Workers
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- Ages: 5 - 10
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- Workshop Length: 45- 60 minutes

# Introductory Information

- Labor Day, the first Monday in September, is a yearly national tribute to the contributions workers have made to the strength and prosperity of our country. The first Labor Day parade in New York City was held on September 5, 1882. Ten thousand workers gathered to demand fair wages, safe working environments, and that children should not be forced to work. Unions were created to protect individual workers' rights to organize.
- Prior to laws being passed, adult and children laborers typically worked 68-72 hours a week. Most worked in dangerous conditions and were not allowed to take days off due to illness.
- In 1938, Congress passed a law to set a work week of 40 hours, with a minimum wage of 40 cents per hour. It prohibited child labor under the age of 16 while allowing minors 16 and over to work in non-hazardous occupations.

# Background Resources

- Freedom's Feast: online resources to get the most out of your American holiday celebrations  
<http://freedomfeast.us/memorial-day/index.html>
- The History of Labor Day  
<http://www.dol.gov/opa/aboutdol/laborday.htm>
- The History of Child Labor in America  
<http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/childlabor/about.htm>

# Images for Discussion



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# Questions for Dialogue

- Do you know what holiday we are celebrating?
- Why is it important to celebrate this day?
- Can you imagine having to work a 12 hour day at your age without a break and hardly anything to eat?
- How old do you have to be to work now? Why?
- Where do you see people working in your neighborhood?
- Which places in your neighborhood do you think are important? Do you know who works there?
- Who do you think takes away garbage? Who works in our hospitals? Who teaches in your school? Who makes sure that we are all safe?
- Is there a worker in your neighborhood that you would like to thank?

# Hands-on Activity

- **Hands-on Activity:** Workers in My Community Collage
- Children think about different workers who help to keep their communities thriving (bus drivers, doctors, nurses, police, teachers, etc.) and create a collage on an illustrated neighborhood template with colored markers and paper cut-out workers. An optional activity encourages children to deliver a thank you note to a neighborhood worker.
- **Materials:** Workers in My Community template, illustrated workers and neighborhood places, glue sticks, colored markers, crayons, pencils.

# Hands-on Activity Steps

- **Step 1** Show cut-out illustrations of various professionals and typical buildings (schools, stores, post office, etc. See attached.
- **Step 2** Brainstorm with children about the different locations these professionals may work
- **Step 3** Pass out the “Workers In My Community” worksheet
- **Step 4** Children can glue illustrations of different workers and buildings on their Community worksheet and or can use markers to draw their own buildings and workers.
- **Step 5** Have children share their artworks with each other.

# Credits

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<http://www.news.cherryhillseminary.org/2011/09/laborday/new-york-construction-workers-lunching-on-a-crossbeam/>
- Photos of the march and child labor courtesy of the Library of Congress.  
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/search/?q=Union%20protests>