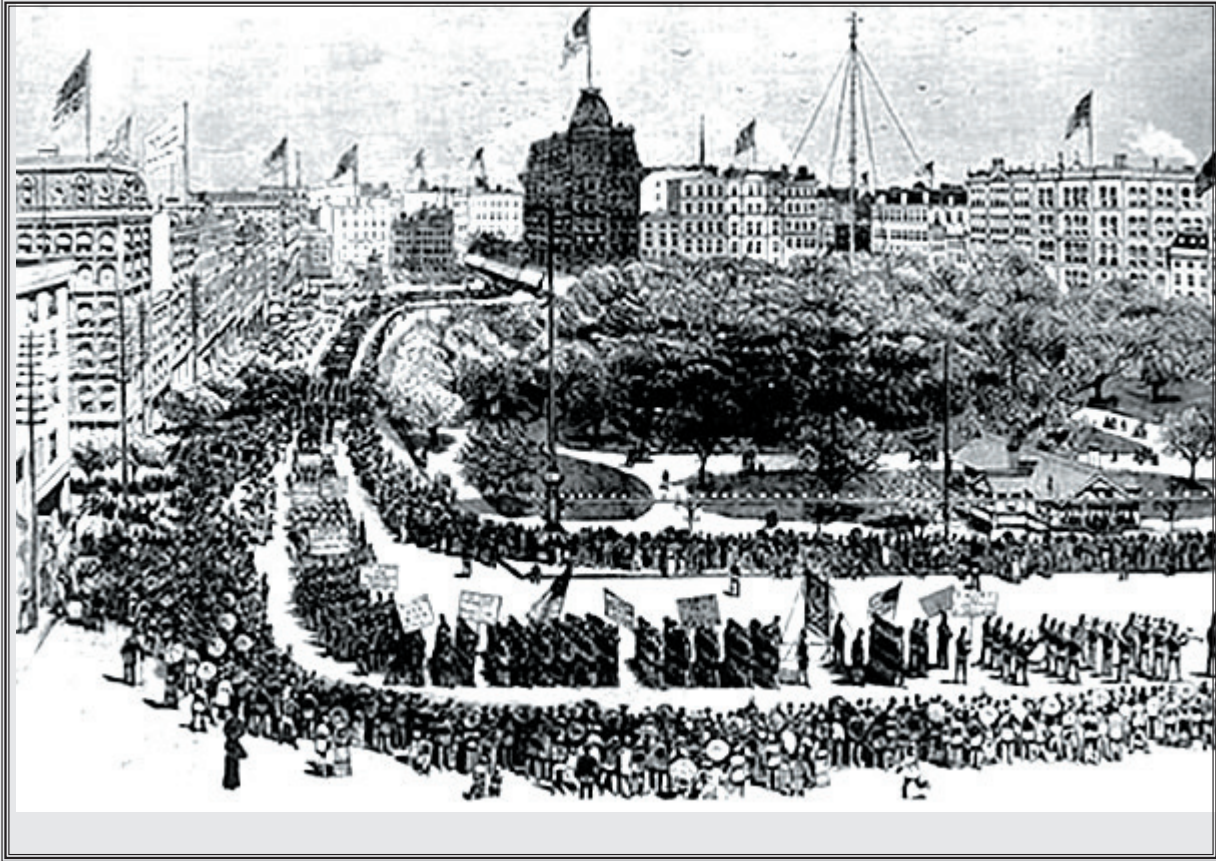


Lesson Guide

“A Short History of American Labor”



In 1882, over 30,000 workers march in New York City's Union Square in what would become known as the first Labor Day parade.



Prepared by:
PAUL F. COLE
Executive Director
American Labor Studies Center

For More Information: www.labor-studies.org

This guide has been prepared for use with “*A Short History of American Labor*,” a reprint from the March 1981 *AFL-CIO AMERICAN FEDERATIONIST*, AFL-CIO, 815 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20006. The guide reflects labor history only up to that date.

The article can be used to supplement textbooks or other classroom materials in units relating to the study of labor’s role in American history.

This guide includes goals, objectives, key concepts, terms, people, events, and legislation found in the article. Also included is a list of questions for inquiry and discussion about material contained in the article.

GOALS

1. To develop an understanding and appreciation of the historic struggle of American workers to organize unions, bargain collectively and pass laws beneficial to the interests of all workers.
2. To develop an appreciation for the dignity and worth of the individual.
3. To develop an appreciation for the intelligent and responsible sharing of power in order to attain justice.
4. To develop a respect for individuals to widen and deepen their ability to live more richly.

OBJECTIVES

Given relevant facts about the history of the American labor movement contained in the article *A Short History of American Labor*, the student will be able to:

1. **TRACE** the early steps of American workers to form unions.
2. **DESCRIBE** the response employers had to the efforts of workers to unionize throughout American history and **STATE** a hypothesis with respect to that response.
3. **COMPARE** and **CONTRAST** the structure, goals, and activities of the Knights of Labor, American Federation of Labor, the Industrial Workers of the World, and the Congress of Industrial Organizations.
4. **DESCRIBE** the role the three branches of American government played during labor-management conflicts throughout American history and **STATE** a hypothesis with respect to that role.
5. **DEFINE** the key terms contained in the article.
6. **IDENTIFY** the key people in the article and **STATE** the contributions of each.
7. **IDENTIFY** the key legislation referred to in the article and **EXPLAIN** the significance of each law.
8. **IDENTIFY** the major labor—management conflicts referred to in the article and **COMPARE** the elements they have in common and those unique to each.
9. **LIST** the major legislative goals of the American labor movement and **EXPLAIN** the purpose of each.
10. **IDENTIFY** and **CONTRAST** those factors that have retarded the development of the American labor movement.

11. **IDENTIFY** and **CONTRAST** those factors that have promoted the development of the American labor movement.
12. **STATE** the goals of the American labor movement regarding the development and growth of free unions throughout the world.
13. **STATE** a hypothesis about the future of the American labor movement.

KEY CONCEPTS

Unity, struggle, organizing, bargaining, movement, representation, autonomy, power, violence, conflict, jurisdiction, workforce, weapon, compensation, discrimination, conspiracy, and merger.

KEY TERMS

Union, collective bargaining, grievance, arbitration, “blue collar,” “white collar,” “grey collar,” representation election, “new right,” guilds, strike, federation, child labor, apprentice system, skilled trades, affiliated union, union-busting, injunction, “unfair list,” secondary boycott, “informational picketing,” feminist movement, sweatshop, company-union, open-shop, American Plan, strikebreaking, blacklisting, vigilantism, “yellow-dog contract,” industrial union, craft union, social security, unemployment compensation, workers’ compensation, minimum wage, “right-to-work,” consumer protection, and “People’s Lobby.”

KEY PEOPLE

Samuel Gompers, Peter J. McGuire, Henry C. Frick, Eugene V. Debs, Frances Perkins, William Green, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Robert F. Wagner, John L. Lewis, Philip Murray, Walter Reuther, George Meany, A. Philip Randolph, Lane Kirkland, and Thomas Donohue.

KEY EVENTS

The Haymarket Square Incident, Homestead Strike, Pullman Strike, 1902 Coal Strike, “The Uprising of the Twenty Thousand,” The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, The Lawrence Strike, Steel Strike of 1919, and the AFL-CIO merger.

KEY LEGISLATION

Sherman Anti-trust Act, Adamson Act, Clayton Act, Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, Wagner Act, Taft-Hartley Act, Landrum-Griffin Act, Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970.

QUESTIONS FOR INQUIRY AND DISCUSSION

1. What workers formed the earliest unions and why did they form them?
2. How did the Knights of Labor, American Federation of Labor, the Industrial Workers of the World, and the Congress of Industrial Organizations differ? How were they similar?
3. What was the Haymarket Square Incident? What effect did it have on the labor movement at the time?
4. How were the Homestead Strike, the Pullman Strike and the Lawrence Strike similar? How did they differ?
5. What weapons have historically been used by management? by labor? Are there any you consider unfair or ineffective? Why?
6. What role did women play in the labor movement in the early 1900s?
7. What legislative goals has the labor movement historically fought for? How successful have they been? Who has benefited from their legislative victories? Why is the AFL-CIO called the “People’s Lobby?”
8. What gains did the labor movement make during the 1930s? Why?
9. What factors led to the merger of the AFL and CIO in 1955?
10. What is COPE? What are its goals?
11. What role did the AFL-CIO play in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964? What does this tell you about the goals of the AFL-CIO?
12. What are some of the current issues facing organized labor?
13. State a generalization about the history of the American labor movement for each of the following areas:
 - A. Employers’ response to unionism
 - B. Role of the government during labor-management conflicts
 - C. Labor’s legislative goals