

Directions: Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow.

## The History of Labor Day

Have you ever wondered how Labor Day started? It all began with a strike in a community called Pullman, Illinois. The town had been built by George Pullman in 1880 to house the workers at his company that built railroad cars. Pullman, on the southern border of Chicago, was a fairly nice place to live.

In 1893, things changed in Pullman. George Pullman's business was not doing well because he did not have enough orders for railroad cars. Pullman had to dismiss hundreds of workers, and the workers who remained had to take salary cuts of 25 percent or more. Pullman did not lower rents on the houses, though, and he would not let his workers move somewhere else. People worked for less money, but they had to pay the same rent. The workers knew this was not fair, so they walked out on their jobs. They went on strike.

People all over the country heard about the strike. Many people were angry about the way the workers were treated. The workers at Pullman had recently become part of a union, and railroad workers across the country joined the Pullman strike. It was the first nationwide strike in America. President Grover Cleveland sent in troops to break up the strike, and there was violence.

Workers in Pullman and in many other parts of the country had been asking for several years for a special day to honor workers. In 1893, many of them were particularly angry with Grover Cleveland because of the action he had taken against the strikers. President Cleveland was up for re-election, and the strikes were making him look bad. To show that he cared about the workers' situation and to receive the workers' votes, Cleveland signed a bill to make Labor Day a national holiday to honor American workers. People in New York City held parades that were similar to the protest marches held by union workers.

Labor Day in the United States is celebrated on the first Monday in September. Many people do not have to go to work on Labor Day, and students do not have to be in school. People march in parades and enjoy picnics with families and friends. Nowadays, though, many people celebrate Labor Day for a different reason. They regard Labor Day as the last weekend of the summer.

- 4 Explain how some of George Pullman's actions were unfair? Use details from the passage to support your answer.

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- 5 Why did George Pullman cut his workers' salaries in 1893?
- A He was unhappy with their work.
  - B He wanted to keep them from striking.
  - C His railroad car business was not doing well.
  - D He wanted them to organize the first Labor Day.
- 6 Which of the following is the BEST summary of the passage?
- A Labor Day exists because of the Pullman railroad workers' strike. The strike, over high rents and no jobs, was broken up violently by soldiers sent by President Grover Cleveland. To regain workers' support, Cleveland agreed to a holiday to honor them, a holiday still celebrated today.
  - B The Pullman railroad workers lived in a small town on the southern edge of Chicago. Their houses had been built by George Pullman. They had a strike, and people all over the country heard about it.
  - C People still celebrate Labor Day today. They have picnics and parades, and they don't go to work. Labor Day is the first Monday in September. We have Labor Day because in 1893 some workers had a strike.
  - D The Pullman strike was the first nationwide strike. The Pullman workers were railroad workers. They lived in a town that George Pullman had built for them. President Grover Cleveland sent in troops to break up the strike.
- 7 Which detail supports the idea that President Cleveland wanted to show that he cared about workers?
- A . . . Cleveland signed a bill to make Labor Day a national holiday to honor American workers.
  - B President Cleveland was up for re-election . . .
  - C . . . the strikes were making him look bad.
  - D Labor Day in the United States is celebrated on the first Monday in September.