From Workers to Westminster

Trace how the Labour Party's priorities shaped British government

TOT.C.2.1.C "United Kingdom's Labour Party."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB As you read, underline two reasons the Labour Party formed, circle two policies it put into action, and number two ways its approach changed over time. These marks will help you trace the party's priorities from its beginnings to recent elections.

What Has Labour Stood For?

1. In 1900, trade unions and socialist groups helped form the Labour Representation Committee, which became the Labour Party in 1906. Many workers felt that the existing political parties did not speak for them. Trade unions wanted members of Parliament who would defend workers' interests, including safer conditions and fairer pay. Labour's early aim was to give working people a stronger voice in decisions made at Westminster. Winning that voice took time: Britain did not elect its first Labour government until 1924. That government lasted only months, but it showed that a party founded to represent workers could lead the country.

2. A turning point came after World War II. In the 1945 election, Labour won a large majority in the House of Commons. Its leader, Clement Attlee, became prime minister. His government argued that the state should do more to protect people from hardship. It created the National Health Service, which began providing health care in 1948, and expanded social insurance to help people facing unemployment or illness. The government also brought several major industries into public ownership. These choices reflected a belief that public action could make essential services more secure and reduce inequality.

3. Labour has not followed one fixed plan. Under Tony Blair, who became prime minister in 1997, the party placed less emphasis on public ownership and accepted a larger role for private businesses. It still supported public services, including schools and the National Health Service. Labour lost power in 2010, then won a large majority in the 2024 general election, making Keir Starmer prime minister. During that campaign, Labour promised to reduce National Health Service waiting times and support clean energy. Across these changes, a continuing question has been how government can improve life for working people.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What problem led trade unions and socialist groups to form the party that became Labour? Use two details from the first paragraph.

2. How did two actions of Attlee's government put its belief about the state into practice?

3. How did Labour's approach to public ownership change under Tony Blair, and what priority continued?

4. What connection can you draw between Labour's 1945 actions and one promise from its 2024 campaign? Support your answer with details from both periods.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are drafting a proposal for a Labour candidate. In 70 to 100 words, propose one action on an issue not named in the passage, explain how it reflects a Labour priority described there, and identify one way your proposal differs from a historical Labour policy in the passage.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · TOT.C.2.1.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

As you read, underline two reasons the Labour Party formed, circle two policies it put into action, and number two ways its approach changed over time. These marks will help you trace the party's priorities from its beginnings to recent elections. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What problem led trade unions and socialist groups to form the party that became Labour? Use two details from the first paragraph.	**Many workers felt existing parties did not speak for them. Trade unions wanted members of Parliament to defend workers' interests, such as safer conditions and fairer pay.**
2	How did two actions of Attlee's government put its belief about the state into practice?	**Creating the National Health Service made health care available as a public service. Expanding social insurance helped protect people facing unemployment or illness.**
3	How did Labour's approach to public ownership change under Tony Blair, and what priority continued?	**Labour placed less emphasis on public ownership and accepted a larger role for private businesses, while continuing to support public services.**
4	What connection can you draw between Labour's 1945 actions and one promise from its 2024 campaign? Support your answer with details from both periods.	**Attlee's government created the National Health Service, and Labour's 2024 campaign promised to reduce waiting times for that service. Both show a commitment to public health care.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would propose funding more frequent buses on routes that connect neighborhoods to workplaces. Reliable buses could help workers reach jobs without paying for a car. The plan reflects Labour's long-standing concern for working people and its belief that government action can improve access to essential services. It differs from Attlee's creation of the National Health Service because it focuses on transportation rather than health care. A candidate would still need to explain how the bus service would be paid for.

For question 2, accept any two accurate actions by Attlee's government with an explanation of how they show public action against hardship. For the open task, accept a plausible new proposal that connects to a priority in the passage and accurately distinguishes itself from a historical policy.