

Present Perfect: A Little History of Work

**READING
TEXT**

Most of us work. For some people, work is a pleasure. Some people even work for free as volunteers. But the majority of us work because we have to. This has always been true. In this text, you will read about the work lives of two people; one in the past and one now.

WORKER

1

LUCY

Our first worker lived in East Africa 15,000 years ago. Because she lived before the invention of written language we do not know her name, so we will call her Lucy. She was a twenty-five year old woman, a mother of three and a member of a group of hunter-gatherers who lived by finding and eating whatever food they could find.

HOUSING

Lucy’s house was a lean-to made of sticks. A lean-to is a simple shelter made by putting two sticks vertically into the ground a few feet apart, then by placing a long stick horizontally sitting on the top of the vertical sticks, and by laying sticks or large leaves from the horizontal stick to the ground on an angle, to form a roof. A lean-to is not a first-rate house, but it is easy to make and went well with the nomadic lifestyle of Lucy’s people.

**COMMUTE
(trip to work)**

Lucy’s job was to find food. She left her children with the older group members when she went to work - an early form of day care. Her trip to work and her work were one and the same, as she started looking for wild fruit, nuts, seeds and easy-to-kill animals.

DAILY LIFE

Lucy worked hard, but she had a surprisingly irregular schedule. There were about sixty people in Lucy’s group, but there was no official leader or boss. Rather, the adults in the group met every evening to discuss what had to be done, and to plan the work schedule. Like most pre-industrial boss-free people, Lucy and her hunter-gatherers would work hard for up to ten or eleven days; but once they had gathered a small surplus of food they would feast, party and relax for four or five days before they started working again.

**WORKING
CONDITIONS**

Lucy lived in a hot, dry climate. She lived and worked outside, and although the sun was strong, this was the climate that our bodies were designed for.

PAY

There was no cash, as far as we can tell. Lucy’s group shared everything they had and there were no stores to shop in or rent or mortgage to pay. Lucy’s pay was her food, her shelter, and perhaps most important, the support and love of her group.

BOSS

There were no bosses as such, but the group’s commercial decisions had to be obeyed. Every member of the group was, in a sense, both a boss and an employer.

WORKER	2	JENNIFER HAY
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Jennifer Hay is thirty years old. She is a typical urban dweller. She takes full advantage of the urban lifestyle. She enjoys the restaurants, theatres and concerts that a big city can offer.

- HOUSING** Jennifer lives on her own in a small one room condominium in the downtown area of a Canadian city. Her condo has a fitness centre and a pool. It has a rooftop garden where Jennifer goes to sun bathe in the summer. The condo also has a party room. Jennifer has a Christmas party there every year. Because the condominium is downtown, Jennifer can walk everywhere. She walks to the bookstore, movie theatre and grocery store. While her condominium is small, she doesn't mind because everything is so convenient.
- COMMUTE (trip to work)** Jennifer walks to work. She deliberately chose to live downtown so that she would not need to own a car. If she has to go somewhere that takes more than an hour to walk she uses public transportation—the subway, bus or train.
- DAILY LIFE** She works long hours every day. But then she takes four weeks of vacation each year. Even when she is working she finds time to go to the gym three times a week. She also visits with friends on the weekends.
- WORKING CONDITIONS** Jennifer works as a consultant. She takes on different projects for technology companies. Jennifer has to visit customers, so she travels about two weeks every month. She travels to major American cities like New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Vancouver and Calgary. When she is not traveling, Jennifer works from home. Her home office has a computer, printer, scanner, fax and telephone.
- PAY** Jennifer is self-employed. She gets paid when the projects are completed. So she has to be careful with her money. But with careful budgeting she can pay herself enough to have a comfortable middle-class lifestyle. She does not want to be rich. She thinks that would be too much trouble.
- BOSS** Jennifer is her own boss. Some days she thinks she is a good boss. Other days she is not so sure. But she enjoys the independence of running her own company. In a few years she wants to have three employees working for her. Then she will need to rent some office space instead of working from home.

Write a sentence with each of the following words and expressions.

- 1. **HUNTER-GATHERER** _____
- 2. **A LEAN-TO** _____
- 3. **VERTICALLY** _____

Intermediate 3 – Reading Exercise 2 – Present Perfect: A Little History of Work

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| 4. | HORIZONTAL | _____ |
| 5. | COMMUTE | _____ |
| 6. | FIRST-RATE | _____ |
| 7. | SURPLUS | _____ |
| 8. | MORTGAGE | _____ |
| 9. | SHELTER | _____ |
| 10. | EMPLOYER | _____ |
| 11. | URBAN | _____ |
| 12. | CONDOMINIUM | _____ |
| 13. | DELIBERATELY | _____ |
| 14. | CONSULTANT | _____ |

Answer the following questions.

1. How has housing changed from the past to now?
2. How has commuting changed from the past to now?
3. How has daily life changed from the past to now?
4. How have working conditions changed from the past to now?