

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Intractability and Labor Conflicts

An intractable conflict is one that is complex and entrenched. As a result, a thirty-second sound bite will not explain an intractable conflict adequately. Cate Malek’s article about labor conflicts is a long one because she examines the underlying issues as well as the disputes that create this intractable conflict.

Use a dictionary to define the following in the context of labor relations:

1. Strike (noun)

2. Picket (verb)

3. What were the costs of the California supermarket strike of 2003?

a. For the grocery workers:

b. For the Supermarket chains:

4. In your own words, define the word *tumultuous*.

5. Why is there a debate over “efficiency and exploitation” in labor conflicts? Who wants what and why?

6. What outside party has helped address these disputes between workers and employers?

Describe four laws that protect the rights of workers.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11. Explain two reasons why labor problems are escalating (getting bigger).

a.
b.
12. What are unions and why does Wal-Mart seem to want to avoid them?
13. In 2003, why did some people feel that Wal-Mart was not supporting its workers?
14. How did Wal-Mart's healthcare policy affect other supermarket healthcare policies?
15. Why were supermarket workers in Colorado considering striking?
Malek writes that a strike is not an optimal (ideal) solution. Give two reasons why.
16.
17.
18. Why do supermarkets try to negotiate or wait the strike out rather than give in to the workers demands (Note: "Labor cost" means the amount workers cost employers, including health benefits, salary, etc.)?
19. Why is a stalemate (when neither side seems to be winning over the other) potentially positive?
20. How can costly strikes be prevented?

21. If mediation doesn't work, what can workers do?
22. Why might picketing in front of Wal-Mart, instead of the grocery stores that employ the unhappy employees, help these same employees?
23. Describe how the pressure put on Nike's Indonesian sweatshops is a good illustration of Malek's point (addressed in question 22).
24. What are the underlying conflicts that make labor issues an intractable conflict?
25. What other workers are involved in labor disputes?