

Coal Culture

Lesson Plans

Coal Mining and Coal Towns in Western Pennsylvania

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Grade Level: 7-12

Introduction:

A block of three lessons on mining in Western Pennsylvania that can be taught in a Geography or History class.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- a) Interpret primary source material.
- b) Describe examples of mining equipment and their uses.
- c) Locate on a map various mining communities in southwestern Pennsylvania.
- d) Describe the layout of a typical mining town.
- e) Describe life in a mining town.
- f) Examine how miners' lives were affected by mining companies.

Teaching Time: Three 40-minute periods

Disciplines:

Geography

History

Reading and Writing

Materials:

Day One

- PowerPoint slide show with images of the following on individual slides:

- [surveyor's tool](#)
- [sunshine lamp](#)
- [anemometer](#)
- [blasting cap crimper](#)
- [blasting cap package](#)
- [canary cage](#)
- [miner's lunch pail](#)
- The descriptors will give teacher an idea of the purposes of these tools.
- Map showing coal distribution in Pennsylvania.
<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/topogeo/maps/map11.pdf> This can be put on a PowerPoint slide show or a transparency.
- Sufficient copies of the map on coal distribution for each pair of students in the class.

Days Two and Three

- PowerPoint slide show or transparencies with the following images:
 - Photograph of [Adrian Hospital](#) in the Rochester and Pittsburgh Coal Company mining town of Adrian, north of Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania.
 - [Baseball team](#) in Sagamore, Pennsylvania.
 - Deserted [patch houses](#) in the abandoned coal mining company town of Blacklick, Pennsylvania.
 - [Company house](#) (now private residence) located near United Area, in Climax, Pennsylvania. Patch house originally erected for the use of coal miners working in the Climax Mine.
 - Photograph of [company houses](#) (now private residences) in Clymer, Pennsylvania.
 - Photograph of a [loaded trip](#) leaving #1 Mine Portal in Ernest, PA. In this photograph, the town of Ernest is still under construction, and the fan house and Mule Barn are visible.
 - Rear-view photograph of the [Helvetia Store Building](#) in Helvetia, Pennsylvania in Clearfield County, between Sykesville and Luthersburg. This store was destroyed by fire and rebuilt.
 - Photograph of [Iselin Italian Band](#).
 - Class photograph of the students at the [Bairdstown School](#) in 1910.

- Sufficient copies of the article Eileen Mountjoy Cooper, “Ernest: Life in a Mining Town.”
http://www.lib.iup.edu/depts/speccol/articles/ernest_story.html
- Sufficient copies of Worksheet One for students.
- Sufficient Construction Paper and Color Pencils/Markers (one set for each group of four students)

Information for Teacher

- For information about the formation of coal, the teacher can refer to <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/topogeo/education/coal/es7.pdf>
- For a chronological overview of coal mining, see <http://www.lib.iup.edu/depts/speccol/mininglife/time.html>
- For background information, see http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/nero/coal.pdf

Day 1 Procedure:

Introductory Activity

- Project images of mining equipment onto a screen. Or distribute handouts with pictures of mining equipment.
- Have students volunteer to identify these items and encourage students to speculate on their uses.

Instructional Input and Student Activity

- Project a map showing coal distribution in Pennsylvania:
<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/topogeo/maps/map11.pdf>
- Prompt students to discuss the distribution of coal.
- Discuss with class the presence of bituminous coal in the west and anthracite in the east. Explain the differences between the two.
- Introduce the topic of bituminous coal mining as an important economic activity in southwestern PA and the emergence of numerous coal towns in the region.

Student Activity

- Provide each pair of students with a copy of the map showing coal distribution in PA. Students can replicate the distribution on their blank maps.
- By looking at the map, each pair of students should identify a number of counties in Western PA where coalmining towns emerged.

Conclusion

- Review today's lesson.
- Prepare students for the lessons in the next two days. Get some students to share their thoughts about what life was like in coal mining towns in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Day 2 Procedure:

Instructional Input

- Teacher to project images of mining-related sites onto the screen.
- Teacher will provide information about these images: patch houses, schools, company towns, baseball teams, hospitals.
- Teacher should discuss the extent to which the coal company may have an effect on the lives of its workers.

Student Activity

- Distribute copies of the article, [“Ernest: Life in a Mining Town”](#) to students.
- Students are to read the article individually.
- Put students in pairs to answer questions on Worksheet 1.

Discussion

- Guide students in a discussion of the article.
- Guide students to draw conclusions about what a typical mining town would have looked like.

- Stress the following: ethnic make up of a coal town such as Ernest; typical buildings found in town; hard life of a miner; efforts to improve conditions of work through unionization, common amusements and recreation, including the baseball leagues; lives of children and teenagers; education opportunities for the young.

Conclusion

- Review major points discussed.
- Prepare students for the next day's activity.

Day 3 Procedure:

Student Activity

- Organize students into groups of four.
- Distribute construction paper and colored pencil/markers to each group.
- Each group is to produce a diagram showing the layout for a typical coalmining town in Western Pennsylvania. Each diagram should include a legend.
- Students should use the article that they had read and the notes they had taken the day before as a resource.

Homework

- Each student will work on the following as a homework assignment: "Imagine that you are a child or a teenager in a mining town in Western Pennsylvania in the early 20th century. Write one-page diary entry about a day in your life." You must use at least 6 pieces of historical information that you have learned in your lessons in the last three days.

Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening	History	Geography
1.1.5.G 1.1.8.G 1.1.11.G	8.1.6.A 8.1.9.A 8.1.12.A	7.3.6.C 9.3.6.C
1.2.5.A 1.2.8.A 1.2.11.A	8.1.6.B 8.1.9.B 8.1.12.B	7.3.6.D 9.3.6.D
1.4.5.B 1.4.8.B 1.4.11.B	8.1.6.C 8.1.9.C 8.1.12.C	
1.5.5 1.5.8 1.5.11	8.2.6.C 8.2.9.C 8.2.12.C	
1.6.5.A 1.6.8.A 1.6.11.A		
1.6.5.E 1.6.8.E 1.6.11.E		

Worksheet 1

1. Who came to live and work in Ernest?
2. In what ways did the places of worship reflect the ethnic make up of those who came to Ernest?
3. Why were boarding houses necessary?
4. How would you describe life for a miner?
5. What items did the company store sell?
6. What did townspeople do for amusement and recreation?
7. Describe a life of a child in a mining town such as Ernest.