

Mining - Children in the Mines – A Miner’s Life

Source 1



“I gang at three in the morning, and return about six, it is no very good work, and the sore labour makes me feel very ill and fatigued; it injures my breath. We have no regular meal-times; food is not safe in the pit. The lads and lassies take oat-pieces and bread below; we drink the water sometimes; get other food at home, sometimes broth, potatoes, and herrings...”

from Mr Franks’ report of the Collieries of South Wales, *Children in Mines and Collieries*, 1839, p36

Source 2

“These doors are called trap-doors, and the children so employed trappers...the employment being one of the most monotonous and deadening to all the mental and physical powers of a young child which can well be conceived. The trapper has to sit, often exposed to damp, completely in the dark, and in silence, from the time the coal begins to be brought forward by the drawers till the last whirley has passed, cheered only by the occasional gleam of a lamp from a passing whirley, or a few words from the drawers.”

from Mr Franks’ report of the Collieries of South Wales, *Children in Mines and Collieries*, 1839, p36

Source 3

“The little trapper of eight years of ages lies quiet in bed...It is now between two and three in the morning, and his mother shakes him, and desires him to rise, and tells him that his father has an hour ago gone off to the pit..He turns on his side, rubs his eyes, and gets up, and comes to the blazing fire, and puts on his clothes. His coffee, such as it is, stands by the side of the fire, and bread is laid down for him...He then fills his tin bottle with coffee, and takes a lump of bread, and sets out for the pit, into which he goes down i the cage, and walking along the horseway for upwards of a mile...He knows his place of work. It is inside one of the doors called trap-doors, for the purpose of forcing the stream of air, which passes in its long, many miled course from the down shaft to the up-shaft of the pit; but which door must be opened

whenever men or boys, with or without carriages, may wish to pass through. He seats himself in a little hole, about the size of a common fire-place, and with the string in his hand: and all his work is to pull that string when he has to open the door, and when man or boy has passed through, then to allow the door to shut itself...He may not stir above a dozen steps with safety from his charge, lest he should be found neglecting his duty, and suffer for the same. He sits solitary by himself, and has no one to talk to him;....For he himself has no light. His hours, except at such times, are passed in total darkness. For the first week of his service in the pit his father had allowed him candles to light one after another, but the expense of three halfpence a-day was so extravagant expenditure out of tenpence, the boy's daily wages, that his father, of course, withdrew that allowance the second week, all except one or two candles in the morning, and the week after the allowance was altogether taken away; and now, except a neighbour kinder than his father now and then drop him a candle, as he passes, the boy has no light of his own."

Dr Mitchell's report of the Collieries of South Wales, Children in Mines and Collieries, 1839, p38-39

Source 4

John Hawkins, eight years of age:

"Has worked in Sissons Pit a year and a half; lives a mile from the pit; and goes down from five to nine; that is, the child, eight years old, is employed in the pit at work from five o'clock in the morning to nine at night, a period of sixteen hours."

Mr Leifchild's report of the Collieries of South Wales, Children in Mines and Collieries, 1839, p55

Activities

Having read the sources above carefully:

1. Complete a diary to show a day in the life of a trapper boy.
2. You are a local MP and you wish to introduce a law that will stop children under the age of 10 working in mines.
 - a. Create a slogan, banner/poster and a speech for your campaign.

You may want to use the banner template overleaf in your campaign.

- b. Present your campaign to your class.



