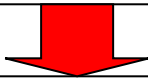




Life in the mines



As ironworks and steam powered machines spread, the demand for coal to power them increased. More mines were opened and deeper shafts were sunk. Deeper mines meant more danger for the miners, above all from water and gas. Many were injured or killed through falling down the mine shaft, drowning when mines flooded, gas explosions or the collapse of the mine.



Working conditions were unhealthy down the pit. Men, women and children worked in cramped, poorly lit, stuffy conditions. Many miners suffered from stunted growth, chest complaints or other ailments. Some even went blind because they were so use to working in darkness all of the time.



Inspectors in the 1830s found pits where boys and girls of four or five sat for hours in the dark, opening and closing trap-doors. Their report shocked the public. People found out what mining was really like. In 1842 parliament passed a law which said that women, girls and boys under ten could not work underground.

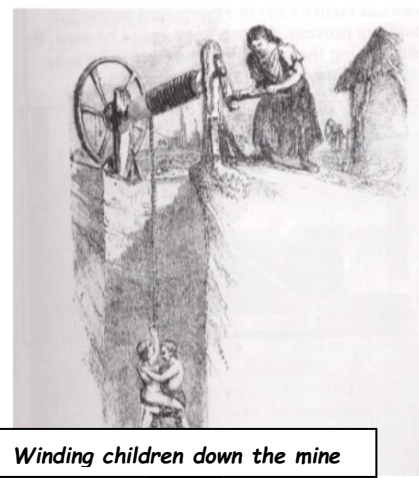


However some people said that nothing was wrong with the conditions in mines and that it was upto the parents to decide where they wanted their children to work. Factory owners saw child labour as necessary.

SOURCES



SOURCE A



Winding children down the mine



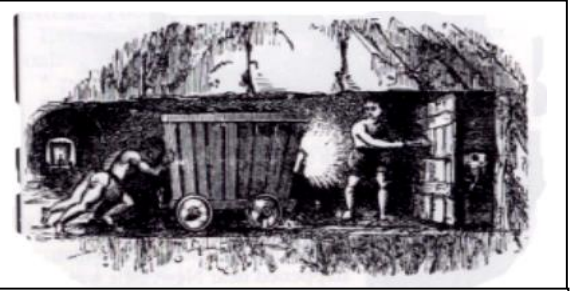
SOURCE B



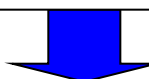
Woman carrying coal



SOURCE C



Children opening trap doors to let the miners push the coal wagons through.



SOURCE D

They are called trappers. They sit in a little hole and open and shut the doors. They are in the pit the whole time it is worked. They sit in the dark, often with a damp floor. Their ages vary from five to ten years'

Extract from Parliamentary investigation into conditions in mines 1842

MORE SOURCES

SOURCE F

The trapper's job is not cheerless or dull, nor is he kept alone and in darkness all the time. The trapper is generally cheerful and contented.

Extract from a petition written in 1842 by the Marquess of Londonderry who owned many coal pits in England.

SOURCE F

I push tubs of coal a mile and more underground. I push eleven a day. The coal workers beat me if I am not quick enough. I am the only girl in the pit. There are about twenty boys and fifteen men. All the men are naked. I would rather work in the mill than in the coal-pit

Patience Kershaw, aged 17, interviewed for the Parliamentary investigation of 1842

SOURCE G

My father and brother work in the coal mine. Our family's large, we have got seven children, so I am obliged to work in the same mine.

Extract from a poem called, 'The Collier Lass'

SOURCE H

'I have visited many industries and never saw a single beating of a child. They seemed to be cheerful and alert, taking great pleasure in the gentle use of their muscles. They showed no signs of being exhausted.'

Andrew Ure, The Philosophy of manufacture, 1835. Ure was a supporter of industry.

Tasks

Read the information and sources and answer the following questions in FULL SENTENCES in your exercise books.

- 1) a) Use the text and the sources to list all of the dangers involved in mining
b) Which do you think was the most dangerous?
c) What kinds of affects could working in the mines have on the miners' health?
- 2) a) Look at sources A-D. Who features in all of these sources?
b) What jobs are they shown doing? Explain
c) Why do you think that mine owners were eager to employ these people?
- 3) a) Why did adults put up with the working conditions in mines?
b) Why did children put up with these working conditions?
(use sources F and G to help you)
- 4) What do you think most shocked people in 1842?
- 5) a) Compare sources D and E. What are the differences between these sources?
b) Why are these sources so different? Explain your answer
- 6) a) What similarities are there between sources E and H?
b) Why are these sources similar?
- 7) Look at source B and F. What do these tell us about life for women in the mines?