**Coal Mining**

Grade Level: Lower and Upper Elementary options

Heritage Farm Museum and Village in Huntington, WV is a Smithsonian-affiliate and has a coal mining interactive exhibit in its Industry Museum. A visit to the Museum would be a wonderful trip for your students but if you cannot, a virtual tour is available.

The video, *Coal Mining Lesson*, is approximately 17 minutes long and is narrated by Teresa Foster, a docent at Heritage Farm Museum and Village, Huntington, WV. The location is the Industry Museum at Heritage Farm Museum and Village where school groups visit the interactive exhibit of a 19th century coal mine.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBtBukRTNv0>

**Grade Level: Early Elementary**

Essential Question:

Describe life for the early coal miners?

What do we want them to know?

What was it like to live in a coal camp?

How did the miners get the coal out of the ground?

Why was a canary in the coal mine?

What did the miner take in his lunch box?

How was the miner paid?

Strategies:

* Have the children to stand and bend over with their hands on their knees. Let them keep that posture as you show them a piece of coal. Pass it around the room so the children can tough it as you explain that coal is one of West Virginia’s natural resources and coal mining has provided jobs for many people over the years. Ask if anyone knows a coal miner or been in a coal mine.

By now the children will most likely be complaining that their back hurts or they need to stand up or sit down. Explain that the early coal miners would have to stay bent over all day when they worked in the mine. Some knelt on their knees or sat on their bottoms while working. No one stood up in the mine.

* Plan a trip to visit Heritage Farm Museum and Village in Huntington, WV or show <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBtBukRTNv0> , Coal Mining Lesson of the exhibit at Heritage Farm Museum and Village.
* Using the “What Do We Want Them to Know” questions review the video with the children.

Assessment: The children will draw a picture of something they saw in the video and write 2-3 sentences about it.

**Grade Level: Upper Elementary**

Essential Question:

What is coal?

What do we want them to know?

* How is coal formed?
* How do we know what is underneath our feet?

Strategies:

* View the 2 min. video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQ_Ethb6_Wk> *How is Coal Formed? Geography for Kids.*
* Coal is formed by plants that died millions of years ago and were buried by layers of dirt and water. Eventually, heat and pressure turn the remains into coal. The following simulation adapted from <http://www.coaleducation.org/lessons/primary/origin/coalform/coalform.h> will increase understanding of coal formation.

Coal Formation Simulation

Time: 3- minutes set-up with 4 week observation time period.

1. Pour 4-6 inches in an aquarium or other container lined with plastic wrap.

2. Evenly spread 2 inches of sand in the container.

3. Drop in small leaves, twigs, ferns, etc. that the students collected. Take a picture of it. Students could write a description of what they did.

4. Let it stand for about 2 weeks and take another picture, noting the changes in coloring and decomposition.

5. Add 2 more inches of sand spread evenly.

6. Wait another 2 weeks. Take another picture. Note the layers. Take out the surface water and allow it to dry for a few weeks. There should be some “fossil” imprints.

* Coal is not everywhere and must be mined out of the ground. How do you know where the coal is?

Cupcake Core Sampling is an activity using cupcakes and plastic straws to model core sampling techniques to find out what sort of layers are in the ground (cupcake). <https://www.womeninmining.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/CUPCAKE-CORE-SAMPLING.pdf>

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Assessment: Students will keep a journal to write what they observe from the coal formation simulation. They will make an entry at the beginning and then every 2 weeks, describing what they did in the process and the observations over each time period.

Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Coal Formation

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Process:  What did we do? | Observations:  What do you see? How has it changed? |
| Beginning date |  |  |
| 2 weeks later  2 weeks later |  |  |
| What have I learned? | | |

**Resources about Coal**

VIDEOS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQ_Ethb6_Wk> *How is Coal Formed? Geography for Kids* Approximately 2 minutes. Summarizes how coal is formed.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEa36qNo86E> *The formation of coal 3D* Approximately 8 minutes. What physical and chemical changes take place to form coal.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ylkdUuNOJzw> *How do they do that? More contemporary look at how coal is mined.* Approximately 6 minutes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-kbt8hheho> *Coal Mining Documentary - The Most Dangerous Job on Earth – Classic History.* Approximately 43 minutes but can be divided into sections. Explores the machinery used in mining, the history of coal, types of coal, types of mining and challenges to the miner’s health and the environment.

*October Sky* – The 1999 documentary is about Homer Hickam, a West Virginia native, who grew up in a coal mining camp but was interested in rocket science. The movie gives insight into the life of a coal miner.

**Lesson Plans & Activities**

<http://www.efmr.org/edu/coal2009.pdf> Lesson plans were designed for upper elementary, middle school and high school.

<http://www.coaleducation.org/default.htm> The Coal Education website provided by the Kentucky Foundation has wonderful lesson plans and resources for all school groups.

<https://www.earthsciweek.org/educational-resources> Numerous classroom activities and resources for use with all grades.

<https://www.womeninmining.org/activities/> Activities teachers can use in planning classroom lessons.

<https://www.wvminewars.com/teacher-resources> The Mine War Museum in Matewan, WV has lesson plans regarding the mine wars and life in the coal camp.