

Eckley Miners' Village – Life in the Coal Patch

Lesson Overview

Students will learn about 19th century life through the lens of a coal mining patch town – Eckley Miners' Village. This case study depicts how the combined experience of having emigrated to a new country and the state of United States industry affected home, work, and education. The lesson is also a culmination of the previous lessons. See presentation– Eckley Miners' Village – Life in a Coal Patch presentation.

Objectives

- Students will be able to list 5 differences between life in 19th century and 21st century America.
- Students will be able to list 2 different parts of the company/patch town.
- Students will be able to list 2 different jobs that children worked in the 1800's patch town.
- Students will be able to describe 2 - 5 differences between the living conditions of a laborer, miner, and mine boss/owner.
- Students will be able to list 2 differences and 2 similarities between their lives (home, work, and education) and the lives of the patch town residents.

Standards

- 8.1 Historical Analysis and Skills Development
 - B. Historical Comprehension
 - C. Historical Interpretation
- 8.3 United States History
 - A. Contributions of Individuals and Groups
 - B. Documents, Artifacts, and Historical Places
 - C. Influences of Continuity and Change
 - D. Conflict and Cooperation Among Social Groups and Organizations

Activities/Assessments

Story Time – there are several children's books available to borrow and/or purchase at Eckley Miners' Village Museum.

[Wages and Expenses](#) (in 1925)

[Chores](#) (Me vs Patch Town kids)

[A Letter Home](#) (post-visit version)

[A Letter Home](#) (classroom version; no visit required)

[Butter-making](#)

[Coal Mining Activity](#)

VOCABULARY

Patch Town – a cluster of company-owned houses built near a mining operation to house workers and their families.

Company Store – a town built and owned by any industrial company on the site of its operation.

Colliery – all the buildings and structures necessary to mining operation, including the company houses, breaker, fan house, stables, and company store.

Breaker – a large, wooden building where coal is brought up from the mines and separated slate, rock, and other material.

Company Store – a store run by a larger business for the workers in a company town. Company stores sold a variety of goods ranging from food and clothing to dynamite, lantern oil, pickaxes and shovels. The prices in the company store were higher than other stores.

Script/Store Credit – instead of paying workers with cash, they would give them store credit, or company scripts, and they would have to buy from the company store because that was the only place the credits or scripts were accepted.

“Buying off the Book” – the practice of paying on credit for goods at the company store.

Snake – a black, squiggly line that indicates overspending on a mine employee's company store account.

Breaker Boy – boys between the ages of 7 and 12 whose job it was to separate slate from coal. They typically worked 8-12 hour days for about 25 cents a day.

Mule Boy/Tender – a boy typically 14 or 15 years old who was responsible for guiding the mules that pulled the coal cars through the coal mines. Usually receive this position after having worked as a breaker boy and door operator.

Slate Picker – laborers whose job was to separate coal from slate and other mine refuse. While breaker boys used their fingers, slate pickers used pickaxes

Short Ton/Long Ton – 2,000 pounds; 2,240 pounds