

Life In A Victorian Mine



Life in a coal mine was hard. Wages were never great, but the hours were always long and physically demanding. Until 1842, children as young as 5 years old could be sent to work underground. Even after the law was changed in 1842, children over the age of 10 could still be employed in mines.

Throughout the Victorian period, children in mines were expected to work the same hours as adults. Some opened and closed doors all day to allow the carts through; others were employed as “hurriers”. These were responsible for pulling and pushing tubs of coal along tracks back up to ground level or down to the bottom of the mines. This was back-breaking work and incredibly dangerous in the darkness of the mines.

“Getters” were often the strongest children or adults. They cut the coal from the rock face using a pickaxe. They were the only people in the mine who were allowed to have a candle at all times; everyone else moved around in near-total darkness. This job was one of the most dangerous because rockfaces could collapse at any time, burying “getters” underneath them.

Vocabulary

What does the phrase “physically demanding” mean?

What does “employed” mean?

Retrieve

Which job involved carting coal to the surface?

Infer

Why might it have been worrying to be a child in a Victorian mine?

Why might “getters” have needed a candle at all times?