

Year 6 Autumn 2 Week 2 – LO - to find out about life as a trapper

If you can, listen to the BBC radio clips about life as a trapper

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/school-radio/history-victorians-trapper/zvspmfr>

If not, read the following slides to find out about life as a trapper in the Victorian times.

Answer the questions at the end of each passage.

Jimmy Turton is twelve years old and he's about to start his first day working in the mine as a 'trapper' - working alone in the pitch darkness, opening and closing trap doors to allow coal carts along the tunnel.

Jimmy is feeling anxious as he enters the 'cage' with his brother Benjamin and an older miner called William - he's been in the mine often enough before, but not since his father died in an explosion about a year previously. The 'cage' is used to transport people down into the mine so they can work underground to get coal.

Jimmy thinks about the day when his father was killed – what was that explosion like? How scared must his father have been?

Year 6 Autumn 2 Week 2 – LO - to find out about life as a trapper

Jimmy has been working as a trapper for some months when he falls ill and must take some time away from the mine sick. His mother is anxious about how the loss of his earnings will affect the family. She arranges some herbal medicine for him.

Jimmy is so worried about not earning his wages that - in a fever - he wanders to the mine and somehow finds his way down the shaft. Then he is involved in one of the most common types of mining accident: being struck by one of the coal carts.

Jimmy's injuries place an additional burden on the family and as soon as he is well enough he must go back down the mine.

How much do you think he got paid for carrying out his job as a trapper? A lot or not very much?

What do you think might have made him ill?

What injuries did he get when he was hit by the cart?

How do you think his mum reacted when he was injured?

Jimmy is becoming accustomed to his life as a trapper. When he hears Benjamin and William approaching with a coal cart he opens his trap door as usual to let them through. Suddenly they hear a trickle of water - a very bad sign - and the shaft begins to flood.

They are unable to open the trap door so they have no option but to follow the water towards its source.

Jimmy and Benjamin struggle against the flood until they make it to the surface...where they learn that a sudden summer rainstorm has flooded the mine, drowning many miners including several children.

How do you think Jimmy felt when he heard a trickle of water?

How do you think he felt when he heard that many miners had died in the flood?