

Student Worksheet 3-Coal Patch Houses

Introduction:

The mining company built houses for the miners. Some companies built poor quality houses: roofs leaked, wind came through walls with no plaster, etc. Other companies built acceptable houses. The houses were designed to be built quickly, and it was important to have a house for the workers, but it was not important for it to be a nice looking house. In order for the houses to be built quickly, the Company usually built the same type of house over and over again, so all the houses looked the same. Several designs were used in various patch towns – such as row houses, which were cheap to build since they shared walls, and also two-story double houses. They were called double houses because it was one building, but divided into two separate houses inside which could hold one family on each side of the house. These double houses would have 4 to 6 rooms per side. Behind the houses would be the double outhouse. Often families would take in boarders to bring in more money. These boarders paid for a place to live, meals, and laundry done. At times there would be two families on one side, plus single mine boarders, making 15 to 20 people living in one small house. The houses were very simple in their furnishings and primitive in function – they did not have running water or electricity. Miners paid the company rent for these houses. During strikes the mining company could have the workers evicted if they joined the strike or spoke out against the company. Along with the rental of the house, the families usually also received a small piece of land for a garden.

1. Read the Introduction above.
2. Read stories from the residents of the coal patch.
3. View the pictures provided.

Answer the following questions:

1. Who built and owned these houses?
2. Describe the typical construction of a company house.
3. Why were houses built in this manner?
4. Discuss some of the problems miners and their families encountered with these houses.
5. Describe some of the things you might find in a company house (such as furniture, etc.)
6. Explain the importance of the garden for the miners.

On the back of this sheet:

Look over the previous questions, introduction and stories and create a 2 to 3 sentence summary statement to explain to the class about coal patch houses.

Choose two pictures to put on the class display to represent the Company Houses.