



Preserving Diverse Industrial Heritage
COURSE

Level 1: Introduction Series (10 lessons)

Lesson 2

An Introduction to Black Miners Heritage

Overview

Lesson 2: An Introduction to Black Miners Heritage

Topics explores: History / Shared Heritage /Diversity /Industry/ Coal mining / Miners/ African-Caribbean communities /Camaraderie / Colliery

Objectives / Learning Targets: *Learners will*

- Gain knowledge about the Black/BAME communities involved in British coal mining history
- Understand the various experiences of black miners in the UK coalfields
- Learn how cultural memories can be collected and preserved through oral history methods /audio media (i.e., recorded interviews)
- Reflect on the end of the coal mining industry and the legacy of black miners through heritage.

Goals for understanding/ learning outcomes:

- To be able to relate to human experience other than your own
- To celebrate the achievement and resilience of different cultures
- To find out more about the diverse history of industrial heritage

Curriculum links: History, Citizenship, Geography, Sociology, Media Studies

Materials & Resources

Computer / IT technology

World Map

UK map

Paper pen/pencil

Introduction

Even though coal mining in the UK dates back to Roman times (and probably earlier) and has been recorded since the 12th century and deep coal mining in the heights of production from around 1550 until the late 1950s, the Black/BAME presence within the coal mining workforce in the UK, has had no formal recognition or acknowledgement of their contributions within the sector until the work done by the Black Miners Museum (www.blackcoalminers.com) at Nottingham News Centre

(www.nottinghamnewscentre.com), which has helped to collate and preserve the narratives and memories of former black miners since 2010.

Coal mining was profitable over many centuries, particularly private colliery owners and individuals, pre to the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act, which was passed on the 12th July 1946 and nationalisation vesting date on the 1st January 1947.

Besides the USA and South Africa, there is limited research available about black miners' experiences and in particular, miners from the Caribbean and West Africa where many of black miners interviewed, during my research from 2010 to 2021, migrated from before finding work in British coalfields. None of the 70+ black miners interviewed had received any knowledge or training of coal mining before working as coal miners, underground or on the surface.

Collieries keep personnel records but no record of workers' ethnic group distinctions/race was ever recorded as this was not the focus of recruitment campaigns, but rather whether a man could do the job, digging, lifting and sifting coal.

Black miners have spoken to me as a mining historian about remaining, until the very end, at collieries facing swift closure, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. They shared painful memories shutting down and capping mines with fellow miners; reluctantly slamming shut the iron doors to cages and shafts in the coal mines for the very last time. Service, in Britain and for Britain, had been long, arduous, dangerous and varied but always thorough and achieved with dedication and brotherly friendship with other miners; despite the end result for black personnel often receiving less than was bargained for in terms of pay, conditions, promotion opportunities, formal recognition and national appreciation.

After speaking to the former miner interviewees, I learnt that the black miners worked in a variety of jobs underground, depending on colliery need, as well as speaking about their experience and commitment to coal mining life.

During my initial research period from 2012-2020, locating and recording the experiences of former black miners in the UK, I located, met and/or interviewed 70+ former Black/BAME miners.

My research suggests that black men as miners were a valuable cohort of the workforce in many collieries across the UK. Most worked in England, where there was plenty of work available in the rich coal seams of Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire, Wales, Kent, Lancashire and the North East for example, at a time where productivity and the demand for labour, post World Wars I and II was necessary to rebuild a war-torn Britain.

Most black miners became coal face workers. However, these were some of the additional roles undertaken by black men in the colliery: Shaftsmen, Fitter, Surface Worker, Supply, Onsetter, Development, Ventilation Officer, Ganger, Loader, Union Rep, Safety Officer, First Aid and Chargehand (supervisor). Few were promoted to

deputy, management or official as some stated that white miners would not work under them in senior leadership/officer type roles.

Most of the black miners interviewed, had experienced or witnessed accidents and deaths underground. These could be personal injuries to themselves such as broken bones, missing fingers, knee, back and chest problems. William Rose, a Doncaster miner, born in Jamaica, said: *"I've lost my fingernail, you know, crushed. And I've had a coal bag burst and I got a lot of coal in my eyes but besides that, that's only the two things that really affected me. Then after that, when things were mechanised, I started suffering dust, you know, so that's what took me out of the pit really. So, I went to the surface and retrained for something else."*

Some miners witnessed fatal accidents such as the Bentley Colliery train disaster on the 21st of November 1978, which killed seven miners of which, Lloyd Brown, a Jamaican, was a passenger on the Bentley Colliery train when it crashed. Lloyd Brown was born in 1937 in Portland, Jamaica and came to the UK in 1957. He worked as a miner at Bentley Colliery in Doncaster, Yorkshire from 1957-1987. Lloyd remembered the dirt, dust and hard work he had to do. He recalls: *"I was shook up – we were all shook up with what had happened to our colleagues. It could have been another disaster if another train had come out and ran into each other"*.

Most black miners had vivid memories of their work experiences and were able to recall, in detail, their experiences of receiving training after being employed as a coal miner and learning 'typical' coal mining terminology, particularly for their duties or role each had to undertake. Names of equipment and tools were remembered in detail as were as nick names, memorable events that happened to themselves and funny anecdotes – the miners' sense of humour, 'banter' and ability to 'take a joke'. Most stated in their interviews, that it was hard work, but also valued the camaraderie and working life together, most of the time, to get the job done.

Through my research gathered, some of the collieries across the UK where black miners are known to have worked are (list compiled as of June 2021) are:

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AREA

1. Gedling Colliery
2. Manton Colliery
3. Firbeck Colliery
4. Newstead Colliery
5. Calverton Colliery
6. Ollerton Colliery
7. Thorseby Colliery
8. Babbington (Cinderhill) Colliery
9. Cotgrave Colliery
10. Clifton Colliery
11. Bilsthorpe Colliery
12. Calverton Colliery

13. Bevercotes Colliery
14. Annesley Colliery
15. Mansfield Colliery
16. Blidworth Colliery
17. Clipstone Colliery
18. Sherwood Colliery
19. Shireoaks Colliery
20. Shirebrook Colliery
21. Sutton Colliery
22. Rufford Colliery

YORKSHIRE AREA

23. Bentley Colliery, Doncaster
24. Markham Main, Armthorpe (eastern edge of Doncaster)
25. Brodsworth Colliery (north west of Doncaster)
26. Selby Colliery (north Yorkshire)⁵
27. Rossington (Doncaster)
28. Lofthouse Colliery (near Wakefield, Yorkshire)
29. Askern Colliery (near Doncaster)
30. Whitwick Colliery (Leicestershire)
31. Maltby Colliery, Rotherham, South Yorkshire
32. Kellingley Colliery, North Yorkshire
33. Sharlston Colliery, Wakefield, Yorkshire
34. Wistow and Peckfield Colliery
35. Prince of Wales Colliery
36. Sarlston Colliery
37. Barnsborough Colliery
38. Yorkshire Main Colliery
39. Cadeby Main Colliery (near Doncaster)

LEICESTERSHIRE & DERBYSHIRE AREAS

40. Measham Colliery (Leicestershire, near Derbyshire border)

DURHAM AREA

41. Mainsforth Colliery, Durham
42. Dawdon, Seaham, Durham

LANCASHIRE & STAFFORDSHIRE AREA

43. Bold Colliery, St Helens – Merseyside (Lancashire Coalfield)
44. Sutton Manor Colliery, St Helens – Merseyside (Lancashire Coalfield)

45. Florence Colliery (North Staffordshire)

SHROPSHIRE AREA

46. Meadow Pit Colliery, Madeley Shropshire

KENT AREA

47. Tilmanstone Colliery, Kent

48. Snowdown Colliery, Kent

49. Chislet Colliery, Kent

50. Betteshanger Colliery, Kent

WALES

52. Point of Ayr Colliery, north Wales

52. Deep Navigation Colliery, Treharris – Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales

53. Nantgarw Colliery Wales

54. Big Windsor Colliery Wales

55. Britannia Colliery Pengam Wales

56. Maerdy Colliery, Rhondda Valley Glamorgan Wales

57. Ocean Colliery Rhondda Valley

58. Fernhill Colliery, Blaenrhondda

59. Glyncastle Colliery, near Resolven (Neath /Glynneath area)

60. Ffaldydre level (Glyn Neath area)

61. Deep Duffryn Colliery Rhondda Cynon Taff, Mountain ash (Glamorgan)

61. Penrhyn Mawr Colliery

63. Garth Colliery, Tonmawr (south Wales)

64. Penallta Colliery

This illustrates how widespread black miners' contributions were to the UK coal mining industry.

Research and oral history interviews conducted by Norma Gregory, mining historian and broadcaster

www.normagregory.com

Learning Activities

Time	Activities	Key words / Phrases
10 mins	<p><i>Ice-breaker/ Starter</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the group what they know about coal / coal mining • Ask students if they live near a former coal mine /colliery • Ask students if they know of a coal miner (in the family, a relative, a neighbour, a colleague, friend) 	
45 mins	<p><i>Main</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the theme of migration and moving/ leaving home. • List what might be packed in a suitcase for someone migrating to another country • Discuss some of the experiences of the miners / black miners (as shared in the introduction section) • Share thoughts on how the miners might have felt working deep underground. • Use a UK map to locate the regions were black miners worked • Record an interview with a former miner (or the child/ relation of a former miner) • Write an emotive poem using adjectives, expressing the feelings/narratives/emotion of a miner / black/BAME miner/non-British miner. 	<p>Black/BAME (Black Asian Minority Ethnic)</p>
5 mins	<p><i>Plenary</i></p> <p>Reflection questioning</p> <p>Describe what you have learnt today – write (or draw a related object) on a post-it note.</p> <p>Gather responses and share.</p>	Reflection

Ideas for differentiation

a. *Visual Learners*

Include images

b. *Auditory Learners*

Include recordings/podcasts/music

c. *Kinesthetic Learners*

Include objects to handle

d. *ESL Students*

Include vocabulary translations and images of key objects/words

e. *At-risk Students*

Be aware of discussing subjects/topics that may trigger negative responses or behaviours

f. *Advanced Learners*

Include extension activities i.e. further questions, questions that encourage analysis and evaluation, independent research topics

Opportunities for individual, paired, groups

- Work in pairs to conduct interviews
- Use a map to locate the sites of former coal mines/ collieries in the UK in relation to coal mining areas in other countries
- Create a short play including a miner as a character
- Design a t-shirt that depicts the legacy of mining /miners
- Discuss the effect on the environment today and the use of fossil fuels

Assessment

Informal, direct questions, self-reflection

Media links & further reading/study

- Black Miners Museum <https://www.blackcoalminers.com>
- Black miners in the media <https://www.blackcoalminers.com/BMMP-Media-Interest>
- The Guardian newspaper article How Black Britain's black miners are reclaiming their place in history (2016) <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/oct/24/black-miners-britain-nottingham>
- Mining heritage <http://www.healeyhero.co.uk/rescue/menu.htm#top>
- World Coal Association <https://www.worldcoal.org/coal-facts/coal-mining/>
- Ronald Lewis *Black Coal Miners in America* (1987)
- Norma Gregory *Jamaicans in Nottingham Narratives and Reflections* (Hansib Publications, 2015)
- *Inside Out* BBC East Midlands (broadcast 12.09.16) 'Brother Beneath the Surface,' (feature story) about the experiences of black miners of Nottinghamshire. Produced by Jane Dodge. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOHHcTgzs5E>

Global connection opportunities & places to visit (online or physical)

- Visit the National Coal Mining Museum, Yorkshire
<https://www.ncm.org.uk>
- Woodhorn Mining Museum, Ashington, Northumberland
<https://museumsnorthumberland.org.uk/woodhorn-museum/>
- Durham Mining Museum
<http://www.dmm.org.uk/mindex.htm>
- Pitman's Parliament, Redhills Durham
- <https://redhillsdurham.org>
- Beamish Mining Museum
<http://www.beamish.org.uk/explore-discover/1900s-coliery/>
- Bilsthorpe Mining Museum, Nottinghamshire
- The Kent Mining Museum
<https://www.kentminingmuseum.co.uk>
- Locations of UK mining museums which include black miners' heritage
<https://viewer.mapme.com/black-miners-museum-project>

Images for heritage educational use and discussion



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TEACHER NOTES