

FAMILY LIFE DURING THE MINING ERA

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OVERVIEW

Students will analyze historical photographs in order to understand family life in Colorado mining camps and towns of the late 19th century (1870-1900).

STANDARDS

- History Standard 3.2: Students understand the history of social organization in various societies.
- Reading and Writing Standard 3: Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this activity, students will be able to:

- Gather information from historical photographs.
- Gather information from primary sources.
- Draw conclusions about mining families in Colorado during the last third of the 19th century.
- Describe family life in Colorado mining towns and camps.

INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- What was family life like in Colorado mining camps and towns?
- What kind of work did women do?
- What kind of housing was available to families?
- What did children do for recreation?

PROCEDURE

1. Print and copy the following historical photographs (alternatively, you may decide to have students use the Doing History CD-ROM or the Project web site):

FAMILIES AND CHILDREN THEME:

- Families and Children Sequence:
 - Photo 1 “A Mining Town Family”
 - Photo 2 “Two Children from Cripple Creek”

- Photo 3: "A Boy with a Burro"
- Schools Sequence:
Photo 6: "The Principal and Teachers"
- Clothing Sequence:
Photo 6 "A Mine Manager's Family in Front of Their Cabin"

FROM THE DOING HISTORY ARCHIVES

- Weary Days of Labor and Pain
- Taking in Boarders
- Keeping a Boarding House
- Dress Making
- Hotel Work
- Maude Park in Her Summer Kitchen

2. Divide students into groups; give each group a set of the above photographs and primary sources; assign one of the inquiry questions to each member of the group. As the photographs are passed, each student is to record information that answers his/her inquiry question.

3. After all the photographs and sources have been analyzed, instruct students to share the information they gleaned from the photographs with other members of their group.

4. Ask the students in each group to create a play about life in the mining regions of Colorado in the late 19th century.

5. Ask each group to perform its play for the entire class.

6. Debrief the information from the group performances and help students draw conclusions about family life in mining camps.