ON REFLECTION
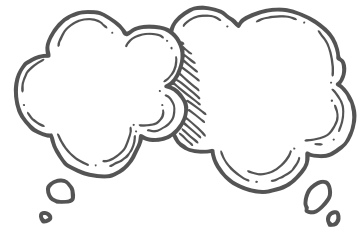
Memorialising… Children in the mines

Working in a coal mine is well known for being dangerous. But did you know, for many years, it wasn't just adults facing the dangers? Children worked in mines too!

1 EXPLORE

Explore this coal miner's pick from Brora – it has an especially short handle because space was so tight in the mine. Miners often had to lay on their backs to mine the coal above them – you wouldn't want to do that job if you were claustrophobic!

2 TALK ABOUT IT

We now understand better that we need to protect children and keep them safe. The Mines and Collieries Act of 1842 stopped children under the age of 10 from working underground. This was changed to include children under the age of 12 in 1860.

- What do you think you would have found hardest about the work?
- Do you think there are any jobs that 12-year-olds should be allowed to do?

3 TALK ABOUT IT

Children from poorer families had very different childhoods from today! They were often sent to work instead of having time to play and have fun.

Have a look at the Codd bottle on the website – these bottles were very common in the late-Victorian period and brilliant for storing drinks. However, they are nearly always found with broken necks. That's because little boys broke the bottles to try and get out the marble that was inside each one!

It reminds us how children from poorer families had very few toys!

- What would you miss most if you had to work from a young age?

4 FIND OUT MORE

Play our quiz - Could You Survive in a Coalmine? - to discover more about a mining life.
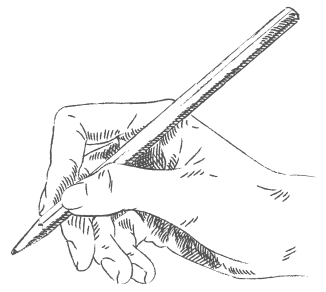
5 TRY IT YOURSELF

Try creating your own game using objects from your family kitchen. What could you use? How would the game work?

6 CREATE A COMMEMORATION

Use this page to plan your ideas.

Who do you want to commemorate?

Why do you want to remember what happened to them?

What could your design look like? What shapes or pictures could you include?

What message could you write?