

Document A

The following photograph shows a group of “breaker boys” who were employed at a coal mine in northeastern Pennsylvania. The job of a breaker boy was to separate rocks and minerals from coal that had just been mined from the ground. They would typically use their bare hands to pick rocks from the coal.



Title: *Breaker boys working in Ewen Breaker of Pennsylvania Coal Co.*

Location: South Pittston, Pennsylvania.

Date: January 1911

Photographer: Lewis Hine

Document B

The document below shows breaker boys at work in Pennsylvania. The coal would travel through a chute below them and they would pick rocks from the coal as it passed.



Title: *A view of the Pennsylvania Breaker. The dust was so dense at times as to obscure the view. This dust penetrates the utmost recess of the boys' lungs.*

Location: South Pittston, Pennsylvania.

Date: January 1911

Photographer: Lewis Hine

Document C

In the following photograph, Hine featured a young “driver” named Arthur Havard (pictured in the middle of the front row). Mines in this region of the country were deep in the ground and the coal needed to be hauled to the surface. Drivers would lead mules pulling carts full of coal out of the mines.



Title: *Arthur Havard, a young driver, Shaft #6, Pennsylvania Coal Company.*

Location: South Pittston, Pennsylvania.

Date: December 1910

Photographer: Lewis Hine

Document D

The photograph below shows a young driver leading a mule in a mine shaft. To his left is an adult driver sitting on a type of steam engine that was also used to haul coal from mines.



Title: *Mule power and motor power. A Young Driver, Shaft #6, Pennsylvania Coal Company.*

Location: Pittston, Pennsylvania.

Date: January 1911

Photographer: Lewis Hine

Guiding Questions

1. What does each photograph suggest about what work was like for children in the Pennsylvania coal mines in 1910 and 1911? Cite specific details from each photograph to support your claims.

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2. What other evidence would you want to see to determine whether these photographs are accurate representations of work in coal mines?
3. Based on the content of the photographs, how do you think Hine felt about child labor? Cite evidence from each of the documents to support your points.

4. When evaluating whether a historical photograph is useful as evidence, historians consider various questions, including:
- When and where was the photograph taken?
 - Who took the photograph? What was their perspective on the events or people being photographed and how might that have influenced what they chose to shoot?
 - Why was the photograph taken? Does the photographer have an incentive to portray a scene in a particular way?
 - Under what circumstances was the photograph taken? How might these circumstances have limited or enabled what the photographer was able to capture?
 - What technology did the photographer use and how might that have influenced the image created?

Considering the questions above, why might Hine's photographs be useful evidence about working conditions for children in the mines at the time?

Considering the questions above, what about the photographs might cause you to question whether they are useful evidence about working conditions for children in the mines at the time?

Background on Lewis Hine

Lewis Hine was a school teacher in New York City who trained to become a photographer. In 1908, the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) hired Hine to take photographs of the terrible working conditions facing children who worked in a variety of industries, including textiles, mining, and agriculture. The NCLC was a progressive organization that opposed child labor. They hoped that Hine's photographs would help to convince the public to support their campaign against child labor.

From 1908 to 1918, Hine travelled tens of thousands of miles across the country taking photographs of children working in a wide variety of jobs. The owners and operators of these facilities typically opposed the NCLC's crusade against child labor, and they would not have agreed to let a photographer document the working conditions of children in their factories and mills. Hine would often lie to gain access, telling people that he was an inspector or that he was only interested in taking photographs of the machinery. He was sometimes forcibly removed when management learned his real intentions.

Hine used a basic box camera to take his photographs. The box camera, invented by Kodak in 1888, was light enough to be carried easily and allowed photographers to capture images by simply opening and closing a shutter. Although the box camera was portable and relatively easy to operate, it was not an effective tool for capturing action shots. Rapid movement by subjects could cause them to appear blurry in the photograph, so Hine would often need his subjects to remain still when being photographed. Hine would also use a magnesium flash to capture images in dark conditions (like those in the mines). The flash technology was tricky to operate and would send a large cloud of fire and sparks into the air, so candid photographs were difficult to capture in dark conditions. Subjects were usually aware that they were being photographed.