

HUMANITIES — WELSH HISTORY · YEAR 5–6

Diwydiannau Cymru — Welsh Industries Deeper Study

Coal & Slate — Years 5–6

Coal and slate — two industries, two landscapes

1

The South Wales Coalfield

The most important coal-producing region in the world in the late 19th century. The Rhondda alone produced 9 million tons of coal per year at its peak. Cardiff was the world's largest coal-exporting port.

2

North Wales slate

The slate quarries of Gwynedd — Penrhyn (Bethesda), Dinorwig (Llanberis), and Ffestiniog — produced much of the world's roofing slate in the 19th century. The landscape of Snowdonia was transformed by these quarries.

3

Working conditions

Coalminers worked in darkness, damp, and danger. Lung disease (pneumoconiosis/silicosis) from coal and rock dust was epidemic. Explosions were common — the Senghenydd colliery disaster (1913) killed 439 men and boys.

4

The labour movement

Welsh miners and quarrymen were at the forefront of the British labour movement. The Tonypany riots (1910-11), the Penrhyn Quarry Lock-Out (1900-03 — the longest industrial dispute in UK history), the 1984-85 Miners' Strike.

5

Deindustrialisation

Coal pits closed from the 1960s onwards — accelerated by the Thatcher government's pit closure programme after the 1984-85 strike. The last Welsh deep mine (Tower Colliery) closed 2008.



6

UNESCO World Heritage

The Blaenavon Industrial Landscape (including Big Pit National Coal Museum) and the Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales (Gwynedd quarries) are both UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

