

“There’s Been and Explosion in 12 Pit”

Our Relationship with Natural Resources

Grade Level: Grade 8

Big Questions (Topics of Inquiry):

1. How do the natural resources we rely on affect our communities, our economic well-being, and our perception of reality?
2. How do our perspectives change the way we understand historical events?

Objectives:

1. Students will consider the potential economic, social, and cultural impacts that the natural resources we rely on can have on our lives in a regional context.
2. Students will learn how to piece together a story from different primary accounts of the same event.

Targeted Curriculum Outcomes: Understand the influence of occupations and trades and the accompanying lifestyles on the culture of a selected region; Determine the extent to which political and economic circumstances affect cultural change; Understand the effect of the physical environment (including resources) of Atlantic Canada in shaping its culture.

Instructions:

Step 1: Hand out abbreviated excerpts from two accounts of the New Waterford mine explosion of 1917 (see attached). Half the group should receive one account and the other half the second account.

Step 2: Have students read the excerpts in their groups and prepare a quick summary of events to share with the other group. Ask specifically for students to summarize the account **and** explain how they think the author of their account feels about the mine.

Step 3: Ask students to piece together a brief account of the event using what they know from both accounts. Ask students if they think these authors feel the same way about the mine and the mining company.

Step 4: Ask students why each author might feel the way they do about the mines (each having differing views) despite the fact that they both were witness to the accident. Possible answers might include ideas of economic opportunity, power dynamics, social pressures, religious beliefs, or many others.

Step 5: Ask students to imagine they lived in New Waterford. Ask the following questions and facilitate discussion: How might you feel about the mine? Would your view change after the accident? How might these same economic and social forces affect the way we view industries today? Can you think of any modern parallels?

Step 6: Wrap up discussion by highlighting the interconnected role of natural resources, economics, society, and culture. Draw from student discussion to provide examples.

Extensions: *This activity is meant as a brief way to introduce students to interconnectedness of natural resources, economics, society, and culture that shaped history and continues to play a role in our lives today. However, there are many possible extensions that could leapfrog from this activity. A few possibilities are listed below as separate inquiry questions/projects. Some are intentionally broad to foster the wider discussion of the impacts of natural resources on society.*

1. How do the natural resources we rely on for energy impact the **environment** and our relationship to it? Students might research the impacts of natural resources such as oil, coal, natural gas, solar, wind, and hydro-power to answer this question in different ways. Facilitate discussion in how each of these technologies impacts the environment and society as a whole. Many of these resources can be discussed in a regional and/or local context.
2. Explain the legal proceedings that followed the mining accident (see attached summary). Ask students why they think the court ruled the way it did. Through discussion, explore the role of power dynamics in shaping our economic, social, and cultural decisions.
3. Have students research local industries where they live. Ask students to consider the potential economic, social, and environmental impacts that industry might have on their own life.
4. Have students research the Deepwater Horizon oil spill of 2010. Have students research the environmental, economic, and social effects the accident had. Have students research how different industries, governments, environmental groups, and the public at large responded to the event. Ask students the following: *What similarities and/or differences are there in the responses to this accident with the way people responded to the mine explosion in New Waterford? (students will have to research more on the mine explosion).* Facilitate discussion around these similarities and differences to explore how the economic, environmental, and political impacts of oil, like coal, impacts the way society views its use.
5. Have students research modern industries considered controversial given the current political, environmental, and social context. Possibilities include oil, natural gas, lithium, uranium, timber, and coal. Students could either be assigned an industry or pick one of their own choosing. Have students explore the environmental, social, and cultural impacts these resources have had. There are many possible inquiry questions that could arise from this exploration. Possibilities include: *Why is your chosen natural resource still widely used despite its impacts? How have political and economic power dynamics affected the way societies view your chosen natural resource? How do the economic, social, and/or political backgrounds of different people affect the way they view and argue for/against the use of your chosen natural resource? How has the presence/absence of your chosen natural resource affected the way people in Atlantic Canada view its use in the world? How has the issue of climate change affected the way people view your chosen natural resource?*