

MINING IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

GRADES 6/7-12

EXERCISES: A look at the global realities of mining today

Five YouTube video-clips to watch with questions to discuss

Every day, we use products made from mined materials. What is in those products? Where does it come from? Under what conditions is it mined and processed? We rarely ask these questions, yet need to if we are to assess the real costs of our choices, and the real cost of mining.

SMALL SCALE GOLD MINING – LATIN AMERICA’S ‘GOLD RUSH’

Mining played an important role in the development of Canada. In particular, the BC gold rushes acted as the stimuli for the formation of the mainland colony and later the formation of the province. Today, people around the world still seek out gold and precious minerals for the same reasons people came to BC – a quest for a better economic standing.

Have your class watch the following video:

Peru: Child labour in Gold Mines (2.5 minutes):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I7EizOnDSLc>

Ask your students to discuss the following questions:

Why do children work in the gold mines?

What are some of the risks faced in the mines?

ILLEGAL GOLD MINING – LATIN AMERICA’S ‘WILD WEST’

Governments are responsible for deciding the conditions under which mining occurs. However, laws may not be enough. Enforcement is also necessary. In many locations, the lack of enforcement leads to illegal mining. Illegal mining poses the greatest risk to both the environment and human health. Not only that, taxes and royalties are not collected on illegally mined materials, meaning society does not benefit to the same extent as it could, while ultimately being responsible for the impacts of these activities.

It was recognition of the need to control the mining and movement of gold, and thus collect all taxes on what was mined in BC that led to the construction of the Caribou trail – the wagon trail that opened up the interior of our province.

In Peru, illegal gold mining is having a devastating impact on the environment and human health.

Have your students watch the following video: (nb: contains a brief display of drug use).

A toxic legacy: gold mining in Peru (11 minutes)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbI_ZArJ22U

Have your students discuss the following questions:

What are three issues with illegal gold mining in Peru?

What drove the increase in illegal mining?

What role do consumers play in that increase?

FILLING OUR NEED – THE TRUE COST OF OUR WAY OF LIFE

Mining is essential to our way of life, yet we do not often even think about how the things we have come to be in our hands.

Have your class watch the following video on tin mining in Indonesia:

Tainted Tin: The Deadly Cost of Smart Phones (7.25 minutes)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USodnCMC6rE>

Have your students discuss the following questions:

Identify two issues local people have with tin mining.

Identify choices we can make to reduce our personal environmental impact.

What is the new frontier of mining presented in the video? What are the issues surrounding it?

CONFLICT MINERALS – NATURAL RESOURCES USED TO FUND WARS

The impact of mining becomes worse when conflict is brought into the picture. Today, we are beginning to recognize the real impact of ‘conflict minerals’ – minerals mined to fund wars. The United States and the UK have introduced laws requiring the identification of the sources of potential conflict minerals to reduce this impact.

Have your class watch the following video:

In Focus: Congo’s Bloody Coltan: (4.5 minutes)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3OWj1ZGn4uM>

Have your class discuss the following questions:

Is knowing the source of materials used in things you own important to you? Why?

Why should we care about the working conditions of people that supply the raw resources for the products we desire?

A CHANGE IN SCALE – THE SHIFT FROM SMALL SCALE TO LARGE SCALE MINING

Not all mining is small scale, of course. Large scale mines present their own costs and benefits.

Peru has undergone a rapid transformation since the 1990s after the Peruvian government opened up the country to foreign mining companies. Canadian companies are now major players in the Peruvian mining industry.

Have your students watch the following video:

Peru's Mining Boom (2.5 minutes):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMfB08ioH5U>

Have your students discuss the following questions:

What has been one impact of foreign investment in Peru's mining industry?

Why were locals protesting the construction of a new mine?

Why it is important for a nation's government to listen to the concerns of its people when a new mine is proposed?