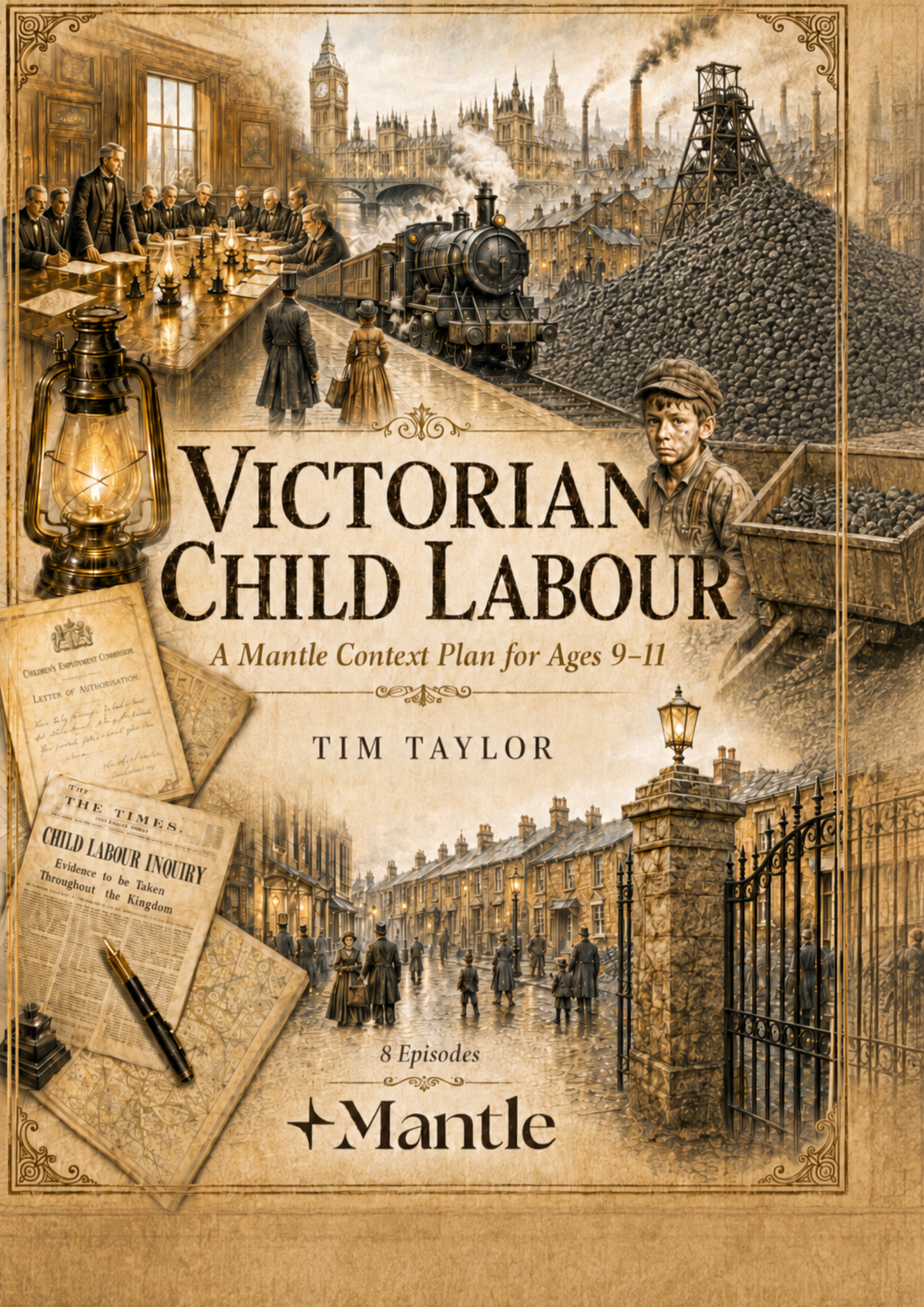

VICTORIAN CHILD LABOUR
A Mantle Context Plan for Ages 9–11
TIM TAYLOR
CHILDREN'S EMPLOYMENT COMMISSION
LETTER OF AUTHORISATION
THE TIMES.
CHILD LABOUR INQUIRY
Evidence to be Taken Throughout the Kingdom
8 Episodes
Mantle

Contents and Context Map

Ep.	Title	Narrative	Student Outcome
1	**A Room in Parliament**	Establishes the historical world and draws students into the Team through encounter with evidence — a document, images, a letter from Lord Ashley, and a commission.	Students have read a primary document, examined images, received a written commission, and begun to form an investigative stance.
2	**Meeting the Owner**	The Team travels to Halifax. An unexpected document shifts the mood. Students meet the mine owner and must manage questions of historical judgement, moral complexity, and investigator discipline.	Students have gathered and compared conflicting evidence and begun to weigh the reliability of different accounts.
3	**Underground**	The Team descends into the mine. TIR as Sykes opens the gap between Liston's account and the reality underground. A sustained writing task asks students to work with contrasting examples of register, audience, and purpose.	Students have written a personal letter about the experience, working with two contrasting models to understand how register shapes the same material differently.
4	**Deeper into the Mine**	Students move from observation to testimony, using real quotations from the 1842 Commission to construct biographical portraits of individual child workers.	Students have constructed a biographical account from primary testimony and reflected on what the day's evidence means for their investigation.
5	**The Evidence from Black Horse Yard**	A documentary episode. Students work through census returns, a yard plan, a survey, and household possessions to reconstruct life across the yard.	Students have built a detailed picture of the five families connected to the mine and prepared for the visits in Episode 6.
6	**Black Horse Yard**	The Team visits the yard. TIR as Mary Greenwood opens the visit. Students meet four families through paired and group role work, with Mrs Booth as a witness giving the	Students have gathered direct testimony from families and begun to answer the question they have been carrying since Episode 3.

		yard its longer memory.	
7	**Liston House**	The Team returns to Liston, but now knows far more than he expects. A lengthy TIR encounter leads to the question Liston turns back on the investigators: what exactly would you have me do?	Students leave with a more difficult problem than the one they arrived with — and with detailed notes for their report.
8	**The Report to Parliament**	The Team returns to London. Students edit a findings summary, draft recommendations, defend them under challenge from the Prime Minister, revise, and submit. The fiction ends; the historical outcome is revealed.	Students have produced and defended a formal set of recommendations and compared them with the Mines and Collieries Act 1842.

Voice-Type Key

Voice type	Description
TIR (Teacher in Role)	The teacher takes on a character within the fiction to provide information, create tension, or open questions.
Narrator	The teacher speaks outside any character role to move the story forward, set a scene, or provide context.
Facilitator	The teacher steps fully outside the fiction to manage the session — giving instructions, pausing for reflection, or explaining a task.
Twilight	A transitional mode between Narrator and TIR — the teacher moves into or out of a character role gradually.

CONTEXT

Theme

What happens when the truth about an injustice is brought into the light—and there are no simple solutions?

Overview

Students investigate troubling but disputed reports about children working at a Victorian coal mine. As a team of investigators, they gather and compare documentary evidence, direct observations and testimony from children, workers, families and the mine owner. Their investigation takes them underground, into the homes of families who depend upon children's wages, and into the house of the man who profits from the mine.

As the evidence accumulates, the Team discovers that exposing dangerous conditions is only the beginning: removing children from the mine may protect them while pushing their families further into poverty. Students must decide who is responsible for change, develop practical recommendations, defend them under challenge and compare their proposals with the Mines and Collieries Act of 1842. Through the Team's work, they develop historical knowledge, evaluate evidence and construct careful arguments about justice, responsibility and reform.

Inquiry Questions

- Why might people accept working conditions that others later decide are wrong?
- What makes evidence strong enough to persuade people in power to act?
- Whose accounts are listened to, whose are ignored, and why?
- Who is responsible for changing a system that causes harm?
- What should happen when protecting children may make their families poorer?
- How should investigators judge accounts that are partial, contradictory or disputed?

- Can changing the law solve a problem—or is legislation only the beginning?

Narrative

In the coalfields of Yorkshire, winding gear rises above the fields and the sound of hauling machinery is part of everyday life. One particular mine has expanded as the demand for coal has grown. Children as well as adults work below ground, but Parliament does not yet have a clear and reliable picture of what work they do or the conditions they face. Reports have reached London, but they are incomplete and disputed. The mine owner says that some accounts are exaggerated, while workers and local witnesses describe long hours, dangerous tasks and serious risks.

The deaths of twenty-six children in the Huskar pit disaster brought national attention to children working underground. As further reports reached Parliament, the government established the Children's Employment Commission to investigate. Lord Ashley, who has campaigned for better protection for working children, needs dependable evidence. The Team has been appointed to inspect a mine in Yorkshire, speak with those involved and report what they discover. Parliament must understand what is happening before it can decide whether the law should change.

What begins as an investigation into conditions underground gradually becomes a wider inquiry into the system surrounding the mine. The Team discovers that families in Black Horse Yard depend upon children’s earnings, while the mine generates wealth for an owner who rarely sees the conditions from which he benefits. The investigators must decide not only whether change is necessary, but who should bear its cost, how it should be enforced and what should happen to the families affected. Their recommendations will be tested before Parliament decides whether the law should change.

The Team

Role A team of investigators appointed by the Children's Employment Commission to investigate the employment and working conditions of children employed at one mine in Yorkshire.

Powers The Team can request access to the mine, ask to speak with workers, families, the owner and local witnesses, and examine records that are made available. The mine owner may cooperate, restrict access or try to influence what the Team sees. The Team's findings will be submitted to the Children's Employment Commission and shared with Lord Ashley.

Responsibilities The Team must produce an accurate, thorough and honest account of children's work underground, including the jobs they do, their hours, their working conditions and the risks they face. They must distinguish between what they have observed, what people have told them and what records show. Their report must be clear enough to help Parliament decide whether action is needed. They must also consider what the consequences of their recommendations might be for children, families, mine workers and owners, and distinguish between identifying a wrong and proposing a workable remedy.

Values The Team works carefully, independently and fairly. Members listen respectfully, test claims against the evidence and avoid deciding what has happened before the investigation is complete. They understand the responsibility involved in recording the experiences of children and families whose voices may otherwise go unheard.

Commission

Lord Ashley has asked the Team, working for the Children's Employment Commission, to investigate troubling but disputed reports about children employed at a mine in Yorkshire. The Team is to gather testimony from children, families, mine workers and the owner; observe working conditions where access is granted; examine available records; and compare different accounts. They must report what the evidence shows, explain where it is incomplete or uncertain, and recommend what Parliament should do. Their recommendations must address not only the dangers faced by children, but also enforcement, family poverty and the possible consequences of removing children’s wages. The report must be accurate, balanced and clear enough for readers who know little about mining.

Other Points of View

1. Robert Liston, the mine owner — Liston maintains that the mine is well managed and that reports of dangerous conditions are exaggerated. He argues that employing children is a normal and necessary part of

mining life, and that he cannot be held responsible for every decision made underground.

2. Mr Sykes, the pit manager — Sykes understands the realities of the mine more directly than Liston. He is cooperative but guarded, aware of the dangers underground and of the limits of his own power to change them.
3. Children working underground — Children may describe difficult or dangerous conditions, but they may also be frightened of speaking to officials, worried about losing wages or unsure whether telling the truth will help them and their families.
4. Families in Black Horse Yard — Many families depend upon the wages their children earn. They may want safer conditions while fearing that restrictions on children's work could remove income the household cannot replace.
5. Mrs Booth, a longer-standing member of the community — Mrs Booth gives the yard its longer memory and helps the Team understand how its families and circumstances have changed. Her perspective connects individual experiences with the wider history of the community.
6. Lord Ashley, MP supporting reform — Ashley believes the evidence makes a strong case for change, but knows that sympathy alone will not secure legislation.
7. Sir Robert Peel, Prime Minister, and those concerned about the consequences of legislation — Peel takes the evidence seriously but tests whether the Team's recommendations are necessary, practical, enforceable and capable of avoiding greater hardship.

What the Team Needs to Know

- Very young children were employed in some mines. Their jobs included opening and closing ventilation doors and helping to move coal through low, narrow passages. Hours could be long and the work could be dark, tiring and dangerous.
- The Huskar disaster in 1838 killed twenty-six children when floodwater entered the mine. News of the disaster drew national attention to the fact that young children were working underground.
- Parliament had received earlier reports and testimony, but it did not have a clear and reliable picture of conditions across the coalfields. The evidence gathered at the mine will contribute to one of the first extensive official investigations of children's employment underground.

- Testimony is an important form of evidence, but it must be gathered and recorded carefully. The Team should note who gave each account, what they could know directly and whether other evidence supports or challenges it.
- The national investigation conducted by the Children's Employment Commission helped lead to the Mines and Collieries Act of 1842. The Act prohibited all women and girls, and boys under ten, from working underground in mines.
- Mine owners had economic and political influence. The Team therefore needs to remain independent and make sure its conclusions are supported by strong evidence.
- The published Commission report included illustrations as well as written testimony. Together, these helped people understand work that usually took place out of sight underground.
- Working-class households often depended upon several small wages. Removing a child's earnings could make an already precarious family situation worse.
- The people who received most of the wealth generated by mining were not necessarily those who bore most of its physical and economic risks.
- An owner could act within the law and accepted custom while still benefiting from conditions that caused harm. Legal responsibility and moral responsibility were not necessarily the same.
- Passing legislation did not automatically end exploitation. Laws required inspection and enforcement, and the 1842 Act did not address working hours, compensation, schooling or the poverty of families who lost wages.

Curriculum Objectives

History

- Develop a coherent understanding of British history beyond 1066, with a focus on Victorian society, industry, and reform
- Construct historically grounded accounts using a range of primary and secondary sources
- Evaluate the usefulness and reliability of different sources, including testimony, official records, and contemporary publications
- Understand cause and consequence — why conditions developed as they did, and what drove the movement for reform

- Recognise how historical narratives are shaped by who produces them, for what purpose, and for which audience
- Begin to understand the significance of legislative change as a mechanism of social reform
- Develop chronological understanding by placing the investigation and subsequent reforms within the wider Victorian period and tracing developments across short and long timescales
- Identify continuity and change, similarity and difference, and historical significance in relation to children's working lives and attempts at reform
- Make connections between evidence from one Halifax mine and community and the wider development of industrial Britain and national parliamentary reform
- Develop historical perspective by considering how social position, economic circumstances and political power shaped the experiences and choices of different groups

Historical information introduced through the Knowledge Cards

- The roles of Queen Victoria, government ministers and Parliament in early Victorian Britain, including how laws were proposed and changed
- The movement of production from homes and small workshops into mechanised factories
- The importance of steam power, coal, machinery and expanding transport networks to industrial growth
- Migration in search of work and the rapid growth of industrial towns such as Halifax
- Social class and inequality in Victorian Britain, including differences in housing, food, clothing, health and opportunity, and contemporary attitudes towards poverty
- Changes during the later Victorian period, including wages, working hours, child-labour restrictions, education, literacy, sanitation and public health, alongside the persistence of poverty and poor living conditions
- Different historical interpretations of whether the Industrial Revolution improved people's lives

Geography

- Locate Halifax within Yorkshire and consider its place within the industrial landscape of Victorian Britain

- Understand how mining and industrial growth shaped settlement, housing, land use and patterns of wealth in Halifax
- Consider the relationship between coal, industry, transport and the growth of industrial towns
- Read and interpret maps, plans and surveys to investigate the physical and social organisation of Black Horse Yard and Liston's estate
- Consider how environmental and industrial conditions affected the lives of the people who lived and worked within them

English — Reading

- Read and evaluate historical non-fiction, including testimony, letters, official records, census material and formal reports
- Retrieve, record and summarise relevant information from several sources
- Make inferences from written and visual evidence and explain what supports them
- Distinguish between what a source states directly, what can reasonably be inferred and what remains uncertain
- Compare accounts of the same events or conditions, identifying agreement, contradiction and omission
- Consider how viewpoint, audience and purpose influence the language and content of a source
- Compare the language and organisation of personal, biographical and official writing

English — Writing

- Make concise notes from observation, discussion, images, maps, documentary sources and spoken testimony
- Record information systematically in inquiry books, distinguishing observation, testimony, inference and unanswered questions
- Record the substance of spoken testimony accurately, using direct quotation or reported speech where appropriate
- Select, group and organise information gathered from several sources
- Write for different audiences and purposes, including personal letters, biographical accounts, investigators' notes, findings and formal recommendations

- Adapt vocabulary, register and degree of formality to the audience and purpose
- Develop written conclusions and recommendations supported by relevant evidence
- Review, edit and revise writing in response to new evidence, questions and objections

PSHE and Citizenship

- Understand how laws are made and changed, and the role that evidence and public pressure play in that process
- Recognise that the rights of individuals — particularly those without political power — may require active protection
- Consider what it means to act on behalf of others who cannot act for themselves, and the responsibilities that entails
- Explore the relationship between individual action, collective pressure, and systemic change
- Consider different viewpoints when discussing questions of rights, responsibility and social reform
- Recognise that attempts to solve one problem can have unintended consequences for other people
- Explore how poverty and unequal power can restrict the choices available to individuals and families
- Consider who should bear the financial and social costs of reform

RE and Ethics / Philosophy

- Consider questions of justice, fairness, and moral responsibility in a historical context
- Reflect on why some injustices persist for a long time before being addressed, and what conditions make change possible
- Explore the difference between individual goodwill, charitable action and systems of legal responsibility
- Consider how religious belief, charity and ideas of personal responsibility may influence people's actions
- Explore moral dilemmas in which every available course of action may cause some harm
- Give reasons for ethical judgements, respond to opposing arguments and reconsider conclusions when circumstances are complicated

Oracy — Voice 21 Framework

- Cognitive: The Team's work — weighing testimony against official accounts, deciding which evidence is most persuasive, and constructing a report that Parliament cannot dismiss — places sustained demand on students' ability to reason aloud, organise their thinking, and build on one another's contributions. Discussion during evidence-handling and report construction develops the capacity to hold an argument across an extended exchange.
- Linguistic: The context generates consistent demand for precise, register-appropriate language. Students move between the language of testimony, the language of formal reporting, and the language of reasoned argument — developing an awareness of how register shifts according to audience and purpose.
- Social and Emotional: The commission places students in a position of genuine responsibility: their findings are addressed to Lord Ashley and the Children's Employment Commission and may be read by Parliament. This gives discussions and presentations real stakes, requiring students to consider how they present themselves, how they listen to disagreement, and how they manage the weight of speaking on behalf of others.
- Ask relevant, precisely worded questions and use follow-up questions to develop an inquiry
- Listen attentively to testimony and respond directly to what a speaker has said
- Build on, challenge and clarify the contributions of others respectfully
- Articulate and justify conclusions using relevant evidence
- Adapt vocabulary, tone and register when speaking to children, families, workers, an owner and political figures
- Consider competing viewpoints and revise a spoken argument in response to challenge
- Participate in sustained collaborative discussion, maintaining focus on a complex question

Literacy and Oracy Links

1. Recording testimony — When the Team speaks with those working underground, they must record accounts accurately and without distortion. This requires careful, precise note-making and an understanding that the words of another person are a form of evidence that must be treated honestly and completely.

2. Constructing findings and recommendations — Students review and amend a formal findings summary before developing recommendations for Parliament. They must select relevant evidence, state conclusions with appropriate caution and explain both what should change and what problems their proposals might create.
3. Evaluating conflicting accounts — Mine owners and child workers may give very different accounts of the same conditions. The Team must discuss these contradictions aloud — deciding which accounts to trust, which to question, and how to represent disagreement honestly in the report. This creates genuine demand for reasoned spoken argument.
4. Reading primary sources critically — Accounts, letters, official documents, and press reports from the period require students to read with care — identifying perspective, purpose, and what may have been omitted as well as what has been said.
5. Defending recommendations — When Sir Robert Peel challenges the Team's proposals, students must respond with authority, clarity and appropriate seriousness. The encounter creates a genuine reason to defend conclusions, acknowledge weaknesses, revise proposals and speak precisely to a powerful, sceptical audience.

Teacher Briefing: Children Working in Victorian Coal Mines

During the early nineteenth century, coal was essential to Britain's growing industries. It powered factories, heated homes and helped drive steam engines and railways. As demand increased, mines expanded and employed large numbers of men, women and children.

Children worked underground for several reasons. Mining families were often poor and depended upon every available wage. Employing children was also cheaper for mine owners, and their small size meant they could move through narrow passages that adults could not easily enter. At the time, many people regarded children's work as a normal and necessary part of family life.

Children carried out different jobs underground. Some worked as **trappers**, sitting alone beside ventilation doors and opening and closing them as workers and coal tubs passed. Others helped to move coal through the mine. **Hurriers** pulled loaded tubs, sometimes using a chain fastened around the body, while **thrusters** pushed from behind. Older children might work alongside adult miners at the coalface.

The work could be exhausting and dangerous. Underground passages were often dark, cramped and poorly ventilated. Children might work long hours and face injuries from falling rock, moving tubs, explosions and flooding. Trappers could spend much of the day alone and in almost complete darkness. Conditions varied between mines, however, and evidence about one mine should not automatically be treated as proof of conditions everywhere.

Public concern increased during the 1830s. In July 1838, twenty-six children were killed when water flooded the Huskar Pit near Silkstone in Yorkshire. The disaster drew attention to the employment of children underground, although it was not the only reason Parliament began investigating.

In 1840, the government established the **Children's Employment Commission** to investigate the work being done by children in mines and other industries. Investigators visited mining communities, interviewed children, parents, doctors, clergy and mine owners, and gathered evidence about working hours, jobs and conditions. Some mine owners cooperated, while others disputed the reports or attempted to defend existing practices.

One prominent campaigner was **Lord Ashley**, who later became the Earl of Shaftesbury. He used evidence collected by the Commission to argue that Parliament should protect children working underground.

The Commission's report was published in 1842. Its testimony and illustrations shocked many readers and contributed to the passing of the **Mines and Collieries Act 1842**. The Act prohibited all women and girls, and boys under the age of ten, from working underground. It was an important reform, but it did not immediately make mining safe. Enforcement was initially limited, and children aged ten and over could still work below ground.

The historical situation should not be presented simply as cruel mine owners exploiting powerless families. Mine owners benefited from cheap labour, but many families also depended upon children's wages to survive. Removing children from the mines could therefore protect them while also placing their families under greater financial pressure. This tension gives the students a genuine historical problem to investigate.

In this context, the students work as investigators examining conditions at **one Yorkshire mine**. Parliament has received troubling reports, but it needs reliable evidence. The Team's task is to visit the mine, speak with those

involved, examine the available evidence and report what they discover. They should not begin knowing exactly what their conclusions or recommendations will be.

Historical Note

This context is a carefully researched historical fiction. It combines real people, evidence and conditions with invented characters and events to create a coherent classroom inquiry. For dramatic purposes, the accident return for the Bradford and Halifax district is treated as if the five Halifax deaths relate directly to the fictional mine visited by the Team, although the original source does not establish that they occurred at one colliery. The investigation is set in summer 1841, before publication of the Commission's final report in 1842. Within the fiction, the return is therefore presented as preliminary evidence gathered during the inquiry. Teachers may wish to make this distinction explicit when discussing the use and limitations of historical sources with students.

Quotes Used in Episode 4

The children's quotations used in this context are drawn from evidence collected by the **Children's Employment Commission for its 1842 report on mines and collieries**. The Commission interviewed children working underground, as well as parents, miners and mine officials, across a number of mining districts. For classroom use, the quotations have been selected from published transcripts and digitised copies of this evidence and, where necessary, shortened by removing repetition or material not relevant to the activity. The intention has been to preserve the meaning and character of the children's original testimony. **The quotations are therefore based on genuine contemporary evidence rather than invented accounts.**

EPISODE 1 A ROOM IN PARLIAMENT	
Duration	Approximately 60 minutes
TIR / Keys	Lord Ashley, Member of Parliament (TIR) | Facilitator
Student outcome	Students have read a primary document, examined images, received a written commission, and begun to form an investigative stance.
Teaching route	1. Opening: the room 2. The document 3. Lord Ashley (TIR) 4. Images from the coalfields 5. The commission 6. The letter 7. Inquiry books 8. Closing
Key resources	Slides | Lord Ashley's letter (printed, one copy) | Three images per group (Resources Pack) | Inquiry books and pencils

Keep in view	• Keep Lord Ashley precise and serious — not sympathetic, not dramatic. • The letter creates productive uncertainty: authority on paper, uncertain authority in practice. Do not resolve this tension. • Students who notice the gap between the formal commission and the uncertain access are already thinking like investigators.

CURRICULUM FOCUS History | English Reading and Writing | PSHE and Citizenship | Oracy

Curriculum Connections

History: Victorian society and industry; the emergence of parliamentary reform; children's employment underground; the role of evidence in driving legislative change. Students begin to distinguish between different forms of evidence - statistical records, images, official testimony - and to consider what each can and cannot show.

English - Reading: Reading a primary-style document closely; drawing inferences from partial information; identifying what a source does and does not tell us.

English - Writing: Note-making and drawing in inquiry books from observation and discussion.

PSHE and Citizenship: The role of investigation in bringing hidden conditions into public view; speaking carefully on behalf of people whose situations they have not experienced.

Oracy: This episode places early demand on the cognitive and social-emotional strands - students reason aloud from unfamiliar evidence, hold tentative positions under uncertainty, and begin to develop the register appropriate to a team with a serious public responsibility.

Key Resources

- Slides
- Resources Pack:
  - Huskar Colliery disaster document – included; one copy per pair or student
  - The letter from Lord Ashley printed in advance - one copy
  - Copies of the three images - a set of three for each group.
- Inquiry books and pencils at tables before the lesson begins

Description

Episode 1 establishes the historical world and draws students gradually into the Team through encounter with evidence. By the end of the session, students have read a document, examined images, received a commission in writing, and begun to form the investigative stance the rest of the story will require.

EPISODE 1 — LESSON PLAN

Opening: the room

Students are sat at their desks. The teacher speaks in facilitator voice.

"Take a look at this room."

Slide - Victorian Parliamentary committee room.

Hold it in silence for a moment. Ask, “What do you notice?”

Discussion.

Narrator

"It is 1840. It is two years after news of a disaster at a mine in Yorkshire. Many people are troubled by what they have heard about conditions in the mines. They are demanding answers."

"A team has been called together in a room like this one - people trusted to look into what is happening, and to work out what to do next."

Pause.

"If you were part of a team like that - called in to look at the evidence - what would you want to know first?"

Take four or five responses. Do not evaluate them. Write the questions on a board where everyone can see them - these become the team's first working questions, and they will stay visible throughout the lesson.

The document

"Here is something that has been put before the team."

Slide - Huskar document.

➔ **Students also receive a printed copy.**

"Take a moment to read it. You might want to write a note in your inquiry books about anything you want to know more about."

Allow quiet reading time. Then, in facilitator voice:

"What do you make of this?"

Move through the discussion in three stages, keeping the language open throughout:

- "What facts has the document given us?"

- "What might some of these details suggest?"
- "What would we need to find out that this document does not tell us?"

Lord Ashley

Facilitator “A man enters the room.”

Slide - Lord Ashley

“This man is Lord Ashley. He is a Member of Parliament and a leading campaigner for an inquiry into the employment of children. He has helped persuade Parliament to establish the Children's Employment Commission and has come to speak to the Team of investigators.”

“You’ll want to take notes, there is likely to be a lot of information. This is an important man so you’ll want to make a good first impression.”

Encourage the students to sit up, ready for the meeting to start.

Step into role as Lord Ashley. Straighten up and convey the seriousness of an influential Member of Parliament who has helped secure an important national inquiry. He considers it both an opportunity and a risk. He does not want to get this wrong.

TIR

> "You have all had a chance to look at that document. I imagine it affected you as it affected me.
>
> Twenty-six children dead. The youngest was seven years old.
>
> We know what happened at Huskar. We know why those children were underground, and we know what work they were doing. What has not yet been established systematically is how widespread these conditions are: how many mines employ children, how many children are involved, what the work is like from day to day, and what risks they face.
>
> Reports have been coming in from across the coalfields. Some describe conditions that are very serious. Mine owners dispute them. They say the reports are exaggerated, or simply wrong. Parliament now needs systematic, reliable evidence, gathered carefully and honestly. Without it,

> the case for reform will be challenged and dismissed, and nothing will change.
>
> So a Commission has been appointed to conduct this inquiry. Teams are being sent to mines across the country to find out what is actually happening. Your team has been assigned to a mine in Yorkshire. You go there, you gain access, you find out what you can - what the work involves, who is doing it, what conditions are like - and you report back.
>
> The people who will read your report will be looking for reasons to dismiss it. So it needs to be thorough, and it needs to be honest. And where there are things you cannot establish with confidence, you say so."
>
> I will answer any questions you have now.

Pause.

Come out of role.

Facilitator "You've heard what Lord Ashley had to say. Write down in your inquiry books any notes you want to make at this stage. I'll read out again what he said, there was quite a lot of information."
Read out the words from Lord Ashley, stopping to give the students time to make notes.

"Now, he said he was prepared to answer any questions you might have. So take a moment, talk to the person next to you and write down the questions you would like answers to."

TIR as Lord Ashley answers the questions.

This is what he knows:

Why are children working in mines?

"Mining families are poor. The wages a child earns underground are part of what keeps the household going. For many families, there is no alternative - or none that they can see. It has been this way for a long time, and most people in mining communities regard it as simply how things are."

Who sends them down there?

"In most cases, the parents. Sometimes a father who works at the same mine. The children are hired by the mine owner, but it is usually the family that makes the arrangement. The father may even be responsible for paying his own children's wages out of what he earns - which means he has a direct interest in their working. It is not a simple picture."

Why use children specifically?

"Two reasons, mainly. The first is cost - a child is paid far less than an adult. The second is size. Some of the passages underground are very narrow. Too narrow for a grown person to move through easily, or at all. Children can get through them. That is why they are used as hurriers and thrusters - moving the coal tubs through passages where adults cannot go. And trappers need to sit in very confined spaces for long periods. A child fits where an adult does not."

- Children are employed in mines across the country. This is not unusual or hidden - it is standard practice, and has been for a long time.
- Reports have come in describing poor and dangerous conditions in various mines. He has read these reports.
- Mine owners have disputed these reports. Some have written to Parliament directly to challenge them.
- The evidence gathered so far is incomplete and contested. Parliament needs a systematic, independently conducted investigation.
- The Children's Employment Commission has been appointed to gather that evidence systematically.
- Teams of investigators are being sent to mines across the country. This team is one of several.
- The team's destination is a mine in Yorkshire.
- The team has a letter of authorisation. It should secure access, but the owner is not legally compelled to cooperate.
- He does not know what the team will find. He has suspicions, but he is careful not to state them as facts.
- Whatever the team finds, the report must be able to withstand challenge from MPs who do not want to act.

Images from the coalfields

TIR

“I’ve brought along some images made by people who have visited the mines. They might be of use to you.”

- ➔ **Hand out the images - one set of three for each group. Give the students time to look at the images.**

“When you visit the mine, search out children like these, talk to them, and find out about their lives.”

Show the first slide.

Encourage the students to make notes in their inquiry books.

Slide: a trapper - a child seated alone in near-darkness beside a ventilation door.

Hold the image in silence for a moment before speaking. As you read give the students time to make notes and ask questions.

"This is a trapper. Their job is to sit beside a ventilation door underground and open it when workers or coal tubs need to pass through, then close it again behind them. The doors are there to keep air moving through the mine - preventing the dangerous buildup of toxic and explosive gases. Someone has to operate them, all day, every time anything passes. It is not physically demanding work, but the trapper sits alone, in near-complete darkness, for the whole of their shift. Some of these children are very young - seven or eight years old. They may have a small light, or they may not. They wait, and they listen for the sound of someone coming and then open the door."

Slide: a hurrier - a child pulling a loaded tub with a chain harness fastened around the body.

"This is a hurrier. Their job is to move the loaded coal tubs from the coalface through the underground passages to the bottom of the shaft, where the coal is brought to the surface. The tubs are heavy. In the narrower passages there is no room to push from behind, so the hurrier pulls - and you can see here how they do it. The chain is attached to a belt or girdle around the waist, and the hurrier crawls or crouches forward, dragging the tub behind them. The passages can be very low - not enough height to stand upright. This work is done by children because the passages are too narrow for adults."

Slide: children and adults working near the coalface, including a child leading a mine horse.

Near the coalface

"And here, children working closer to the coalface alongside adults. The coalface is where the coal is actually cut from the rock. It is the most dangerous part of the mine - the roof is less stable, there is dust in the air, and the risk of an accident is higher. These children are doing heavier work than the trappers. Some may be older - twelve, thirteen, fourteen. But as you can see, they are children nonetheless. This one is leading a horse to fetch the coal."

The commission

TIR

> "We have identified a mine in Yorkshire. You will travel there and request access from the owner. He may cooperate fully. He may not. Either way, what you observe and what you are told will need to be recorded with care.
>
> You are to gain access to the mine. Talk to the people working there - adults and children - and come back with a full account.
>
> I have written a letter of authorisation. It confirms that you are acting under the Children's Employment Commission and that access to the mine should be granted. Whether the owner chooses to respect that is, I am afraid, another matter entirely. You will need to be persuasive.
>
> The children working in that mine deserve an honest account. So does Parliament."

Slide: Letter

- ➔ **One printed copy of the letter is distributed and passed around the class.**

The letter

> Office of the Children's Employment Commission London October 1840

> To whom it may concern,
>
> The bearers of this letter are investigators appointed by the Children's Employment Commission, acting under the authority of Parliament and with the support of Lord Ashley, Member of Parliament.
>
> They have been charged with examining working conditions at your mine, with particular attention to the employment of children underground. They are authorised to speak with workers and their families, to observe the premises where access is granted, and to review such records as you are willing to make available.
>
> The Commission asks that you extend full cooperation to this investigation. Its findings will inform Parliamentary deliberation on matters of considerable public concern.
>
> Lord Ashley Children's Employment Commission House of Commons, London

TIR

“I will leave you now. I look forward to reading your report. Godspeed.”

Teacher steps out of role as Lord Ashley.

Twilight:

"So, there we have it. Are we all clear about what is being asked of us?

What do you make of this letter? What does it give us? And what does it not give us?"

The gap between authority on paper and authority in practice is worth dwelling on. The owner can refuse entry. The letter requests; it does not compel. Students who notice this are already thinking like investigators.

Inquiry books

Students return to their inquiry books.

"Before we leave this point in the investigation - before we have seen anything underground - we need to note what we are bringing with us. What we already know, what we are uncertain about, and what we most need to find out."

Students write three headings in their inquiry books: *What we know*, *What we are not sure about*, *What we need to find out*. They work quietly, drawing on the document, the images, and the discussion. The teacher circulates in twilight voice: "The 'not sure about' column is often the most useful one. It tells us where to look." "If you have a question you cannot answer yet, write it down. That is what the investigation is for."

Closing

Gather students back together. Facilitator voice.

"We have a commission. We have a letter that may or may not get us through the door. We have some images - and a list of questions we cannot yet answer."

A pause.

"The mine owner knows we are coming. We do not yet know what he will show us, or what he will tell us, or even if he will grant us access to the mine. We will find out soon."

Leave it there.

TEACHER NOTES

On Lord Ashley in TIR

Lord Ashley was a real historical figure - an evangelical reformer, later the Earl of Shaftesbury, genuinely committed to the welfare of working children. Keep him precise and serious in TIR, not sympathetic in a sentimental way. He is not distressed by what he has found. He is determined, and he is careful.

On the letter

The gap the letter opens - authority on paper, uncertain authority in practice - is one of the episode's most productive tensions. Students who notice it are already thinking like investigators. Do not close it. If students ask whether the owner has to let them in, the honest answer within the fiction is: the letter requests, it does not compel. What the team does if access is refused is a question for the next episode.

EPISODE 2 MEETING THE OWNER	
Duration	Approximately 75 minutes
TIR / Keys	Robert Liston, mine owner (TIR) | Facilitator | Narrator
Student outcome	Students have gathered and compared conflicting evidence and begun to weigh the reliability of different accounts.
Teaching route	1. Opening: the journey north 2. The document 3. Preparing questions for the owner 4. Arriving at the mine 5. Robert Liston's office 6. Meeting the owner (TIR) 7. Managing the interview 8. After the interview: reflection 9. Inquiry books: drawing 10. Closing
Key resources	Slides | Pit accidents document (one per pair) | Inquiry books and pencils
Keep in view	• Liston believes his own account — he is not a villain. Maintain his self-assurance throughout. • The document found at the hotel shifts the mood before the meeting begins. • Students must stay in investigator role throughout the interview — direct rather than accusatory.
CURRICULUM FOCUS History | English Reading and Writing | PSHE and Citizenship | Oracy	

Curriculum Connections

History: Working conditions in Victorian mines; attitudes to child labour; the role of different perspectives in historical understanding. Students encounter a contemporary point of view that challenges easy moral judgement and begin to understand that historical actors rarely see themselves as doing wrong.

English - Reading: Reading a primary-style document closely; drawing inferences from data that is partial and disturbing; identifying what a source does and does not tell us.

English - Writing: Note-making in inquiry books; drafting questions for a formal interview with a powerful figure.

Oracy: This episode places sustained demand on all three strands. The cognitive strand is active throughout the document discussion and question preparation - students must reason from evidence, organise their thinking into questions precise enough to put to a resistant witness, and hold their position under pressure during the interview. The linguistic strand is tested by the encounter with the owner, which requires students to speak with precision and restraint to someone who outranks them. The social-emotional strand is most tested here: students who feel angry after reading the document must learn to manage that response in the service of the investigation.

Key Resources

- Slides
- Resources Pack:
  - Pit accidents document - printed, one per pair
- Inquiry books and pencils at tables

Description

Set in summer 1841, Episode 2 moves the Team from London to Halifax. An unexpected document found in their hotel room shifts the mood of the investigation before it has properly begun. The following morning, the Team meets the mine owner - a man whose attitudes and values require students to think carefully about historical judgement, moral complexity, and the discipline required of a serious investigator.

EPISODE 2 — LESSON PLAN

Opening: the journey north

Slide: A train at Euston station, summer 1841

Students are gathered on the carpet. Narrator voice.

> "The Team left London early. The railway carried them north through the morning - through the flat country north of the city, then gradually into hillier ground as the hours passed. By the afternoon they had reached Leeds, where they changed to a coach. The road toward Halifax climbed steadily, and the landscape around them changed again. The fields here were broken up by stone walls. There were mill chimneys visible in the valleys below. And here and there, rising above the fields, the winding gear of a colliery."

Slide 2: a horse and carriage arriving outside a provincial hotel in a busy market town. Cloth factories in the background.

> "They arrived in Halifax in the late afternoon. Halifax was busy - a market town, but also an industrial one. The streets smelled of coal smoke. The hotel was respectable enough. The Team were shown to their rooms."

Hold the image in silence for a moment.

> "It had been a long day. Tomorrow they would travel to the mine."

The document

> "But when they reached their rooms, they found something unexpected. On the table was a plain envelope. No name on it. No indication of who had left it there."

Slide 3 - an unmarked envelope on the table

Pause.

Twilight:

"What do you make of this? Let’s open it?"

Open the envelope.

Slide 4: List of accidents

➔ **Hand out the copies of the list of accidents - one per pair.**

Allow quiet reading time. The teacher says nothing during this. Let the document do its work.

When students have read:

"What do you make of this?"

Observation first - what is stated, what the figures show. The teacher in twilight voice, contributing alongside: "The ages here - some are really young." "Can you make out any patterns in the accidents?"

Then:

"What does this document not tell us?"

Draw out: it does not tell us who left it, or why. It does not tell us whether these figures are complete, or how they were gathered. Students are likely to notice that five of the deaths involve a mine in Halifax, which is the one they are visiting the next day. If not, draw attention to it.

"And that question - who left this, and why - is one we may not be able to answer. But we write it down."

Students note their observations and questions in inquiry books. Two or three minutes, quiet, independent.

Notes from the document about the Halifax mine

The original return contains five deaths recorded at Halifax. “Ditto” in the location column means Halifax.

Date Name Age Verdict recorded in the return

17 April 1838 James Lumley 9 “The like. With caution there is no need of safety-lamps in this district.”

31 August 1838 Francis Taylor 11 “Explosion of fire-damp. Neglect of John Crossley, his master, in not going first in pit.”

11 June 1840 William Sheard 30 “Explosion of fire-damp, deceased persisting in going into the pit, although warned at seeing the fire-damp as he went on.”

15 June 1840 Joseph Sheard Not recorded “Explosion of fire-damp. Deceased compelled to go in by Wm. Sheard, his employer.”

26 February 1841 Jonathan Sutcliffe Not recorded “Accidental and unexpected explosion of fire-damp.”

All five Halifax deaths resulted from firedamp explosions. Two victims were definitely children: Francis Taylor, aged 11, and James Lumley, aged nine. The ages of Joseph Sheard and Jonathan Sutcliffe are not given.

“Firedamp” was the miners’ name for methane gas trapped in coal mines.

Methane is colourless and odourless. When it mixes with air, a naked flame or spark can ignite it, causing a sudden and often devastating underground explosion. In 1841, candles and oil lamps could therefore be extremely dangerous in poorly ventilated mines.

The word damp came from an old mining term for harmful gases or vapours. Firedamp was the gas that caught fire; it was not dampness or water.

Preparing questions for the owner

"Tomorrow morning, we will go to the mine and meet its owner. His name is Robert Liston. Lord Ashley told us he may cooperate, or he may not. Either way, we have one opportunity to put questions to him directly. We need to use it carefully."

Twilight voice as the discussion develops.

"Talk to the person next to you. What do we most need to find out from this man? And how do we ask it in a way that he will actually answer?"

Allow time for paired discussion. Then bring the group together.

"What questions have we got?"

Take responses and build a shared list where everyone can see it. As questions are offered, the teacher asks of each one:

"What are we hoping that question will tell us?" "Is there a way to ask that which is more likely to get an honest answer?" "Is there anything this question assumes that we have not yet established?"

The list should end up with six to eight questions, precise and purposeful. Students copy the final list into their inquiry books - these are the questions the Team is taking into the interview.

"One thing worth thinking about. Robert Liston is a man of considerable standing in Halifax. He employs a large number of people in this town. He has agreed to see us, which he did not have to do. If we go in aggressively, or start accusing him of things before we have heard what he has to say, the interview will be over. And we will have learned nothing. How we conduct ourselves in that room matters as much as the questions we ask."

Arriving at the mine

Narrate:

“Early the next morning the Team travelled up to the mine. The road out of Halifax climbed steeply, following the line of the valley before turning onto rougher ground. The air was cold and smelled of damp stone. After about half an hour, they heard it before they saw it - a low, rhythmic creaking, and the sound of horses moving in a slow, steady circle. Then the pithead came into view above the rise: a timber frame over the shaft, the horse gin turning beside the shaft and, a little farther away, a low stone pumping house with smoke coming from its narrow chimney. A man was waiting for them at the gate. He introduced himself as Robert Liston and took them into his office.”

Robert Liston’s office

Slide: the office.

Hold the image.

Twilight:

"Let’s pause the story. What do we notice?"

Observation first. The teacher in twilight voice: "The Bible is within arm's reach - and so is the ledger." "The portrait behind him - what has he chosen to show about himself in that painting?" "What does the room tell us about this man before he has said a word?"

When observation has been thorough:

"What might this suggest about his values? And what are we not sure about yet?"

Hold the uncertainty.

Meeting the owner: TIR

The teacher moves to the chair at the front - a deliberate, unhurried move. Sits. Picks up an imaginary letter and begins to open it with an imaginary knife. Does not look up immediately.

When the teacher looks up, Liston speaks. He is not hostile. He is comfortable, and he expects to be treated accordingly.

> "Good morning. I trust you had a comfortable night. Halifax is a fine town - I have lived here all my life."

[A pause while he sets the letter aside.]

> "I understand you have come a long way. The Children's Employment Commission. Yes. I received the letter. I have no objection to your visit - none at all. I run a well-managed operation and I have nothing to conceal."

[He refers to the ledger briefly, as if confirming something, then closes it.]

> "Now. What is it you would like to know?"

Note: Liston is a busy man who manages a substantial workforce - he may reasonably consult the ledger on his desk when asked about specific names, dates, or figures. Referring to the notes in role, as if checking a record, is entirely consistent with his character and keeps the fiction intact.

The interview begins. Students ask from their prepared list. The teacher responds in role, guided by the following:

On the mine itself

> "The seams here are thin - what we call the Halifax Hard Bed and the Soft Bed. Good coal, well regarded for gas and coke, but you cannot put a tall man into a two-foot seam. The shaft is nearly sixty fathoms deep. At the surface you will see the horse gin - a horse walking a circular track,

> winding the rope that brings the coal up. It has served us well."

Note: sixty fathoms is approximately one hundred metres.

On why children work underground

> "The roadways are low. In some sections a grown man cannot move through them comfortably, or at all. The children can. That is the plain fact of it. The children are not forced upon us. Their parents bring them, or the colliers engage them to assist with their work. If a man says his son or daughter is fit for the work, that is his responsibility. That is how it is done throughout this district."

Note: roadways are the underground tunnels used for transport, ventilation, and travel between the vertical shaft and the active coal face.

On the ages of children

> "I employ those who are capable of doing the work. A child of eight or nine can manage a trapper's door perfectly well. It requires no great strength. It is not dangerous work if the child is sensible and does their job."

On the deaths document, if students raise it

> "Mining is a dangerous occupation. Everyone who works in my pit understands that. I do not send workers underground to be killed - that would be contrary to my interests as well as my conscience. Accidents happen. They happen in factories, on farms, on the roads. I cannot be held responsible for the carelessness of individual workers, or for the nature of the ground itself."

On his responsibilities to the community

> "I employ a great many workers in this town. Their families depend on those wages. I provide housing for some of them. I contribute to the church. If Parliament decides to interfere in how I run this mine, those families will suffer. Has Lord Ashley considered that?"

On the anonymous document, if students raise it

> "I would not know anything about that. There are people in this town who like to cause trouble for their own reasons. I would not set too much store by an anonymous document."

On his Christian faith, if students ask

> "My faith is my own business. I will say this: I do not believe God places people in their stations without reason. A man who works hard and lives honestly may better himself. That is as it should be."

Managing the interview

If the conversation becomes heated or a student challenges Liston in a way that risks closing the exchange down, the teacher steps out of role by standing - a clear, simple signal - and speaks in facilitator voice:

"Let's pause for a moment. He is not going to respond well if we push him on that directly. What do we actually need from him - and how might we get it?"

Short discussion. Then: "Let's go back in and try a different approach."

Teacher returns to the chair and resumes.

When the interview has run its course:

> "Well. I think that covers the ground. I have a busy morning ahead of me. I think that will do. I expect you will want to get back to London. Good day to you."

Teacher stands and moves away from the chair. Out of role.

This is a crucial point for the Team. They will need to challenge him by making clear that they intend to inspect the mine.

Liston's response is one of genuine surprise, and then firm resistance.

"Into the mine? I don't think that will be necessary. You have heard from me directly. I have given you a full account of how this operation is run. What would you expect to find down there that I have not already told you?"

If the Team presses, he remains resistant.

"The mine is a working pit. I cannot have people moving through the workings who do not know what they are doing. It is a question of safety as much as anything else. My workers have work to do."

If the Team produces the letter:

[He takes it, reads it again carefully, and sets it on the desk.]

"I have read this letter. It says you are authorised to observe the premises where access is granted. I am not persuaded that access to the underground workings is what Lord Ashley had in mind. However."

[A pause. He looks out of the window toward the pithead.] Give the students an opportunity to challenge him. Resist, but eventually agree. Reluctantly.

"I will allow it. You may go down with the overman. He will show you what there is to see."

If students ask to speak with workers, or with the families of those who died, Liston's surprise is genuine.

"The workers? I cannot imagine what they would tell you that I have not. They are employed to dig coal, not to give evidence to a Royal Commission. I would ask you not to disrupt them while they are working."

He does not forbid it directly - the letter does not give him grounds to - but his expectation is clear. He does not raise the families himself. If the Team asks about speaking to them:

"The families. I see."

[A pause.]

"That is your affair. I cannot stop you knocking on doors in Halifax. I would ask only that you are careful about what you stir up. These are people who depend on this mine for their livelihood. Unsettling them does nobody any good."

He does not say they cannot. He makes clear he would prefer they did not.

When access has been agreed:

"Sykes - my overman - will take you down. I would ask you to follow his instructions underground. He knows that mine. You do not."

[He stands.]

"Good day to you."

Teacher steps away from the chair. Out of role.

After the interview: reflection

Twilight voice.

"What did you make of that? Did he convince or do you think he was hiding something?”

Talk to the person next to you. What did we find out? And what more do we want to know?"

Two or three minutes of paired discussion. Then bring the group together.

"What are we not sure about? And what did he not tell us - what did he avoid, or deflect?"

Students add a section to their notes in inquiry books, headed: *What Liston said - and what we think of it.* Three or four entries, in their own words. Lastly: *what we hope to find.*

Inquiry books: drawing

"Before we finish today - sketch the entrance to the mine. It will form part of the evidence for the final report.” Show slide 16 for reference.

Closing

Gather students back. Facilitator voice.

"We have met Liston. We have our notes. We have questions he answered and questions he did not."

A pause.

"Next we go into the mine. He has said we may visit. What we will be allowed to see - and who we will be allowed to speak to - we do not yet know."

Another pause.

"And there is still the question of who left that envelope in the hotel room."

Leave it there.

Teacher Notes

On managing the owner interview

The most common difficulty in this kind of TIR is students who want to use the encounter to express moral outrage rather than gather information. The preparation work - thinking carefully about what questions are most likely to get honest answers - is the best preventative. If a student asks an accusatory question, Liston can respond with polite firmness: "I am not sure I understand what you are suggesting." This keeps the encounter alive without rewarding the approach. If the difficulty persists, step out of role and have the facilitator conversation described in the plan.

On Liston's characterisation

Liston is not a villain. He is a man whose worldview is internally consistent and, within its own terms, coherent. He believes in the social order he inhabits, in his obligations to his community as he understands them, and in his own moral seriousness. Students who find him easy to dismiss are not yet thinking historically. The most productive moments in this interview are usually when students find themselves unable to immediately refute something he has said - when his logic, however uncomfortable, holds together. Do not steer students toward a conclusion. Let the discomfort sit.

On stepping out of role

Standing is enough. The shift should be unhurried and clear, not dramatic. When you return to the chair, take a moment before speaking - let the class settle back into the fiction before Liston reappears.

On the bible and the ledger

This detail is worth returning to across the story. Liston is a Christian man who also runs a profitable business and does not experience these as contradictions. Students who notice this and sit with it, rather than resolving it quickly, are doing serious historical thinking.

On the resistance sequence

The moment when Liston assumes the interview is over is the most important in this section. Do not rush past it. Let the team register that he considers the inquiry concluded - and then decide, as investigators, what to do next. Some students will produce the letter immediately. Others may try to argue their case first. Either is legitimate, and both are worth allowing to develop before

the letter is produced. The letter is most powerful when it is the last resort rather than the first move.

If students struggle to persuade him and become frustrated, step out of role briefly: "He thinks we have everything we need. Do we? And if we don't - what is our strongest argument for going underground?" Then return to the chair.

Liston's reluctance to have the team speak with workers is not a prohibition - the letter gives the team the right to do so. But his assumption that they will not want to is itself a piece of evidence. Students who notice it and write it down are thinking as investigators.

On the anonymous document

If students want to know immediately who left it, stay in twilight voice: "Who in this town might want us to have this information - and why might they not want to be named?" This turns the question into an investigative one rather than a narrative one. Do not resolve it. It may never be resolved, which is itself an authentic feature of historical investigation.

On the five Halifax deaths: detailed notes for TIR preparation

Have these close at hand so you can refer to them when questioned by the team. Frame it as part of the fiction: “Francis Taylor, you say. Let me look in my ledger.” Pause as you read your notes. “Ah yes, I remember now.” Read the note:

> Francis Taylor, aged 11 - firedamp explosion, neglect of his master John Crossley

The coroner found Crossley, the boy's master, at fault - not the mine management. Liston puts distance between himself and Crossley: "The boy's master was found at fault by the coroner. Crossley should have gone into that section first to check it was safe. He did not. I cannot be held responsible for the judgement of every man who works underground."

> James Lumley, aged 9 - firedamp explosion, coroner's note that safety lamps were unnecessary in this district

Liston uses the coroner's own note: "The coroner recorded that safety lamps were not required in this district. That was the considered view of the inquest. We were working within what was understood at the time to be safe practice."

If pressed, he adds quietly: "The boy was nine years old. I am aware of that." He does not elaborate.

> If students press on the ages of Francis Taylor and James Lumley

"Their families brought them to work. I did not go to their homes and take them. Their fathers made that arrangement, as fathers do in every mining community in this county. The wages those boys earned went to their families. That is the reality of life in a town like Halifax."

> Joseph Sheard and Jonathan Sutcliffe - ages not recorded in the document

If students ask: "Boys working in the pit at that time - I would say neither was above thirteen. Beyond that I cannot be certain." He moves on.

> William Sheard, aged 30 - warned, persisted in going underground regardless

Liston is comfortable here. "Sheard was warned. That is in the coroner's record. He was told there was firedamp and went in regardless. I cannot compel a man to follow instruction if he chooses not to."

> Joseph Sheard - compelled to go in by William Sheard

This is the most difficult entry for Liston. "William Sheard - a worker, not a manager - sent the other man in, having already disregarded a warning himself. The decision was made by Sheard, not by me or anyone acting on my behalf." If students push on whether Joseph had a choice: "I cannot speak to what passed between them underground. The coroner recorded what he found." He will not say more.

> Jonathan Sutcliffe - accidental and unexpected explosion

"The coroner recorded it as accidental and unexpected. I have nothing to add to that." Short. He moves on.

> If students ask why so many Halifax deaths involved firedamp

"The seams here are thin. Thin seams mean low roadways, and low roadways mean firedamp can accumulate in ways that are harder to manage than in a larger, better-ventilated pit. That is the nature of the coal in this district."

> If students press on what precautions are taken

"We ventilate the workings. The trappers manage the ventilation doors - that movement of air is what keeps the gas from building up. Before a shift begins, a responsible man goes ahead to check for gas. If gas is detected, the section is not entered until it has cleared. Workers carry lamps. In sections where gas is a risk, we use the Davy lamp, designed not to ignite firedamp. In sections where gas is not expected, workers use candles." If students ask why candles at all: "The Davy lamp gives less light. In a narrow, low roadway where a boy is hauling coal, a candle lets him see what he is doing. It is a judgement that has to be made." This answer sits uncomfortably beside the coroner's note on James Lumley - the district was judged not to require safety lamps, and a nine-year-old died in a firedamp explosion. Do not point this out. Let students find it.

> On the families of those who died

William Sheard almost certainly had a family. Joseph Sheard shares his surname and was likely a younger relation. If students ask whether families were supported: "The law does not require me to compensate a worker's family for an accidental death. That is the position in law. What I will say is that I am not an unfeeling man. Where I have been able to assist, I have done so." If pressed on what assistance: "In some cases a collection was made among the workers. In some cases I contributed to that collection myself. The church has a role in these matters, and I support the church. Beyond that, I do not think it is appropriate to discuss private arrangements made with individual families. There are workhouses for those who can not provide for themselves."

The legal position is accurate: in 1840 there was no requirement for an employer to pay anything to the family of a worker killed in an accident. The Fatal Accidents Act, which began to change this, was not passed until 1846. The Employers' Liability Act came in 1880. A worker killed underground in 1840 left his family with nothing unless the employer chose to give something voluntarily, or unless other workers contributed from their own wages. If

students find this shocking and say so, Liston responds without defensiveness: "A man who works in a mine understands the risks he takes. I provide the work. The man provides the labour. What happens underground is, in the eyes of the law, a matter between a man and his occupation." He is accurately describing the law as it stood. The difficulty of that - something deeply unjust that was also entirely legal - is one of the most important things this episode can leave open.

On oracy

The question preparation is the episode's most significant oracy moment before the interview itself. Watch for questions that are too broad or too leading. The facilitation question "what are we hoping that question will tell us?" usually produces a more precise rewrite. During the interview, the social-emotional demand is most acute: students are required to manage a strong emotional response in the service of a professional task. In the reflection discussion afterwards, ask what difference that discipline made to what they found out.

EPISODE 3 UNDERGROUND	
Duration	Approximately 75 minutes
TIR / Keys	Mr Sykes, mine official (TIR) | Narrator (descent) | Facilitator
Student outcome	Students have written a personal letter about the underground experience, working with two contrasting models to understand how register shapes the same material differently.
Teaching route	1. Opening: arriving at the pithead 2. TIR: Mr Sykes 3. Questions for Sykes 4. The descent: narration 5. From narration to notes 6. Listening to the letters 7. Comparing the two texts 8. Closing
Key resources	Slides | Narration of the descent, one set per pair (Resources Pack) | Two writing examples, one set per pair (Resources Pack) | Inquiry books and pencils
Keep in view	• Sykes is guarded but honest — his hints are more powerful than direct statement. • The question 'Does Liston ever go underground?' is the most significant. Prepare for the pause it creates. • If students raise the deaths document, Sykes does not dismiss it. He confirms it directly.
CURRICULUM FOCUS History | English Reading and Writing | Oracy	

Curriculum Connections

History: Direct encounter with underground working conditions; children's specific roles in the mine; the gap between an owner's account and the reality of the work. Students begin to gather first-hand observational evidence and to test what Liston told them against what they find.

English - Writing: Writing in two contrasting registers for two different audiences and purposes - a personal letter and an official report extract. Understanding how the

same experience is shaped differently by audience, purpose, and the relationship between writer and reader.

English - Reading: Reading two contrasting examples of the same experience written in different registers; analysing the choices each writer has made.

Oracy: The questioning of Sykes before the descent places demands on the cognitive and linguistic strands - students must frame questions precisely to a witness who is cooperative but guarded, and must read what he does not say as carefully as what he does. The social-emotional strand is active throughout: students are encountering something genuinely disturbing and must hold their response in check in order to observe carefully.

Key Resources

- Slides
- Resources Pack:
  - The narration of the descent into the pit printed, one set per pair.
  - The two writing examples printed, one set per pair.
- Inquiry books and pencils at tables

Description

Episode 3 takes the team underground. The opening TIR as Sykes gives the team information, hints at the gap between Liston's account and the reality of the mine, and allows students to ask questions before the descent. The narration of the descent follows. The episode ends with a sustained writing task in which students write a personal letter about the experience, working with two contrasting examples to understand how register, audience, and purpose shape the same material differently.

EPISODE 3 — LESSON PLAN

Opening: arriving at the pithead

Students are gathered on the carpet. Narrator voice.

> "The team arrived at the mine early the following morning. The air was cold and the ground was wet underfoot. At the pithead, the whim gin was already turning - the horses moving in their slow circle, the rope winding steadily. Waiting beside the cage was a broad-shouldered man in working clothes, his face weathered and his hands dark with coal dust even at this hour. He did not smile when the team approached, but he nodded and waited for them to come to him."

Slide: Mr Sykes at the pithead.

TIR: Mr Sykes

The teacher moves - unhurried, settling into a different physical register like the man on the slide.

> "Morning. I'm Sykes. I'm the overman here - I run the underground workings. Mr Liston has asked me to take you down.
>
> Before we go anywhere near that cage, there are things you need to know.
>
> First, the lamps."

He holds out imaginary Davy lamps - one for each member of the team. He waits until everyone has taken one before continuing.

> "Davy lamps. You'll have heard of them. The flame burns inside a fine wire mesh - the mesh stops the flame reaching any gas in the air around it. In a mine with firedamp, a naked flame can kill everyone in the passage. These won't. Keep them close. Don't set them down. Don't open them underground for any reason. If the flame changes colour - turns blue at the top - you stop where you are and you tell me immediately. Is that understood?"

He looks at the team. He is not asking for confirmation so much as making sure they have actually heard him.

> "Second. You stay with me. The passages branch and they are not lit. If you go down a passage without a lamp you will not find your way back. The mine is not a building. It does not behave like one.
>
> Third. Keep your heads down in the lower passages. The roof is low in some sections. Lower than you would expect. If I duck, you duck.
>
> Mr Liston will have told you the mine is well managed. Aye, well. Keep the lamp close and don't set it down."

A brief pause - not dramatic, just a beat before he moves on.

> "There'll be workers down there. Men and children both. They have work to do. I'd ask you not to get in the way of the corves - the wagons - when they're moving. The passages are narrow and a loaded corve won't stop for you.
>
> You'll see the ventilation doors as we go through. The trappers manage them - they open and close them as the corves come through. It keeps the air moving through the workings. It's important work."

Another pause - slightly longer than necessary.

> "Any questions before we go down?"

Questions for Sykes

The team has the opportunity to ask questions. Sykes answers carefully - he is not evasive, but he is precise. He gives the team what they ask for and no more.

Some guidance on likely questions:

On how many children work in the mine

> "A fair number. I couldn't give you a figure off the top of my head. Trappers, hurriers, thrusters - most of the lighter work underground is done by children. Small people fit where large ones don't."

On how old the youngest children are

> "Youngest trapper I have at present - I'd say eight. Possibly younger. Their parents would know better than me."

On whether it is dangerous for children

> "Mining is dangerous. For everyone." *A pause.* "I take every precaution I'm able to."

On the firedamp deaths recorded in the document, if students raise them

> "I know about those." *He does not elaborate immediately. If pressed:* "Firedamp is the difficulty in this district. The seams are thin and the roadways are low. Gas collects where there's not enough ventilation. We check the workings before each shift. We use the Davy lamp where there's risk." *If pressed further on why candles are still used in some sections:* "The Davy lamp gives less light. In a low passage where a child is hauling coal - you need to see where you're going."* He says it matter-of-factly. He is not defending it. He is describing it.

On whether Liston visits the mine underground

A very slight pause before he answers.

> "Mr Liston manages the business side of the operation. He leaves the underground workings to me."

That is all he says. He moves on.

On what the team should look out for underground

> "Look at everything. That's what you're here for."

When questions have run their course, Sykes says:

> "Right. We'll go down."

Teacher steps out of role.

The descent: narration

Facilitator

"Let’s all sit down. Close your eyes if you want to. Let's hear what happens after the team steps into the cage."

Students settle. Some may close their eyes. The teacher reads the narration at an unhurried pace, with pauses where the text breathes.

Slide: Descent down the shaft.

> The gate slams shut. There is hardly room to move. Shoulders press against shoulders. The lamps are held close. Above, there is still daylight, a bright square of sky at the top of the shaft.
>
> Then, without warning, the cage drops.
>
> There is a lurch in the stomach. Hands reach for the sides. Boots shift on the floor. The cage rattles and bangs as it gathers speed, the noise filling the narrow space. The walls of the shaft rush past only inches away, black rock, wet timber, darkness.
>
> The square of daylight above is already getting smaller.
>
> Smaller.
>
> The cage keeps falling.
>
> Water spits through the gaps and strikes faces and hands. The rope groans overhead. Metal scrapes against metal. Every jolt seems to come without warning, throwing everyone slightly off balance before the cage steadies and continues down.

No one can see how far there is still to go.

The daylight is now no bigger than a window.

Then a hand.

Then a coin.

Then it disappears.

For a moment there is nothing but darkness and noise.

The lamps tremble with the movement of the cage. Their flames give only a weak yellow glow, enough to catch a face, a hand gripping the rail, the shine of water on the shaft wall. Beyond that small circle of light there is nothing.

Down and down.

The ears strain for any change in the sound, anything that might mean the bottom is near. But the cage keeps moving. The rope creaks. Water falls. The wooden guides rush past.

And then, suddenly, it begins to slow.

The noise changes. The cage shudders, drops a little further, and stops with a heavy jolt.

Everything is still.

For a few seconds nobody moves.

There is no daylight now. No sky. No sense of the world above.

Only the small flames of the lamps.

The gate is pulled open.

Beyond it is darkness.

A lamp is raised, and slowly the bottom of the shaft begins to appear. Wet black walls. Timber supports. Iron rails shining in the lamplight. Loaded corves standing on small wheeled platforms. Passages opening away in different directions.

Then the darkness begins to move.

A horse emerges from one of the passages, its hooves striking the wet ground as it pulls a line of loaded corves towards the shaft. A man walks beside it, calling out as another worker moves quickly to clear the way. Empty corves rattle past in the opposite direction.

Near the shaft, men are working around the winding gear. A loaded basket swings slightly from a chain as it is fastened for the journey upwards. Someone shouts. A signal is given. The rope tightens, the basket rises, and within seconds it has disappeared into the darkness above.

For a moment the space is full of noise. Wheels clatter over the rails. Chains knock against iron. Hooves scrape on stone. Doors open and slam shut. Voices call from one passage to another. Somewhere further away,

> picks strike coal in a steady rhythm.
>
> Figures appear and disappear in the lamplight. A miner passes carrying tools. A boy struggles beside a loaded corve. A girl ducks beneath a low timber and vanishes into a passage. Near one of the ventilation doors, a child sits perfectly still in the darkness, waiting for the next wagon to come through.
>
> Then the horse moves on. The corves disappear into another passage. The voices fade.
>
> For a few seconds the bottom of the shaft is quiet again.
>
> Only the drip of water.
>
> Only the lamps.
>
> And beyond their light, passage after passage leading deeper into the mine.

From narration to notes

A pause after the narration ends. Do not speak immediately. Let the silence sit for a moment.

Then, quietly, in twilight voice:

"That’s a thing! Imagine what it must have been like for those inspectors, people who had spent their whole lives above ground, to descend into the darkness in a rickety cage. I wonder what they might have written to a friend or a family member about that experience once they were back at the hotel later in the day. What would you write if you were trying to describe it - what would you say? How would you find the words?"

Short discussion. Then:

"Let’s have a go. You might want to start by making a few notes - or a drawing if that comes more easily. The narration I just read out is on your tables. You might find it useful."

➔ **Handout, Narration of the descent into the pit; one copy per pair**

Students move to tables and work in inquiry books - notes, sketches, first phrases. The teacher circulates in twilight voice, looking at what students are producing: "What is the detail that is staying with you?" "What did you hear that you want them to hear when they read this?"

After a few minutes, ask for some contributions. Take four or five - brief, specific, varied. Then:

"Look at the narration. Can you find the moments where it uses darkness and light? Sound and silence? Movement and stillness? Underline them."

Allow time. Then discuss together - students read out what they have underlined and the teacher notes the pattern on the board without labelling it as a framework: these are the contrasts that make the reader feel as if they were there.

Then:

"Let's write the letter. Decide first who you are writing to - someone close. Write ‘Dear’ and their name, and start with the moment the cage drops. Don't be afraid to say what it felt like."

Students write. The teacher supports those who need help finding a starting point: "What is the first thing you would want them to know?"

Listening to the letters

Once students have finished, bring them back to the carpet. Ask them to bring their inquiry books.

Say in the twilight voice:

> "The personal thoughts and feelings of the team were not part of their work. In fact, they were considered to get in the way. Inspectors were expected to be dispassionate, cool even, and to put their emotions to one side. When it came to reporting back to Parliament, they would not be part of the report. But, of course, they were only human and the experience of

> going down into a mine for the first time must have been an unsettling experience. Let's hear some of the thoughts they put down in their letters."

Facilitator

"If you would like to read your letter, the rest of us will close our eyes and listen to the words."

Students who wish to read do so. No commentary between readings - just the voices and the silence between them. If a student reads something particularly precise or unexpected, a single quiet response is enough: "Yes." or simply a pause before inviting the next reader.

Comparing the two texts

Facilitator

"You might be wondering what the difference looks like on the page - the same moment written in a letter, and then written for the report. Take a look at these two examples."

➔ **Hand out the printed examples - one set per pair.**

Students return to tables and work in pairs, comparing the two. The teacher circulates, supporting those who need help identifying specific differences.

When everyone has finished, bring the group back together.

"What kinds of things did you notice?"

Discussion. Build a shared list. Draw out the following through students' observations rather than by presenting them directly:

- The letter uses "I" throughout. The report does not use "I" at all.
- The letter names feelings directly: "I confess", "I shall never forget", "I cannot stop thinking about". The report contains no feelings.
- The letter describes events in sequence, as they were experienced. The report organises observations by category rather than by what happened first.
- The letter uses specific sensory detail: the noise of the cage, the feel of water on the face, the sight of a child sitting still in the dark. The report notes that conditions were observed but does not describe them in sensory terms.

- The letter makes connections between what was seen and what it meant to the writer. The report separates observation from interpretation and labels what still needs to be established.
- The letter ends with something still unresolved: "I cannot stop thinking about that child sitting beside the door." The report ends with a list of what requires further enquiry.

Then, the question worth holding open:

"Why does the report have to be written this way? Why can't the inspector simply write what they felt?"

Take responses. Do not resolve it.

Closing

Gather students back. Facilitator voice.

"We have been underground. We have seen some of what happens down there. We have not yet spoken to the people who work there."

A pause.

"Sykes said: look at everything. That's what you're here for."

Another pause.

"We have not yet looked at everything."

Leave it there.

TEACHER NOTES

On Sykes in TIR

Sykes is the most important character in this episode and potentially across the story. He is the person who actually knows what happens underground, and his careful, restrained hints are more powerful than anything he could say directly. The key is to play him as someone who is doing his job conscientiously - he is not trying to undermine Liston, and he would not thank anyone for suggesting he is. The hints emerge from what he emphasises and what he pauses over, not from anything he says explicitly. If students ask him a direct question that would require him to contradict Liston, he deflects: "I

couldn't say anything about that. I can only tell you what I see underground." That is enough.

On the question "does Liston ever go underground"

This is the question that is most likely to produce the most significant pause. Prepare for it. The answer - that Liston leaves the underground workings entirely to Sykes - is a fact Sykes will confirm without editorialising. Students who understand what that means - that the owner has never seen the conditions he described with such confidence - are making exactly the historical connection the episode is designed to open.

On Sykes and firedamp

If students raise the deaths document during the questioning, Sykes will not dismiss it as Liston did. He acknowledges it directly - "I know about those" - and his account of firedamp is practical and specific rather than defensive. Students who compare his answers with Liston's will notice that Sykes describes the same risks in a different register: not minimising, not deflecting, just describing. This is worth drawing out in a later episode when the team compares testimony.

On oracy

The questioning of Sykes is the most significant oracy moment before the writing task. Watch for students who ask questions that are too broad. The specific questions that tend to produce the most revealing answers are the ones about particular people - the youngest trapper, the child at the ventilation door - rather than questions about conditions in general. If students are struggling to frame precise questions, the facilitation prompt is: "We want to know about a specific person or a specific moment - not conditions in general. What would that question sound like?"

EPISODE 4 DEEPER INTO THE MINE	
Duration	Approximately 75 minutes
TIR / Keys	Inspector (TIR — teacher interviews students in role as child workers) | Facilitator
Student outcome	Students have constructed a biographical account from primary testimony and reflected on what the day's evidence means for the investigation.
Teaching route	1. Opening: deeper into the mine 2. Looking again at the images 3. The jobs 4. The quotes: group work 5. Biographical writing: constructing a child's account 6. On the carpet: the inspector's interview 7. Paired interview work 8. Back at the hotel: reflection
Key resources	Slides | Quotes slips — cut individually, one set per group | Jobs list, one per pair | Inquiry books and pencils
Keep in view	• The notebook is the most important prop in the inspector interview — write after each answer. • Sarah Gooder's testimony gives the most biographical detail for the writing task. • The inspector must genuinely listen rather than work through a list of pre-set questions.
CURRICULUM FOCUS History | English Reading and Writing | Oracy	

Curriculum Connections

History: The working lives of children in Victorian coal mines; biographical detail drawn from primary testimony; the relationship between individual accounts and the wider pattern of evidence. Students move from observation to testimony, building a picture of underground working life from the words of the children who experienced it.

English - Reading: Close reading of primary source quotations; inferring biographical detail from fragmentary evidence; understanding how a single voice can carry historical weight.

English - Writing: Writing in the first person from an assumed perspective; constructing a biographical record in the format of an inspector's notes; understanding how the same information is shaped by who is speaking and for what purpose.

Oracy: The paired interview work places sustained demand on all three strands. The cognitive strand is active as students construct and sustain a coherent biographical account under questioning. The linguistic strand is tested by the shift between the child's voice and the inspector's register. The social-emotional strand is most active in the carpet TIR - students are speaking as children whose lives are genuinely difficult, and must hold that with appropriate seriousness.

Key Resources

- Slides
- Resources Pack:
  - The quotes resource - cut into individual slips, one set per group
  - The jobs list - printed, one per pair
- Inquiry books and pencils at tables

Description

Episode 4 takes the team deeper into the mine and into the lives of the children working there. Students move from observation to testimony, using real quotes from the 1842 Commission to construct biographical portraits of individual child workers. The episode ends with the team back at the hotel, reflecting on what the day has shown them and what they need to do next.

EPISODE 4 — LESSON PLAN

Opening: deeper into the mine

Slide: deeper into the mine

Students are gathered on the carpet. Narrator voice.

> "Sykes led the team further into the mine. Away from the bottom of the shaft, the passages narrowed and the roof came lower. They moved in single file, lamps held close. The noise of the winding gear faded behind them. The only sounds now were their own footsteps, the drip of water from the roof, and somewhere ahead, the steady rhythm of picks striking coal.
>
> They passed through several ventilation doors. At each one, a child sat in the darkness and pulled the door open as the team approached, then closed it again behind them. Some of the children looked up as the investigators passed. Some did not.
>
> Further in, they found hurriers moving loaded corves through passages so low that the children were bent almost double, leaning into the weight. In one section, a girl of perhaps twelve was pulling a corve on her own, a chain passing over her shoulder and across her chest, her hands braced against the floor of the passage.
>
> Sykes said nothing. He walked ahead with his lamp and let the team see.
>
> What they saw there would remain with them for the rest of their days."

A pause. Then, in twilight voice:

"We need to understand who these children are. Not just what they do - but who they are. Where they come from. What their lives are like outside the mine. Because that is what the report has to show Parliament - not just conditions, but people."

Looking again at the images

Slide: the trapper at the ventilation door.

Slide: the hurrier with the chain harness.

Slide: child near the coalface.

The three images from Episode 1, returned to now with more knowledge. In twilight voice:

"We have seen these before. We know more now than we did then. What do we see that we did not see the first time?"

Take responses. Students are likely to notice details they passed over before - the posture, the isolation, the age. Do not evaluate. Collect.

The jobs

"Before we look at what these children said about their work, we need to understand what each job actually involved."

- ➔ **Hand out the jobs list. Students read in pairs.**

Brief discussion.

The quotes: group work

Twilight voice:

“Let’s stop and talk to these children. We’ll need to record what they have to say for the investigation.”

“Find yourself in a group somewhere in the classroom - three or four people together - and create an image that will go in the final report. Then take a look at the quotes on the desks and select five or six that might have been said by the children in your image.”

Students move into groups.

- ➔ **Give each group a set of quotes cut into individual slips.**

In twilight voice:

"These are the words of real children who worked in mines like this one. They were recorded by inspectors during the real Commission's investigation."

Groups read through the quotes. Allow time - do not rush this.

Then:

"Choose five or six that you think tell Parliament something important. Not the most dramatic ones necessarily - the ones that, together, build the clearest picture."

Groups create their image and select their quotes. Then:

"One person will read the quotes aloud, one at a time, and lay each one beside the figure in the image it seems to belong to. The rest of us will look and listen. We'll need to think about what someone reading the report will learn from this - someone who has never been underground, who has never seen any of this."

The groups work on enacting their images while deciding which quotes to use. Once they are ready, one reader per group reads the quotes slowly, laying each slip beside the appropriate image. The rest of the class listens and looks.

After each group has done this, there is a brief discussion.

Twilight voice:

"What do you make of this? These words will need to be recorded. People need to know what's going on here, not just our descriptions, but the words of the children."

Take responses. Draw out: the images show what the work looks like; the quotes show what it feels like from the inside. Both are needed.

Biographical writing: constructing a child's account

Students return to tables individually.

In twilight voice:

"Our next job is to find out more about these children. Take another look at the quotes and choose one child to find out more about. You have the child's real words from the Commission. Use those first. Where the evidence does not tell you something, you may add a plausible detail to help build the picture, but make sure you know which details come from the source and which you have constructed. Use these questions to guide you."

Slide: questions

- What is this child's name and age?
- What is their job in the mine?
- Do they have a mother and father? Are both parents alive?

- Do they have brothers and sisters? Have any of them worked in the mine or been involved in an accident?
- Has this child been involved in an accident or been treated badly underground?
- What does this child think about the work? What would they rather be doing?
- Are they paid enough?

The teacher circulates in twilight voice: "Sarah Gooder gives us several quotes - read them together and see what kind of picture they build." "John Saville is seven years old. What do his words tell us about what a seven-year-old's day in the mine looks like?" "Thomas Moorhouse - read his quotes carefully. There is something there that goes beyond the work itself. You don't have to write about the children with the most information. You might choose to write about one with only a tiny amount to go on. It's your choice."

Twilight:

"Once you have worked through the questions, use this format to record the child's background in your inquiry books."

Remind students that the quotations are historical evidence. Any additional details they create are part of the dramatic inquiry and should not be presented as if they were recorded in the original testimony.

Slide - writing format.

> I spoke to [name]. They said:

- My name is...
- I am... years old.
- I am a...
- I have...

Here is an example:

> I spoke to Sarah Gooder, a trapper at the mine. She said:
>
> My name is Sarah Gooder. I am eight years old. I am a trapper. I sit by myself beside the ventilation door and open it when the wagons come

> through, then close it again. I have to trap without a light and I am scared. I am generally in the dark and sit against the door. Sometimes I sing when I have a light, but not in the dark. I dare not sing then.
>
> I go at four, and sometimes half past three in the morning. I would like to go to school far better than be in the pit. I would rather be playing.
>
> I have a mother and a father. I do not know if they are well.
>
> I find the work very hard.

On the carpet: the inspector's interview

Once the writing is finished, gather students back on the carpet with their inquiry books.

Slide: children from the mine

Give the students time to look at the image.

In twilight voice:

"These are the children who worked in the mine. Let's hear from them."

The teacher moves to the chair. TIR as the inspector: careful, respectful, genuinely curious, writing in a notebook.

> "Thank you for talking to me. I know this may feel strange - being asked questions by someone from London. I want you to know that what you tell me will be taken seriously. It will go into our report.
>
> Please - tell me about yourself. Your name, and your work here."

The teacher listens to the student's response and follows up with questions drawn from what the student says. The notebook is real - the teacher writes in it. Questions might include:

- "How long have you been working here?"
- "What time do you arrive in the morning?"

- "Is there anyone down here who looks out for you?"
- "Has anyone ever hurt you?"
- "What would you do if you could do anything at all?"
- “Tell me about your family.”
- “Does the owner pay you enough?”
- “Have you ever had an accident?”
- “Have you witnessed accidents?”

The teacher stays in role throughout, writing carefully after each answer. If a student's response is brief or uncertain, the inspector does not push: "That is fine. Take your time. I am not going anywhere."

After three or four students have been interviewed, the teacher steps out of role.

Paired interview work

Students work in pairs - one as the inspector, one as the child worker. They use their inquiry book notes as the basis for the child's account. The student playing the inspector asks questions and makes notes. Then they swap.

The teacher circulates in twilight voice - not correcting, but deepening: "What follow-up question might help you understand that better?" "You have written that down - what does it tell us that we did not already know?"

Back at the hotel: reflection

Gather students on the carpet. Twilight voice.

"It has been a long day. We have been underground. We have spoken to some of the children who work here."

A pause.

"So. What have we discovered?"

Take responses. Build a shared picture - what the team now knows, what it has confirmed, what it has not yet been able to establish. Then:

"What do we do next?"

Leave the question open. Do not resolve it. Students who have been thinking carefully will have things they still need to find out - the families, the hours, the accidents, what Sykes knows and has not said. Let those threads stay live.

TEACHER NOTES

On choosing which child to write about

Some children in the quotes give more material than others. Sarah Gooder appears several times and gives enough for a detailed biography: she starts at four or half past three in the morning, she works without light, she is scared of the dark, she sings when she has a lamp but not in the dark, she would rather be at school. Thomas Moorhouse gives something darker - he ran away from a man who beat him and slept rough on the pit bank. John Saville is seven years old and stops twelve hours in the pit and never sees daylight except on Sundays. Students who choose any of these will have enough to construct a substantial and precise record. Students who choose a child with fewer quotes will need to infer more carefully. Both are valid approaches and both are worth supporting.

On the inspector interview in TIR

The notebook is the most important prop in this sequence. Writing in it after each answer signals that what the student says matters and is being recorded. It also gives the teacher a natural pause between questions - time to think about the follow-up rather than rushing to the next prompt. If a student responds with something unexpected or particularly precise, slow down and write it carefully before asking the next question. That is what an inspector would do.

On the paired work

Some students will find it easier to be the child than the inspector. The inspector role requires genuine listening and the ability to follow up on what has been said rather than working through a prepared list. If students are struggling with this, the facilitation prompt is: "What is the most interesting thing they just told you? Ask them more about that."

On the reflection

The question "what do we do next?" is genuinely open. Students may suggest speaking to families, returning to Sykes with new questions, looking at the mine's records, or drafting a section of the report. All of these are valid next steps and any of them can shape Episode 5. Listen to what students propose and take note - the direction they want to go in is worth following.

On the jobs list

The Trapper description establishes something the quotes will confirm: some trappers had no lamp at all. This is worth drawing attention to when students read Sarah Gooder's words - "I have to trap without a light and I'm scared" and "sometimes I sing when I've light, but not in the dark; I dare not sing then." The jobs list tells students that trappers often worked without light. The quotes show what that actually meant to a child sitting alone in the dark. The two together are more powerful than either alone.

On oracy

The inspector interview is the most significant oracy moment in the episode. Watch for students who respond to the inspector's questions with single words or very brief answers - not because they have nothing to say, but because they are uncertain how to sustain a first-person account under questioning. The inspector's role in these moments is to be genuinely curious rather than procedural: "Tell me more about that" is more productive than moving to the next question on the list.

World-Building Artefacts

The inspector's biographical records: The records combine direct testimony from named child workers with carefully constructed biographical detail. The quotations remain the historical evidence; the additional details are part of the inquiry. These records will feed directly into the report - they are the human evidence that sits alongside the statistical data and the observed conditions. The contrast between what Liston said about child employment and what the children themselves say is now visible in the inquiry books, in writing, ready to be used.

EPISODE 5 THE EVIDENCE FROM BLACK HORSE YARD	
Duration	Approximately 60 minutes
TIR / Keys	No TIR — documentary episode | Facilitator
Student outcome	Students have built a detailed picture of the five families connected to the mine and prepared for the visits in Episode 6.
Teaching route	1. Opening: back at the hotel 2. Survey of the Yard 3. The census: who lives in Black Horse Yard? 4. The house layout activity
Key resources	Slides | 1841 census return, one per group | Black Horse Yard plan, one per group (large enough to annotate) | Household possessions list | Masking tape and pencils | Inquiry books
Keep in view	• Midden, privy, single pump, mill race, and tanning yard all carry significance for understanding life in the yard. • J. Liston owns the houses. Students who notice this are ready for Episode 7. • Prepare students for the visiting task in Episode 6 — they need specific questions for specific families.
CURRICULUM FOCUS History | Geography | English Reading and Writing	

Curriculum Connections

History: The household economy of working-class families in early Victorian Britain; the relationship between poverty, family structure, and child labour; understanding why historical actors made choices that may seem difficult to explain from a modern perspective. Students move from the mine to the community it depends on, building a picture of working-class life from documentary evidence.

Geography: Settlement and housing in an industrial town; the physical conditions of working-class life in Halifax in 1841; reading a place from a map and a plan.

English - Reading: Reading documentary sources including the census, yard plan and survey; drawing inferences from each and considering what each does and does not show.

English - Writing: Recording evidence, inference, and outstanding questions in inquiry books; distinguishing between what a document states, what it suggests, and what it cannot tell us.

Key Resources

- Slides
- Resources Pack:
  - The Black Horse Yard plan - printed, one per group, large enough to annotate
  - Town surveyor's report on Black Horse Yard - printed, one per group
  - The 1841 census return for Black Horse Yard - printed, one per group
  - Lists of household possessions - printed and cut out, one per group.
- Masking tape and pencils for the house layout activity
- Inquiry books and pencils at tables

Description

Episode 5 is a documentary episode. The team returns to the hotel and spreads its evidence across the table. Students work through the census, the yard plan, the survey, and the household possessions to reconstruct life across Black Horse Yard, with particular attention to the five families connected to the mine before visiting them in Episode 6.

EPISODE 5 — LESSON PLAN

Opening: back at the hotel

Slide: Meeting room at the hotel

Narrator voice.

> "The team returned to the hotel as the light was fading. The day had been long. They had been underground. They had spoken to children who worked there. They had heard what Sykes had said - and what he had not said.
>
> Back at the hotel, they spread their notes across the table. The inquiry books were open. The recording sheets were there - what had been observed, what had been reported, what was still uncertain.
>
> One question kept coming back:
>
> "Why are they forced to work in the mines?"

Take responses. Students are likely to say: because their families need the money. Then:

"Liston told us that. The children have hinted at it. But we have not actually gone and looked. We have not spoken to their parents. We do not know what their lives are like, what they earn, what they spend, what happens when something goes wrong."

Slide - Black Horse Yard

"There is a yard - Black Horse Yard - close by. Several of the families who work in the mine live in that yard."

Pause.

Facilitator

"Let's pause the story for a moment. For people living in towns and cities at this time, places like this — busy side streets, alleys and courtyards — would

have been very familiar. Just from looking at this illustration, what do you notice about people's living conditions?"

Discussion.

➔ **Hand out The Plan of the Yard; one copy per group**

Slide – Yard Plan

Twilight voice:

"We have here a plan of the Yard. You can see there are ten households in all, arranged around a common paved court. There is a single pump for water, a shared privy, and a midden or ash place near the entrance."

Hand out copies of the Yard to the different groups.

Pause and allow students to study the plan.

"There's quite a lot here. The entrance is very narrow, for one thing. And the houses are packed closely around the court."

Allow students to contribute observations.

"I'm also noticing how close the tanning yard is to the houses. That must have had some effect on what it was like to live here."

If unfamiliar words arise, explain them briefly in context: **midden** – a shared rubbish and ash heap; **privy** – an outside toilet; **mill race** – a channel carrying water to or from a mill; **tanning yard** – a place where animal hides were cleaned and treated to make leather.

"The mill race runs right alongside the tanning yard as well. I'm wondering what that might have meant for the water, and for the smells and waste from the yard."

Let students speculate.

"And with only one pump for ten households, there must have been times when several families needed water at once. Every bucket for drinking, cooking, washing and cleaning would have had to come from there."

Allow discussion to develop around crowding, shared facilities, privacy and sanitation.

“Now, the surveyor has also recorded who occupies each house and something about where they work.”

Give students time to read the occupancy schedule.

“There does seem to be a pattern here. Some of these households are connected with the mine, while others are working at Lister’s Mill.”

Allow students to identify the mining households: **1 Hargreaves, 3 Sutcliffe, 4 Dawson, 6 Greenwood and 8 Whitaker**.

“Here’s something else I’ve just noticed. This name.”

Owner: J. Liston Esq.

“We know that name.”

Allow the significance to emerge from the group.

“So Liston owns the mine, and he also owns the yard where some of the mine families live. That feels important.”

Pause.

“We can be certain of those two things. What we don’t know yet is what that relationship means in practice. We don’t know how much rent they pay, what happens if a worker loses his job, or whether living in one of Liston’s houses makes it harder to complain about conditions at the mine.”

Allow students to add possibilities.

“That seems like something we should hold onto rather than decide too quickly.”

Return to the plan.

“There are still things this plan simply can’t tell us. Here we have a description of the yard from the town surveyor. It should give us a clearer picture.”

Survey of the Yard

- ➔ **Give each group a copy of the Town surveyor’s report on Black Horse Yard.**

Allow groups time to read. The teacher circulates and reads alongside them rather than directing the reading.

“I hadn’t realised most of these were only one room downstairs and one room upstairs.”

Allow students to respond and make connections.

“The Dawson house is standing out to me. Nine people, two rooms.”

Pause.

“And then Mrs Booth has the same number of rooms to herself. So the amount of space people have isn’t simply determined by the size of the house. It depends very much on who is living there.”

Allow discussion.

“The report says that the downstairs room is doing almost everything: cooking, eating, sitting, keeping the fire going — and sometimes sleeping as well.”

Students may begin to imagine where people and possessions would fit.

“So when we say ‘two rooms’, we need to be careful not to imagine two bedrooms. For most of these families there is really one main living room below and one sleeping room above.”

Allow students to notice House 5 as the exception.

“The Schofields seem to have considerably more space — four rooms for four people. That is quite different from the Dawsons.”

Do not turn this into a judgement about which family is richer unless students have evidence for that. Hold it as another difference within the Yard.

The report may prompt discussion about why the houses differ in size and age.

“It sounds as though this Yard has grown over time rather than being built all at once. Houses have been added as Halifax has grown and more people have come looking for work.”

Allow students to connect this with what they already know about industrialisation and the growth of towns.

“There’s something important here for us, I think. We’ve been talking about ‘the families in Black Horse Yard’ as though they all live in much the same way. This report is telling us that they don’t.”

The census: who lives in Black Horse Yard?

Twilight voice:

“We should go and talk to them, but before we do, we need to understand as much as we can about their lives. Here is another document that should give us some more detail. It is the latest census, the information collected about the people living in the Yard — adults and children.”

➔ **Hand out the census return - one per group.**

Students read in groups.

In twilight voice:

"Take your time with this. We need to work out who lives in each house. How many people. How many children. Who is working, and what kind of work. Which households look as if they depend on more than one wage."

Groups work through the census, annotating or recording findings in inquiry books. The teacher circulates in twilight voice: "Look at this household carefully - how many people are living in that space?" "Which of these children are old enough to be earning?" "What does it tell us that this person has no occupation listed?"

After groups have worked through the census, gather the class.

"What are you beginning to notice?"

Take responses. Draw out the shift from individual children to households - the census shows not just who is working but who depends on whom.

Pause.

“Take a look at this illustration of the Dawson household.

The house layout activity

Slide - The Dawsons

Look at the image together. Ask the students what they notice.

Then:

“Let’s get a clear idea of the living conditions in these households. I’ve got some masking tape. Let’s each mark out one of these houses. Take careful note of its size and number of rooms. For our classroom scale, we’ll represent ten feet as approximately 30cm.”

Assign each group one of the ten households so that, as far as possible, all ten houses are represented around the classroom.

Groups use the scale on the Yard plan to estimate the ground-floor footprint of their house and mark it out with masking tape on the floor or across joined tables. They then mark a second equivalent space beside it to represent the upstairs room. For House 5, groups create the additional rooms described in the survey.

➔ **Hand out to each group the possession list for their selected household.**

Twilight voice:

“Once we’ve finished marking out the house, take a look at the list of household items. Sketch those onto pieces of paper and start placing them where you think they might go. Think about their size as well — there isn’t much space.”

The teacher works alongside the groups in twilight voice:

“The fireplace is going to have to be against one of the walls somewhere. They’re going to need that for heating and cooking.”

“We’ll need somewhere to eat. And somewhere to keep things.”

As objects begin to fill the space:

“This is starting to fill up quite quickly.”

Keep returning the discussion to people rather than furniture.

“We’ve got the table in. We’ve got the fire. There’s a chest here. Now we need to remember that seven people live in this house.”

“Where are we going to put everybody at night?”

Allow students to work out the implications of the available space.

At the Dawson household:

“Nine people. One room below and one above. We need somewhere for all nine of them to sleep.”

Allow the group to solve the problem rather than suggesting an arrangement immediately. They may propose shared beds, children sleeping together,

somebody sleeping downstairs, mattresses or bedding on the floor, or dividing the upstairs room with a curtain. Refer back to the survey where useful.

At the Greenwood household:

“Five people in these two rooms. Elizabeth is fourteen and James is eleven. Then there are two very young children. I’m wondering what sleeping arrangements might actually work here.”

At the Hargreaves household:

“Seven people. Two adults and five children. Once we’ve made room for everyone to sleep, what room is left for anything else?”

At the Schofield household:

“This feels very different. Four people and four rooms. That difference might be worth remembering.”

At Mrs Booth’s:

“Two rooms for one person. After looking at some of the other houses, this feels almost spacious — although that doesn’t necessarily tell us anything yet about how comfortable her life is.”

As the layouts develop, encourage students to move between groups and look at one another’s houses.

“Have a look at what the other teams have found. The houses are all in the same Yard, but they aren’t giving us the same picture at all.”

Bring the groups together briefly while leaving the taped layouts in place.

“We now know something the plan alone couldn’t show us. We can see the amount of space available. Tomorrow we will go and talk to them.”

End.

TEACHER NOTES

On the Plan of the Yard

The plan is useful because it allows students to infer something about the physical conditions of life in Black Horse Yard before they meet the families.

The important thing is not simply to identify the features, but to consider what their location and shared use might mean for everyday life.

The **midden** is the shared place where households dispose of ashes and other domestic refuse. Its position within the yard means rubbish is being stored very close to the houses. Depending on how regularly it is removed, it may contribute to smells, flies and generally poor sanitary conditions.

The **privy** is a shared outside toilet. Ten households using a small number of shared facilities raises questions about privacy, cleanliness and sanitation. Students may reasonably infer that conditions would become particularly unpleasant in warm weather or when the privy was not emptied regularly, but the plan itself does not tell us how well it was maintained.

The **single pump** is also significant. Every household in the yard depends on the same source for water used for drinking, cooking, washing and cleaning. Water has to be carried from the pump into each house, and any contamination of that source could potentially affect many people at once.

The **mill race** is a channel carrying water to or from nearby industrial machinery. Its proximity to the yard is worth noticing because it places domestic life immediately alongside industrial activity. Students may speculate about pollution or waste entering the water, but this should remain a question unless another source provides evidence.

The **tanning yard** is particularly significant. Tanning involved the preparation and treatment of animal hides and could produce strong smells, animal waste and contaminated water. Its position immediately beside Black Horse Yard illustrates how closely housing and industry were mixed in rapidly growing industrial towns. The point is not simply that the yard would have been unpleasant, but that families had little separation between where they lived and where industrial work was taking place.

Liston owns Black Horse Yard in 1841, but the houses are older than his ownership. He has acquired the property as an investment and rents the dwellings to working families, several of whom also work at his mine.

The detail that **J. Liston owns the houses** is deliberately important. Students already know Liston as the mine owner. The plan now reveals that some of his workers also live in property he owns. This potentially creates a double dependence: a family may rely on Liston both for wages and for its home.

Students may infer that this could make workers less willing to complain or place a family in a vulnerable position if employment was lost. However, the evidence does not show that Liston threatened tenants, charged excessive rents or used the housing deliberately to control workers. Keep the distinction between what is known and what is inferred.

The discussion should therefore remain exploratory. The most productive stance is: **“This seems significant. What might it mean, and what would we need to find out before we could be sure?”** This keeps the plan functioning as evidence rather than turning it into an illustration of conclusions the teacher has already made.

On the house layout activity

The masking tape outlines should be rough rather than precise - the point is not architectural accuracy but spatial imagination. Students who place nine people in a Dawson household outline and then look at the space available are doing historical thinking. The teacher's twilight voice during this activity should consistently return to people rather than objects: not "where does the furniture go?" but "where does everyone sleep?"

EPISODE 6 BLACK HORSE YARD	
Duration	Approximately 75 minutes
TIR / Keys	Mary Greenwood, widow (TIR) | Mrs Booth, long-standing resident (character role) | Facilitator
Student outcome	Students have gathered direct testimony from families and begun to answer the question they have carried since Episode 3.
Teaching route	1. Opening: preparing to visit 2. Arriving at the yard 3. TIR: Mary Greenwood 4. Paired and small-group role work: the family visits 5. Mrs Booth 6. Back at the hotel: reflection
Key resources	Slides | Census returns and house layout sketches from Episode 5 | Inquiry books and pencils

Keep in view	• Do not raise Sarah Ann unless students ask. If they do, answer truthfully and without drama. • Families are neither cooperative nor hostile — avoid either extreme in role. • Mrs Booth should feel like an interruption, not a scheduled encounter.

CURRICULUM FOCUS History | English Reading and Writing | PSHE and Citizenship | Oracy

Curriculum Connections

History: Direct encounter with working-class family life in early Victorian Britain; testimony from families about the economic necessity of child labour; the complexity of social reform when protecting one group creates hardship for another. Students move from documentary evidence to human testimony, testing what the census and the yard survey suggested against what the families actually say.

English - Writing: Recording testimony in inquiry books; noting where family accounts confirm, extend, or complicate what the documents suggested; beginning to identify what the report needs to say about families as well as conditions.

English - Speaking and Listening: Sustained paired and small-group role work; asking questions of witnesses whose situations are genuinely complex; listening carefully and following up on what is said rather than working through a prepared list.

PSHE and Citizenship: The relationship between poverty, custom, and individual choice; understanding that people can make decisions the investigator finds troubling while acting entirely rationally within their own circumstances; the unintended consequences of protective legislation.

RE and Ethics: Moral complexity in a specific historical context; the difficulty of judging people whose choices were shaped by circumstances very different from those available today; the question of what responsibility looks like when the options are all bad.

Oracy: This episode places the most sustained demand on oracy of any episode in the story so far. The cognitive strand is active throughout - students must listen carefully, follow up on what is said, and adjust their questions in response to what they hear. The linguistic strand is tested by the need to speak respectfully and precisely to witnesses whose situations are painful. The social-emotional strand is most acute in the family encounters: students are speaking on behalf of people whose voices may go unheard, and must hold that responsibility carefully.

Key Resources

- Slides
- The census returns and house layout sketches from Episode 5
- Resources Pack:
  - Family Role Cards - printed and cut out. One per group.
- Inquiry books and pencils

Description

Episode 6 takes the team into Black Horse Yard. Before they go in, groups prepare their questions for their family. The teacher opens the visit in TIR as Mary Greenwood. Students then meet the remaining four families through paired and small-group role work, with Mrs Booth available throughout as a witness who gives the yard its longer memory. The episode ends with the team back at the hotel, building a careful answer to the question they have been carrying since Episode 3.

EPISODE 6 — LESSON PLAN

Opening: preparing to visit

Slide - Hotel meeting room

Students are at tables in their groups from Episode 5. Inquiry books are open. The census returns and house layout sketches from the previous episode are on the tables.

In twilight voice:

"Before we go into the yard, we need to be clear about what we are trying to find out. They are proud people, they love their children just like any family. We will have to tread carefully, choose our words, and do our best not to offend them."

"Let's take a few minutes in groups. Look back at what we know about the family. Think about what we still do not understand. Then write down four or five questions - carefully worded - about what we most want to know."

Groups work quietly. The teacher circulates in twilight voice, asking of each question: "What are we hoping that will tell us?" "Is there a way to ask that which is less likely to make the family feel they are being accused of something?" "What would we need to know to understand this family's situation from the inside?"

Draw students away from accusatory questions toward questions that open the situation up:

Instead of: "Why do you make your children work?" Toward: "What would happen if your child stopped working at the mine?" Or: "How important are their wages to the household?" Or: "Would you rather they were doing something else?"

When each group has their questions, students copy the final list into their inquiry books.

Arriving at the yard

Slide - Yard, early in the morning

Gather students on the carpet. Narrator voice.

> "The team walked from the hotel through Halifax. The streets grew

> narrower as they moved away from the centre of town. The smoke from the tanning yard drifted across the rooftops. They turned into a lane, and then through a narrow passage between two buildings.
>
> Beyond it, a small stone court opened up. Washing hung between windows. Coal was stacked beside doorways. Children moved across the yard. Beside the entrance, a shared privy. In the middle, a pump. The stone walls were blackened by smoke and damp.
>
> The team stopped and took stock.

Hold the image in silence for a moment.

In twilight voice:

"Well, here we are. Let's see who will talk to us."

"You'll want to make notes as we go along, these testimonies will be important."

TIR: Mary Greenwood

The teacher moves to the chair - a plain chair, set slightly forward, as if someone is sitting in a doorway. She is holding a baby.

Mary is not hostile. She is not performing poverty. She is a woman managing a very difficult situation with considerable dignity, and she is slightly wary of officials from London.

> "Good morning, what brings you to Black Horse Yard?"

Team answer.

> "Oh, yes. James said there were people asking questions at the mine."
>
> [A pause.]
>
> "What do you want to know?"

The interview is open. Students ask from their prepared list. Mary answers carefully, from inside her situation.

On James working underground

> "He's been going down since he was nine. His father went down before him. It's what the men in this yard do."

On whether she worries about him

> "Every day. Every single day." Pause.
>
> "But worry doesn't pay the rent."

On Elizabeth

> "Elizabeth does what she can. She's fourteen. She's a good girl."

On what Elizabeth earns and where she works

> "She works in the mill. She has three looms."

On Sarah Ann, if students ask about the children at home

> [A slight pause before she answers.]
>
> "There's Thomas. He's one. And Sarah Ann was three."
>
> [She does not explain the past tense. The implication hangs in the air. If students ask:]
>
> "She died three weeks ago. Measles."
>
> [She does not elaborate.]

On what would happen if James stopped working

> "I don't know."

> [She says it quietly, without drama.]
>
> "I've thought about it. I don't know."

On whether she would rather he was not underground

> "What mother would want it? You tell me."
>
> "But if he stays home, what do you suggest I do?"

On what's happened to her husband

> "The mine got him: ceiling collapse."

Teacher steps out of role with a simple physical shift away from the chair. A moment of quiet before speaking.

In facilitator voice:

"What did we find out? And what did we notice that she did not say directly?"

Take three or four brief responses. Then:

"That is one family. There are four others. Let's visit them."

Paired and small-group role work: the family visits

➔ **Family Role Cards and guidance for each family.**

You will need to read this in advance and decide how best to use it with your class.

This is a demanding activity. Before deciding how to run it, consider carefully what the class is ready for.

Some classes will take to this naturally - particularly those who have already done sustained role work in earlier episodes and who are comfortable holding a perspective under questioning. For these classes, the paired and small-group

format described below will work well, and the teacher's job is to circulate and deepen rather than to manage.

Other classes will need more time and more scaffolding before the activity is productive. The Family Role Cards in the Resources Pack are designed to support students who find it difficult to sustain a character under questioning - they give the family member enough information to answer without having to improvise everything from scratch. Even with the cards, some groups will need the teacher to model the family member's voice before they can manage it themselves. Build in time for that if needed.

For some classes, independent role work of this kind will not yet be within reach. If that is the case, there are two alternatives that preserve the educational purpose of the activity. The first is to treat the Family Role Cards as a reading and discussion exercise: groups read the card for their family, discuss what the family would say, and record their conclusions in inquiry books without enacting the encounter. The second is for the teacher to take on each family role in turn - one at a time, with the whole class as investigators - rather than running simultaneous group encounters. This is slower but gives every student access to the same testimony and allows the teacher to model the register and the complexity the activity requires.

Whichever format is used, the educational purpose is the same: students encounter five families who have five different answers to the same question, and they hold those answers alongside each other when they return to the hotel.

Students work in their groups, with each group responsible for one family. Within each group, some students take the role of investigators and others take the role of family members, using the question lists, the knowledge built in Episode 5, and the Family Role Cards from the Resources Pack.

In facilitator voice before the work begins:

"The investigators ask questions from their list - but they listen to the answers and follow up on what they hear, rather than just moving to the next question. The family members answer from what they know about their family. If a question comes up that the census or the survey cannot answer, use your own judgement about what this person would say."

The teacher circulates in twilight voice during the role work, pausing alongside groups and contributing as a colleague: "That is an interesting answer - what does the investigator make of it?" "You have asked about the wages - what about whether the family has ever had to manage without them?" "The family member has just said something unexpected. What does the investigator do with that?"

After enough time for each group to have worked through the main questions, students swap roles and the visits continue.

The team interviews only the families connected to the mine. The other households in the yard are outside the scope of their commission.

Mrs Booth

While the group role work is under way, the teacher moves to the chair set slightly apart from the main groups - Mrs Booth's chair, outside her doorway at one side of the yard.

Students may approach her between their family visits. She does not need to be formally interviewed. She is simply present, watching the yard, available to anyone who comes to speak to her. Students who approach should feel they are interrupting something rather than beginning a scheduled encounter.

> "You're the ones asking questions."
>
> [She watches the yard as she speaks, not the investigator.]
>
> "Children have always worked. Soon as they're able to earn, they earn. That's how it is."

If asked whether things were better before:

> "Different, perhaps. I wouldn't say better."

If asked whether she thinks it is right:

> "Right."

> [A pause.]
>
> "I don't know that I've ever asked myself that. You just manage."

If asked about the families in the yard:

> "The Greenwoods have had a hard time of it. Mary's managing. She always manages."
>
> "The Dawsons - there's always noise from that house. But they're all right."
>
> "The Sutcliffes - Joseph was a good worker. It's hard when a man can't work."

If asked about the Whitakers:

> "Rebecca has her ideas. Good luck to her, I say."

If asked about children dying:

> "It happens. It's always happened."
>
> [She looks at the yard.]
>
> "You get used to it. I don't know that you should, but you do."

If asked how long she has lived here:

> "Longer than most of them. I've seen families come and go. Children born and grown and gone underground themselves."
>
> [A pause.]

> "It doesn't change much."

Back at the hotel: reflection

Slide - Hotel Meeting room

Gather students on the carpet. Twilight voice:

"What did we learn from our visit?"

Take responses. Build the answer carefully through discussion - not a simple answer, but a layered one. Draw out:

- Many families depend on every wage available to them
- The alternatives - debt, hunger, the workhouse - are often worse than the mine
- Parents who send their children underground are not indifferent to the danger; many are frightened and still send them
- The mine owner benefits from cheap labour; the families benefit from wages; the children carry the cost
- Removing children from mines without addressing the conditions that put them there may protect the children while making the families' situation worse

Then:

"So if Parliament passes a law stopping children from working underground - has it solved the problem?"

Hold the question open.

Then, quietly:

"What does our report need to say?"

Leave it there.

TEACHER NOTES

On Mary Greenwood in TIR

Mary is the right family to open with because her situation is the most fully established from the census - the widow, the two children at the mine, the very

young children at home. Students know a great deal before she says a word. The most important moment in the interview is her answer to "what would happen if James stopped working?" - "I don't know." Do not rush past it. Students who have thought carefully about the census and the house layout will understand what that answer means. Mary knows too. The "I don't know" is not ignorance. It is the answer of someone who cannot afford to think about it.

On Sarah Ann

Do not raise Sarah Ann in TIR unless students ask about the children at home. If they do, Mary answers truthfully and without drama. The past tense - "Sarah Ann was three" - is enough. Students who have worked with the census and noticed the child aged three in the Greenwood household will feel the gap immediately. Students who have not will feel it differently but no less. Either response is worth holding.

On the paired role work

The most common difficulty is students who portray family members as either entirely cooperative or entirely hostile. Neither is right. The families in Black Horse Yard are not grateful for the investigation, but they are not obstructive either. They are people managing difficult lives who have agreed to speak to officials they have no particular reason to trust. The family member's job is to answer honestly from within their situation - not to perform poverty or to reassure the investigators that everything is fine.

Watch for investigators who work through their question list without genuinely listening to the answers. The facilitation prompt during circulation is: "What is the most interesting thing they just told you? Ask them more about that." Watch also for family members who answer too briefly. The facilitation prompt for them is: "What would this person want the investigators to understand that they haven't asked about yet?"

On Mrs Booth

Mrs Booth should not be visited in a formal interview. Students who approach her should feel they are interrupting something rather than beginning a scheduled encounter. Her answers should feel like the observations of someone who has seen a great deal and has stopped being surprised by most of it. The most important thing she says is probably: "Right. I don't know that

I've ever asked myself that. You just manage." Students who register that a woman who has lived in this yard for thirty years has never been in a position to ask whether child labour is right are understanding something important about how poverty shapes the questions people are able to ask.

On the difference between the families

The five families are designed to give students five different answers to the same question. Samuel Hargreaves thinks child labour is normal. Joseph Sutcliffe knows it is dangerous and still needs his son to go. Mary Greenwood would stop it tomorrow if she could and has no idea how she would manage. George Dawson does not think there is a problem. Rebecca Whitaker is actively trying to find a different way. Students who have visited all five families and held those five positions simultaneously are ready to write a report that does not reduce the situation to a single cause or a single solution.

On oracy

The cognitive demand throughout is high - students must hold what they know from the census and the survey alongside what the family is telling them, and notice where the two accounts agree or diverge. The social-emotional demand is most acute in the moments when a family member says something the investigator finds difficult to argue with - Mary Greenwood's "what do you suggest I do?", Joseph Sutcliffe's "there's no one else", Mrs Booth's "I don't know that I've ever asked myself that." These are the moments worth returning to in the reflection.

EPISODE 7 LISTON HOUSE	
Duration	Approximately 90 minutes
TIR / Keys	Robert Liston (TIR — second encounter) | Narrator | Facilitator | Twilight (gates, statues)
Student outcome	Students leave with a more difficult problem than the one they arrived with, and with detailed notes ready for the report.
Teaching route	1. Opening: back at the hotel 2. The journey to Liston House 3. Arriving at the gates 4. The statues on the plinths

	5. The exterior of Liston House 6. The waiting room 7. The estate map and family evidence 8. TIR: Liston 9. Leaving Liston House 10. Inquiry books: writing 11. Back at the hotel: the inquiry changes 12. Closing
Key resources	Slides | Inquiry books and pencils
Keep in view	• Question-sorting at the hotel does important intellectual work before the visit — do not rush it. • The journey narration should contrast with Black Horse Yard without editorial comment. • Liston's question — 'What exactly would you have me do?' — is the pivot of the episode.
CURRICULUM FOCUS History | Geography | English Reading and Writing | PSHE and Citizenship | RE and Ethics	

Curriculum Connections

History: The relationship between land ownership, industrial enterprise, and the accumulation of wealth in early Victorian Britain; the distribution of risk and reward in a mining economy; the limits of voluntary charity as a mechanism of social protection; the question of what legal and moral responsibility an owner bears for conditions in a business they do not personally manage. Students encounter the most complex historical thinking of the story so far - not whether Liston is a bad man, but whether a system can produce suffering without anyone intending it.

English - Writing: Recording observations and testimony in inquiry books; drafting questions before a formal encounter; noting where testimony confirms, extends, or complicates the picture already built.

PSHE and Citizenship: The relationship between wealth, enterprise, and responsibility; the limits of charity as a substitute for rights; the question of who should bear the cost of reform.

RE and Ethics: Whether someone can be responsible for suffering they do not directly cause and may barely know about, when they benefit from the system that creates it;

the relationship between religious belief and social responsibility; the question of whether Liston's Christianity and his conduct as an employer can be reconciled.

Oracy: This episode places the most sustained demand on the cognitive and social-emotional strands of any episode in the story. Students must reason across everything they have gathered - children's testimony, family encounters, documentary evidence - and bring it to bear on a witness who is intelligent, articulate, and able to give plausible answers. The linguistic strand is tested by the need to frame precise, probing questions to someone who outranks the team socially and who does not see himself as having anything to answer for.

Key Resources

- Slides
- Inquiry books and pencils

Description

Episode 7 returns the team to Liston - but this time the investigators know far more than he expects, and some of what they know concerns things he does not know himself. The episode moves from the hotel to the journey through Halifax, to the exterior of Liston House, to the waiting room, to the encounter with Liston himself. At its centre is the question Liston turns back on the team: what exactly would you have me do? Students leave the episode with a more difficult problem than the one they arrived with.

EPISODE 7 — LESSON PLAN

Opening: back at the hotel

Slide: Meeting room

Students are at tables. Inquiry books are open. Narrator voice.

> "The team had returned to the hotel from Black Horse Yard. Their notes were spread across the table. The recording sheets were there. The team had spoken to the children underground. They had visited the families in the yard."

Twilight voice:

"I don't know about the rest of you, but I'd like to go back and talk to Mr Liston, the owner of the mine. There are some questions I'd like him to answer. What about the rest of you?"

Short discussion then the students work in groups, reviewing their inquiry book notes and drawing up a list of questions they would like to ask Liston.

The teacher circulates in twilight voice, contributing alongside: "We know something now that Liston may not know - when did he last go underground?" "We know what the families depend on. Does he?" "There is a difference between what Liston told us at the mine and what we have since found out. Let's ask him about that?"

Groups compile their questions. The teacher draws these together, organising them into two columns:

> Questions about the mine / Questions about his responsibilities

Students copy the final list into their inquiry books. These are the questions the team is taking to Liston House.

"We'll have to be careful about how we talk to Mr Liston. He's a man of high standing and won't answer our questions unless we show him respect. Besides, we'll get more out of him if we treat him properly."

The journey to Liston House

Students gather on the carpet. Narrator voice.

Slide - leaving the hotel

> "The team left the hotel the following morning. The streets of the town were already busy - workers moving through the lanes, children among them, the sound of the factories carrying across the rooftops.
>
> But as they travelled further from the centre of Halifax, the town began to change.
>
> The noise became less oppressive. The houses grew larger. There was space between buildings. The streets were cleaner underfoot. Gardens appeared where there had been middens. Windows had curtains. There were private pumps. Horses and carriages. Servants at doorways. Trees.
>
> Eventually they left the densely built streets altogether and the road began to climb into the countryside above the town. The air was different up here. The smoke of the town lay below them.
>
> Eventually they saw the gates."

Arriving at the gates

Slide: the gates of Liston House — decorative ironwork

Hold the image for a moment before speaking.

Twilight voice:

“What do you make of these gates?”

Allow students time simply to observe. Encourage precise description before interpretation: the height of the pillars, the newness of the stone, the elaborate ironwork, the coat of arms, the scale of the entrance, the house visible beyond.

The teacher contributes alongside rather than questioning from outside the inquiry:

“These pillars look very new to me.”

“That stone hasn’t had much weather on it yet.”

“Someone has spent a considerable amount of money here.”

If students focus only on wealth, draw their attention gently to the relationship between the gates and the house beyond:

“Look at the house through the gates for a moment.”

Pause.

“There’s something almost **too grand** about these pillars, don’t you think? As though they might belong outside a much larger house.”

Do not explain the significance. Allow students to respond.

If useful:

“I’m wondering whether these gates were always here.”

“What makes you think they might be newer than the house?”

“Why would somebody replace an ordinary entrance with something like this?”

Draw attention to the heraldry only after students have had time to notice it themselves.

“And there’s that coat of arms.”

Pause.

“What does putting something like that on the entrance suggest?”

Students may suggest family history, importance, ancestry, nobility or status. Accept these possibilities without confirming them.

The teacher might contribute:

“It certainly *looks* old-fashioned — almost medieval.”

Pause.

“But the symbolism itself looks new.”

Leave the contradiction hanging.

If students need further support:

“So perhaps the interesting question isn’t only, ‘What does this tell us about Liston’s wealth?’”

“It might be, ‘What does Liston **want other people to think** when they arrive here?’”

Allow discussion.

Possible teacher contributions, depending on what students notice:

“Perhaps he wants the family to look older and more established than it really is.”

“Or perhaps he simply likes this style.”

“Maybe this is what he thinks a wealthy landowner’s entrance is supposed to look like.”

“Could he be trying a little too hard?”

These should be offered tentatively, alongside the students’ ideas, rather than as conclusions.

The important discovery is the **mismatch**: the house looks substantial but relatively restrained; the entrance is conspicuously new, elaborate and socially ambitious. Students should begin to wonder whether Liston is using his recent wealth to create the appearance of a longer-established family status.

The statues on the plinths

Narrate:

“Alongside the gates and the pillars were two stone plinths, white, shiny, and new. On top of the plinths were statues, recently carved, undamaged by the wind or rain.”

Facilitator

“What do you suppose Linton would have commissioned for these statues? What would he have wanted to have standing outside the gates to his house?”

Short discussion. Ensure the students understand what this means. Show the next slide if necessary.

“Here are some examples of the kinds of statues he might have.”

Slide - collection of stone statues on plinths.

“Let’s have a look at the statues outside his gates, they might tell us something about the kind of man Liston is.

“Find yourselves in pairs, somewhere in the room, and discuss what you think the statues look like. Once you're ready, I’ll count down from three and we’ll take a look at them.”

Students distribute themselves around the room in pairs, finding a space. The teacher circulates in twilight voice, moving between pairs as they discuss: "What would a man like Liston want people to think when they arrived at his house?" "Is he trying to impress them, or reassure them, or something else?" "What does a statue say about someone?"

When most pairs have settled on something, the teacher speaks in facilitator voice:

"When you are ready - let’s begin."

Pairs take up their positions - as still as stone. The teacher moves slowly between them, looking carefully at each one, contributing in twilight voice: "This one is formal - upright, dignified." "This pair suggest strength and purpose." "Most are looking outward, toward the road. Toward people arriving from the town."

After a moment:

The teacher narrates quietly, in the third person, moving through the room:

> The investigators stood at the gates of Liston House and looked at what he had placed there. The statues were newly carved, the stone still white and clean. They said something about the man inside - about how he saw himself, and how he wished to be seen.

Allow a few seconds of stillness.

Then, facilitator:

“Relax, come back to the carpet.”

Twilight:

"What do these statues tell us about Liston, is it anything we didn’t already know?"

Take three or four responses. Then:

“Head back to your desks and make a brief note in your inquiry books. This might not be the most vital information we have gathered, but it gives us some insight into the man.”

Students make a brief note in their inquiry books - a sketch of the gate and statues and two or three observations.

Twilight:

“What did you write?” Short discussion.

The exterior of Liston House

Slide: Liston House

Narration continues:

> "The drive beyond the gates was long and tree-lined. At the end of it, the house came into view."

Hold the image.

In twilight voice:

"Before we go in - what do you notice?"

Observation first, as always. The teacher contributes alongside: "The grounds extend a considerable distance." "I am counting the windows." "There are stable buildings over there - that means horses, carriages, staff to look after them."

Then:

"Yesterday we were working out how nine people might sleep in two rooms."

Pause.

"How many rooms do you think there might be in this house? I suppose some rooms might have more than one window."

Leave the question open. Do not answer it.

Students add to their inquiry book records - observations about the exterior, what it suggests, what they would need to find out.

The waiting room

Narrator

> "The team arrived at the gates of the house and were shown inside by a servant who took them into a room and asked them to wait. The servant explained that Liston was busy but would see them shortly."

Slide: the interior of a well-appointed Victorian waiting room or drawing room.

In twilight voice:

"So, he's busy. Not to worry, it'll give us a chance to look around the room. What do you see?"

Observation first. The teacher contributes alongside the students, drawing comparison to the homes in Black Horse Yard: "There is a fire burning in a room nobody is sleeping in." "The carpet covers the whole floor - not just a piece of it." "These chairs are upholstered. All of them."

Then draw attention to the signs of family and faith. Slide or description: a family portrait above the fireplace; an older, smaller portrait of a previous generation hanging nearby, more plainly framed; a Bible on a side table; a prayer book; perhaps a religious text or painting.

"The portrait above the fireplace - that is Liston and his family. And that smaller one, over there - that is an earlier generation. The frame is less expensive. The portrait itself is smaller."

Pause.

"What might that difference suggest?"

Hold it open. Then:

"There is something strange about standing in this room after being in the Dawsons' house."

Let students articulate it. Do not rush to fill the silence.

The estate map and family evidence

Slide: a map of the Liston estate showing farmland and the colliery.

In twilight voice:

"While we are waiting - here is a map of the Liston estate. The farmland, and the colliery."

"The colliery is on one part of the estate - but look at how much of the estate is farmland." "I am wondering which part of this estate his father and grandfather would have known. And which part is newer."

Draw out the important discovery without announcing it: the estate is old, but the colliery is not. The land Liston inherited was farmland that paid its costs and kept the family comfortable. The coal beneath it - and the wealth it generated - belongs to Liston's own lifetime.

Then: "That changes one of our questions. We were going to ask Liston where his wealth came from. We may already be beginning to see part of the answer."

Students update their inquiry books.

TIR: Liston

Liston enters his own drawing room. He is at ease.

Slide - Liston

He is polite, confident, and welcoming. He knows the investigators have official authority and intends to cooperate. He genuinely believes he is a respectable employer, landowner, father, and Christian.

> "Good morning. I trust the journey out here was pleasant."

[He settles into his chair with the ease of a man entirely at home.]

> "I understand you have visited the colliery and spoken with the families in the yard. I hope my people have given you every assistance."

The phrase "my people" may itself be worth noticing. The interview begins. Students ask from their prepared list, making notes in their inquiry books as the discussion progresses. Liston responds, guided by the following:

On when he last visited the mine

> "Visited? The surface, certainly - I have occasion to speak with Sykes from time to time. Underground?"
>
> [A pause.]

"No. I leave the management of the workings to Mr Sykes and the men appointed for that purpose. I am no mining engineer."

On how long the children work

"I couldn't tell you their precise hours. That is a matter for the manager."

On how young the youngest child working underground is

"I really couldn't say. That is again a matter I leave to Sykes."

On why children are employed underground

"Children have worked in mines for generations. The particular work they do requires - I am told - people of a certain size. The passages are narrow. I do not design the passages."

On the wages paid to children

[He consults, or appears to consult, a mental figure.]

"They are paid according to their work. The rates are set by Sykes in line with what is paid elsewhere in the district."

On whether he is aware that some families depend on children's wages to cover rent and food

"Mining families have always depended upon several wages. That is the nature of the industry. It is not something particular to my colliery."

On the fact that some of those families also rent their homes from him

[A brief pause. He is not embarrassed, but he notes that the investigators have done their research.]

"I own property in the town, yes. The rents charged are in keeping with what is asked elsewhere in Halifax."

On what happens when a worker is injured or killed

> "Where genuine hardship is brought to my attention, I have always tried to act charitably. I am not an unfeeling man."

On whether charity is sufficient, or whether families have a right to support

> "The law sets out what is required. I follow the law. Beyond that, I act according to my conscience."

On his religion and his responsibilities

> "A man fortunate in his circumstances has a duty towards those less fortunate. I contribute to the church. I have given money to poor families in this parish. I provide employment where once there was very little. Many people in this town are better able to support themselves because the collieries have prospered."

On where his wealth came from

> "My father left me this land, certainly. But he did not leave me a fortune. For years these fields produced no more than was needed to maintain the estate. What you see now was built from enterprise. We invested heavily in the workings. There was no guarantee of success. Men have lost fortunes in mining as well as made them."

On whether he feels any responsibility for the gap between his family's life and the lives of his workers

> "I cannot take responsibility for every misfortune that occurs in the lives of several hundred people. I provide work. I provide houses. I pay wages. I contribute to the parish. I do not know, what more would you have me do?"

This is the pivot of the episode. The teacher steps out of role by standing, and speaks in facilitator voice:

"He is asking us a genuine question. Before we answer - what are we actually going to recommend?"

Students discuss in pairs or groups, briefly. Then the teacher returns to the chair and the interview resumes. Students put their proposals to Liston one at a time. He tests each one.

On stopping the employment of younger children

> "How will the family replace the wage? Will Parliament provide for them?"

On raising wages

> "If my coal costs more to produce than coal from another mine, the buyers will go elsewhere. What then?"

On inspecting the mine personally

> "I am not qualified to judge what I see underground. That is why I employ men who are."

On requiring managers to report accidents and conditions

> "Sykes gives me the figures I ask for. What figures would you have me add?"

On compensating injured workers and widows

> "How much? For how long? If a man causes his own accident by ignoring instruction, am I still responsible? Where does that obligation end?"

On providing schooling

> "Who pays for the school? If I build a school and the families send their children to the mine instead because they need the wages, what have I achieved?"

If students suggest that Parliament should support families whose children lose their wages:

> "Then that is a matter for Parliament, not for me. I cannot be asked to solve problems that belong to the whole of society."

And if pressed on the profits he has made:

> "You see the house and you see the profits. Do you also see what was spent sinking shafts, buying machinery, employing men and opening new workings? Capital was at risk. There is no profit without risk."

When the interview has run its course, Liston stands.

> "I hope I have been of assistance. I have cooperated with this inquiry fully and I shall continue to do so. If Parliament decides to act, I shall comply with whatever the law requires.
>
> Good day to you."

Teacher moves away from the chair. Out of role.

Leaving Liston House

Students remain seated. Narrator voice.

> "They travelled back down the drive. The house behind them was warm and lit. At the gates they stopped for a moment."

Slide - looking down into the valley at Halifax

> The smoke of Halifax was visible below them in the valley.
>
> They travelled back down into the town. Back to the hotel."

Slide - Meeting room

In twilight voice:

"Has anything Liston said changed what we think?"

Not: was he right? But:

"What did he help us understand?"

And:

"What did he fail to answer?"

Take responses. Build two lists on a shared surface:

> Things Liston explained / Questions that remain

Students copy both lists into their inquiry books.

Inquiry books: writing

Students write independently in inquiry books. The prompt, in twilight voice:

"We should write down the most important things this visit has changed about how we understand the problem and any observations we should include in the final report."

Allow sustained quiet time. The teacher circulates without speaking.

Back at the hotel: the inquiry changes

Twilight voice.

"We have now heard from everyone. The children. The families. Sykes. Liston."

A pause.

"The question is no longer simply why children are working underground. We largely understand that now. And it is not simply whether Liston is a bad man. That is not really the problem."

Another pause.

"The question is: who is responsible for changing this?"

Build the answer carefully through discussion. Draw out:

- If Parliament does nothing, children continue to be harmed
- If Parliament simply bans their employment without supporting families, the families may be made worse off
- If responsibility is left entirely to owners like Liston, they may never see the conditions that need changing
- The expansion of mining has created new wealth - but the people who receive most of that wealth and the people who bear most of the risk are not the same people
- Reform requires systems of responsibility, not merely individual goodwill or charity

Then:

"Liston asked us a question we have not yet fully answered. What exactly would you have me do?"

"We are going to have to answer that question in the report. Lord Ashley is waiting. Parliament is waiting."

Leave it there.

Closing

Narrator voice.

> "The team sat in the hotel that evening. The inquiry books were open. The notes from every part of the investigation were on the table.
>
> They had been underground. They had spoken to the children. They had visited the families. They had stood in Liston's house and asked him questions he had answered carefully and honestly - and which had still left the most important things unsaid."

Leave it there.

TEACHER NOTES

On the preparation at the hotel

The question-sorting activity - organising questions into what concerns the mine and what concerns Liston's responsibilities - is doing important intellectual work before the visit begins. Students who arrive at Liston House with clear, specific questions get more from the TIR than students who are reacting to what he says. Watch for questions that are already verdicts - "isn't it wrong that you profit from children's suffering?" - and redirect them toward genuine inquiry: "How much do you know about what happens underground?"

On the journey narration

The contrast between the streets around Black Horse Yard and the approach to Liston House should unfold through the narration without editorial commentary. Do not name what students should think about the difference.

Let the accumulation of details - gardens instead of middens, private pumps instead of a shared yard pump, trees, curtains, servants - do the work.

On the gates

The enactive recording of the gates keeps students in the investigator's role - they are not performing a drama exercise but making a record for the report. The teacher's twilight voice question - "what has Liston chosen to put here?" - frames observation as inference, which is the discipline the episode is building toward. Students who notice that gates of this kind are a statement of status and permanence are already thinking about what Liston wants the world to understand about him.

On the map

A *chain* was a standard surveying unit equal to 66 feet (22 yards). Estate maps often used a “scale of chains” because land was measured this way. Ten square chains made one acre, making the unit especially useful for mapping fields and property.

On "my people"

If students notice the phrase, ask in twilight voice: "What does that phrase suggest about how Liston understands his relationship to the workers and families?" Do not answer it. It may come back in the report.

On Liston's account of his wealth

Liston's distinction between inherited land and earned prosperity is genuine and should be taken seriously. He did not simply receive a fortune. He invested, expanded, and developed the mine during his own lifetime. Students who dismiss this too quickly are not yet thinking historically. The harder question - which the episode is designed to open rather than close - is whether the opportunity to make that investment was itself a form of inherited advantage that workers' children could never have accessed, regardless of their enterprise or ability.

On "what exactly would you have me do?"

This is the pivot of the episode and should not be rushed. Step out of role clearly before the discussion begins. Give students enough time to formulate genuine proposals before returning to the chair. Liston's testing of each proposal is not an attempt to win an argument - he is genuinely asking

questions that do not have easy answers. Students who find themselves unable to immediately resolve the tension between protecting children and protecting family income are doing the intellectual work the episode is designed to produce.

On religion

Liston's faith is not hypocrisy. He genuinely believes he fulfils his Christian responsibilities through charity, employment, and contribution to the parish. The question the episode raises - without answering - is whether the kind of responsibility the investigators are asking him to accept is one that any individual, however devout, can fulfil through personal goodwill alone, or whether it requires something different: law, enforcement, and a system of rights rather than charity. Do not foreclose this. Let it remain a genuine question.

EPISODE 8 THE REPORT TO PARLIAMENT

Duration	Approximately 75 minutes
TIR / Keys	Sir Robert Peel, Prime Minister (TIR) | Facilitator | Narrator (opening)
Student outcome	Students have produced and defended a formal set of recommendations and compared them with the Mines and Collieries Act 1842.
Teaching route	1. Opening: returning to London 2. Reviewing the findings summary 3. Liston's question, and Parliament's 4. A week later 5. Lord Ashley's letter 6. Meeting the Prime Minister: Peel's objections 7. Revising the recommendations 8. Stepping outside the fiction 9. Comparing the Act with the team's recommendations 10. Closing
Key resources	Slides | Findings summary, one per student | Mines and Collieries Act 1842 extract, one per student | Inquiry books and pencils
Keep in view	• Peel is not a villain — he takes the evidence seriously and raises genuine concerns. • The third question (what problems might this change itself create?) is the most important. • The step outside the fiction should be clear, unhurried, and delivered in plain facilitator voice. • Sarah Gooder, James Lumley, John Saville and Thomas Moorhouse were real people. This matters.

CURRICULUM FOCUS History | English Reading and Writing | PSHE and Citizenship | Oracy

Curriculum Connections

History: The legislative process and the role of evidence in driving reform; the Mines and Collieries Act 1842 and its limitations; the difference between passing a law and solving a problem; the long arc of child protection legislation. Students move from investigation to recommendation, and from recommendation to historical outcome.

English - Writing: Writing formal recommendations for a specific, powerful audience; revising recommendations in response to challenge; comparing student proposals with the historical outcome.

English - Reading: Reading a formal summary of findings as an editor; reading Lord Ashley's letter and Peel's objections as documents that require a considered response.

Oracy: This episode places the most sustained demand on the cognitive strand of any episode in the story. Students must defend their recommendations under precise, intelligent challenge, distinguish between what their investigation proves and what it suggests, and hold the complexity of the problem they have built across the whole story. The social-emotional strand is active throughout: students are speaking on behalf of the children and families they have encountered, and must hold that responsibility in their final submission.

PSHE and Citizenship: How laws are made and challenged; the role of evidence, investigation, and public pressure in legislative change; the gap between legislation and enforcement; the relationship between individual reform and systemic change.

Key Resources

- Slides
- Resources Pack:
  - The findings summary (three levels) - printed, one per student.
  - The Mines and Collieries Act 1842 - a simplified extract, printed, one per student
- Inquiry books and pencils

Description

Episode 8 returns the team to London and to the room where the story began. Students edit the findings summary, draft recommendations, defend them under challenge from Sir Robert Peel the Prime Minister, revise them, and submit the final report. Only then does the fiction end and the historical outcome become known.

EPISODE 8 — LESSON PLAN

Opening: returning to London

Slide - Train to London

Students are gathered at the desks. Narrator voice.

> "The team left Halifax the following morning. They travelled to Leeds and caught the first train back to London.
>
> Lord Ashley had arranged for them to use a committee room at the Houses of Parliament.
>
> When the door opened, the room was familiar."

Slide: the committee room from Episode 1.

Hold the image in silence for a moment.

In twilight voice:

"We started here. We are back."

A pause.

"We have the inquiry books. We have the recording sheets. We have everything we gathered in Yorkshire. Now we have to turn it into something Parliament can use."

Reviewing the findings summary

In twilight voice:

"I have tried to bring together everything we discovered during the investigation. Here is my summary."

➔ **Distribute summary of the Team's findings - one per student.**

"What I need to know is whether I have got it right - and whether I have missed anything important. Please take a look at it carefully and let me know what you think."

Students read the summary individually, then discuss in pairs or groups. Their task is purposeful and brief:

"Is anything here wrong?"

"Is anything stated with more certainty than the evidence allows?"

"Is anything missing that Parliament genuinely needs to know?"

The teacher circulates in twilight voice, contributing alongside: "This section on firedamp - does it accurately represent what we found, or am I overstating it?" "The section on families - does it say clearly enough what the consequences of reform might be?" "Is there anything from our visit to Liston House that ought to be here?"

Students annotate their copies. Then gather briefly to compare amendments. Any agreed changes are noted by the teacher. The result is the team's agreed account of what the investigation found.

Liston's question, and Parliament's

In twilight voice:

"Thank you. These can go in with the documents we send Lord Ashley.

“Our next task is to draw up a list of recommendations - things we suggest Parliament does in light of our findings. These are things we think need changing.”

Students work in groups to formulate recommendations. Each recommendation must answer three questions, written as headings in inquiry books:

> What should change / What evidence supports this / What problems might this change itself create

“Let’s start with the first question: *What should change?* Let's make a list.”

The students first do this in groups and then create a final list in collaboration with the whole class.

“Let’s now look at each recommendation on the list and answer the second question: *What evidence supports this?*

Again, the students first do this in groups and then create a final list in collaboration with the whole class.

“Let’s now answer the last question: *What problems might this change itself create?*”

Repeat the pattern.

The third question is essential and should not be skipped. A recommendation to stop children working underground is only the beginning. Groups must consider:

- Which children? At what age?
- What happens to the wages their families lose?
- Who inspects the mines?
- What responsibilities should owners and managers have?
- What should children do instead?
- Who pays for schooling or family support?
- What happens when a worker is injured or killed?

The teacher circulates in twilight voice, pressing each group on the third question: "We recommended that families should be supported - but we haven't said how, or by whom, or for how long." "We said there should be inspection - but who would the inspectors be, and what authority would they have?" "We said the minimum age should be fifteen - why fifteen? What happens to a fifteen-year-old?"

Once the final list is agreed, the students write it in their inquiry books. Then:

“I’ll gather everything together and send it all over to Lord Ashley. Please hand in your inquiry books, they contain valuable information.”

Slide - documents tied together in the meeting room.

A week later

Narrator

“The Team had to wait a week before they got a reply. It came in the form of a letter.”

Lord Ashley's letter

Slide - Lord Ashley's letter

> Children's Employment Commission London November 1841
>
> My dear friends,
>
> I have now read the account of your investigation, together with the evidence you collected in Yorkshire. I am grateful for the care and seriousness with which you have undertaken this work. Your findings are, in several respects, deeply troubling.
>
> I believe there is now a case that Parliament cannot simply ignore.
>
> But I must be honest with you. Establishing that something is wrong and persuading Parliament to change the law are not the same thing.
>
> There is resistance. Mine owners and some Members of Parliament argue that intervention could damage one of Britain's most important industries. More significantly, the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, is not yet convinced that your recommendations can be adopted without considering their economic and practical consequences.
>
> I have arranged for you to meet with the Prime Minister. He wishes to put a number of objections to you directly. I would ask you to answer them as precisely and as honestly as you answered the questions you put to the families and workers in Yorkshire.
>
> If your recommendations are to survive, we need answers.
>
> Lord Ashley

Read the letter together. Brief discussion in twilight voice:

"What do you make of this?"

Draw out: the findings are serious and Ashley believes in them. But Parliament is not the same as one sympathetic MP. The recommendations will face challenges.

"We are going to meet the Prime Minister. Before we do - let's look back at our recommendations. Which ones are we most confident about? Which ones are we least sure how to defend?"

Students mark their recommendations accordingly.

"Before we meet him, let me tell you some things about the Prime Minister. His name is **Sir Robert Peel**. He is a Conservative and believes government should be careful about interfering in business. He knows coal is vital to Britain's factories, railways and homes, and he worries that new laws could damage the industry. But he is not against reform. He wants to be convinced that any change is necessary, practical, and will not create worse problems for the families it is meant to protect."

Meeting the Prime Minister: Peel's objections

Slide - Sir Robert Peel.

The teacher moves to the chair. Peel is not hostile. He is a careful, intelligent politician who takes the evidence seriously and is genuinely uncertain about how to proceed. He does not dismiss the team. He tests them.

> "I have read your report. Some of your findings are uncomfortable, and some people are likely to be upset when they read them. However, we must not be hasty. The continued prosperity of British industry is of great importance, and coal is essential to it. Any change we make must be workable, and must not create greater hardship than the problem it is intended to solve. I have some questions."
>
> [He consults papers in front of him.]
>
> "I am going to put a number of objections to you. I would ask you to answer them as directly as you can. Some of them will be uncomfortable. That is the nature of my role."

Peel raises each objection in turn. After each one, the teacher steps out of role briefly - standing, clearly - and gives the team time to discuss before responding, supporting them when needed. Then returns to the chair for Peel's reply.

Objection 1

> "You have visited one mine. On what grounds do you propose legislation affecting every mine in Britain?"

Students must distinguish between what their investigation proves and what the wider Commission's evidence supports. They may argue that their findings are consistent with reports from other districts, that the Commission gathered evidence from many mines, and that the pattern they found is not unique to Halifax. If they overstate the reach of their own evidence, Peel presses them: "Then you are recommending legislation on the basis of one mine's conditions?"

Objection 2

> "If families lose the wages their children earn underground, who will feed those children? Have you considered what your recommendations will mean for the families you say you wish to protect?"

This is the Black Horse Yard problem, returned. Students must hold the complexity they built in Episodes 5 and 6. The best responses acknowledge the difficulty directly and propose something to address it - not dismiss it.

Objection 3

> "Mr Liston appears to have operated within the law and according to accepted practice. What exactly are you accusing him of doing wrong?"

Students must distinguish between something being legal and something being acceptable. This is one of the most demanding moments in the episode. The best answers will note that the law has not kept pace with the scale of child employment underground, and that this is precisely why the law needs to change.

Objection 4

> "You describe extremely serious conditions. How much of this did you observe yourselves, and how much depends upon the testimony of children? Children may say what they believe adults wish to hear."

Students must defend testimony as a form of evidence while acknowledging its limitations. They may point to the corroborating evidence - the accident return, Sykes's answers, the observations made underground - and to the fact that the children's accounts were consistent with each other and with what the team saw directly.

Objection 5

> "Parents themselves decide to send their children to work. Why should Parliament interfere with decisions made within families?"

Students must consider when a choice is genuinely free and when it is constrained by poverty and circumstance. The families in Black Horse Yard are the evidence here.

Objection 6

> "Coal is essential to British industry. What happens if your recommendations make British mines more expensive to operate?"

Students must engage directly with the economic argument. They may acknowledge the concern while arguing that the cost of reform does not fall entirely on the mine owners, or that the current system transfers its costs onto the children and families who bear most of the risk.

Objection 7

> "Who will enforce these new rules? A law without inspection is a law on paper only."

This opens the question of enforcement. Students who have already included inspection in their recommendations are well placed here. Those who have not must consider it now.

After the final objection, Peel leans back.

> "I am persuaded that change is necessary. But I would ask you to consider

> whether some of your recommendations might be moderated - made less immediately onerous to the owners - in order to ensure that any legislation can actually pass. A law that fails in Parliament achieves nothing."

Teacher steps out of role.

Revising the recommendations

Slide - Meeting room

In twilight voice:

"Peel has not told us we are wrong. He has told us what Parliament will find hardest to accept."

Pause.

"We have a choice. We can hold to our original recommendations and risk them being defeated. We can amend them and risk not going far enough. Or we can do both - keep the strongest recommendations and find ways to address the objections that are most likely to sink them."

Groups revisit their recommendations in light of Peel's objections. Some may become more precise. Some may need qualification. Some may survive unchanged. New recommendations may emerge - particularly around inspection and family support.

Students produce a final, revised list of recommendations in their inquiry books.

Narrator

“The final recommendations were sent to Parliament along with the team’s report and made up part of the evidence considered as Parliament debated whether the law should change.”

Stepping outside the fiction

Slide - History

The teacher changes register completely. Facilitator voice - plain, direct, unhurried.

"That is where our investigation ends."

Pause.

"But it is not where the real story ended."

The teacher explains, briefly and without drama, what actually happened.

“The Children's Employment Commission gathered evidence from mining districts across Britain. Its report was published in 1842. The testimony of children, families, miners, and employers - together with illustrations showing underground labour - created enormous public pressure. Lord Ashley used the evidence to press Parliament for legislation. The Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, was cautious. There was considerable resistance from mine owners who wrote to their MPs complaining of the changes and from Members of Parliament who opposed interference in private industry.

Despite their opposition, the Mines and Collieries Act was passed in 1842. It prohibited all women and girls from working underground, and all boys under the age of ten.

Here is a list of the changes it introduced.”

➔ **Hand out simplified extract from the Mines and Collieries Act 1842; one copy per student**

Comparing the Act with the team's recommendations

Students read the extract. Then, in facilitator voice:

"Compare what Parliament did with what we recommended. What did Parliament do that we recommended? Where did Parliament go less far than we did? What problems we identified did the Act not address?"

Build the comparison together. Draw out:

- Children under ten were given legal protection. Boys of ten and above were not.
- Women and girls were removed from underground work entirely - a protection, but also a loss of wages for those families.
- Working hours were not limited by the Act.
- Compensation for death or injury was not included.

- Enforcement was initially very limited - there were few inspectors and mine owners could resist or delay compliance.
- Family poverty - the problem at the heart of Black Horse Yard - was not addressed.

Then:

"Does that mean the Act was a failure?"

Hold the question. Take responses. Draw out: the Act mattered enormously for the children it protected. Passing a law can matter without solving everything. The history of child protection legislation continued long after 1842 - compulsory education, further restrictions on child labour, eventually the school leaving age reaching fourteen and then sixteen.

"The investigation we carried out - the kind of investigation that gathered evidence, recorded testimony, compared accounts, and put findings before Parliament - that is what made the Act possible. Without it, the conditions underground would have remained invisible to the people with the power to change them."

Leave it there.

Closing

The teacher does not return to narrator voice. This is plain facilitator voice, unhurried.

"The children we spoke to - Sarah Gooder, James Lumley, John Saville, Thomas Moorhouse - were real people. Their words are in the 1842 Commission report. They said those things. They were recorded because investigators went underground and listened."

A pause.

"That is what careful investigation does. It makes what is hidden visible."

Leave it there.

TEACHER NOTES

On the three-question framework for recommendations

The third question - what problems might this change itself create - is the most important and the one most likely to be skipped. Students who have built the Black Horse Yard episodes carefully will find this question uncomfortable in productive ways. A recommendation to stop children working underground immediately, without any accompanying support for families, is a recommendation that would harm some of the people it is designed to protect. Students who hold that tension in their recommendations are thinking like reformers rather than prosecutors.

On Peel in TIR

Peel is not a villain and should not be played as one. He is a careful politician who takes the evidence seriously and is genuinely uncertain about how to proceed. The objections he raises are not bad faith - they are the objections that any serious legislative process would require answers to. Students who find themselves unable to immediately answer one of Peel's questions are in exactly the right place. The discussion between objections is where the most significant thinking happens.

On stepping outside the fiction

The change of register should be clear and unhurried. Do not signal it dramatically. Simply shift to plain facilitator voice and speak directly. Students who have been inside the fiction across eight episodes will feel the shift immediately. The historical information that follows should be delivered without commentary - not "and so Parliament finally did the right thing" but simply: this is what happened, and this is what it did and did not achieve.

On the final words

The closing names Sarah Gooder, James Lumley, John Saville, and Thomas Moorhouse as real people whose words are in the historical record. This is the most important thing said in the episode and should not be elaborated. Say it once, plainly, and leave it.

On oracy

The meeting with Peel is the episode's most demanding oracy moment and the most demanding in the story. Students must draw on everything they have gathered across eight episodes, hold the complexity of a problem that has no painless solution, and defend their positions under precise, intelligent challenge. Watch for students who abandon their recommendations too

quickly when pressed - the facilitation prompt is: "Is Peel telling us we are wrong, or is he telling us the recommendation needs more thought?" Watch also for students who refuse to revise anything - the facilitation prompt is: "A law that fails in Parliament achieves nothing. Is there a way to hold what matters most while addressing the objection?"

Peel's objections

1. The investigators visited one mine. On what grounds are recommendations proposed that would affect every mine in Britain?

2. If children's wages are lost, who will provide for the families that depend upon them?

3. The mine owner visited appears to have operated within the law and according to accepted practice. What exactly has he done wrong?

4. Some of the most serious evidence depends upon the testimony of children. How reliable is such testimony as the basis for legislation?

5. Parents themselves send their children to work. Why should Parliament interfere with decisions made within families?

6. Coal is essential to British industry. What are the consequences if these recommendations make mines more expensive to operate?

7. Who will enforce any new rules, and how?
