

Lewis Hine. (1911). *Breaker #9, Hughestown Borough, Pennsylvania Coal Co.* One of these is James Leonard. Corner Central St. & Ross St., Pittston, Pa. Another is Stanley Rasmus, Main Street Near Church Street, Du Pont, Pa. Location: Pittston, Pennsylvania. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division



Lewis Hine. (1911). *Breaker Boys*.¹



SOURCE²

a. What's the photo's date, title, and creator: 1909, *Breaker Boys*, Hine **b. Guess what type of person might have taken this picture and for what purpose:** Lewis Hine used photography to challenge socially accepted "evils" especially child labor **c. Guess was it personal or published, candid or posed, amateur or professional:** Published, posed, and professional.

CONTEXT

d. What do you see in the photo, (details, people, action, surroundings, etc.): Four young boys standing outside... all wearing overcoats, hats, and perhaps gloves... all missing buttons... all look tired, dirty, sad, depressed, hopeless... a taller, maybe older person in the background... the boy second from the right has an open coat and no turtleneck **e. Next, what you think is happening in the photograph:** The boys look like they've been working really hard at a dirty job (faces and clothes) and are now on a break (standing outside, unbuttoned coats, hats pulled-up somewhat). They are sad and depressed (faces, posture). The person in the background may be timing them (looking) **f. Consider how this image serves as a record of the Progressive Era:** Boys from poor families often worked in coal mines sometime by that age of eight... they worked 12-14 hour days, nearly year-round, in coal-processing factories³... "Breaker Boys" sat in a step-like fashion and separated the useless rocks and dirt from valuable coal after it had been mined, this was difficult as the pieces of coal were often small and the coal and the dirt seemed to look alike⁴... factories were always filled with coal dust, so boys often wore goggles, glasses, or bandannas for protection... machinery was noisy and dangerous from revolving wheels, crushers, screens and the rushing coal... Hine wrote "While I was in the region (Pennsylvania) two breaker boys of 15... fell or were carried down into the (train) car below. One was badly burned and the other was smothered to death"⁵... coal miners, having contracted a lung disease or other disabilities, worked above ground as bosses, using whips to force breaker boys to work... Poor families sometime put their sons to work in the mines before they learned to read and write... Hine considered this child

exploitation **g. What is the overall message:** Breaker Boys are not just being treated as adults, they are being abused and exploited... they have no chance to better themselves... Child labor is unfair and unjust and is a moral outrage and Hine is using his craft/artwork to combat the injustice⁶... a truly just society must act to save them... Hine used the emotions associated with protecting innocence to motivate, even shame, society into acting in support of laws to protect children **h. What specific details support...thoughts:** The filthy and unhappy faces of the Breaker Boys staring out.

CORROBORATE/THINK DEEPLY

i. How does it relate to other photos (evidence): Breaker Boys (BB) relates to Hull House Nursery (HHN) in that they both feature children in very desperate situations... both have kids being "overseen" by an elder... both exhibit remedies to societal problems (poverty and being in need) **j. Which others agree? disagree:** HHN delivers a different message: HHN "says" this humane remedy works – support it! BB "says" this remedy is inhumane and unfair—do something to stop it **k. Why might other photos support/refute this one:** Different audiences perhaps, BB seeks to motivate a protest, HHN seeks support **l. What does this photo suggest about the topic-specific question:** Some advocated putting kids to work, labor-intensive jobs, as a way to eliminate poverty. Some considered stability (money and food), although shortening their lives and perhaps perpetuating poverty, was better than nothing **m. What details help support your ideas:** The boys' hopeless look...they look resigned to a life of filthy drudgery and in need of help **n. What else do I need to know:** Where there any serious public demonstrations at the time, or is the idea of resentment a modern thought **o. What questions does this photo raise in my mind:** What protections, if any, did the boys have? Did they consider themselves as adults?

CITATIONS

1. Lewis Hine. (1911). *Breaker #9, Hughestown Borough, Pennsylvania Coal Co. One of these is James Leonard. Corner Central St. & Ross St., Pittston, Pa. Another is Stanley Rasmus, Main Street Near Church Street, Du Pont, Pa. Location: Pittston, Pennsylvania.* Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA: No known restrictions on publication. [National Child Labor Committee Collection](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ncl2004002619/PP/): www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ncl2004002619/PP/
2. Source, Context, and Corroborate/Think Deeply historical thinking steps suggested in: Wineburg, S. (1999). Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 80(7), 488-500.
3. Monk, L. R. (1994). *Ordinary Americans; U.S. history through the eyes of everyday people*. New York, N.Y.: Close Up Publishing, p.154
4. Freedman, R. (1998). *Kids at work: Lewis Hine and the crusade against child labor*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt: Boston. p. 4-5.
5. Hine quoted in Burgan, M. (2011). *Breaker Boys: How one photograph helped end child labor*. Capstone Press: Mankato, Minnesota. p. 26.
6. Nordstrom, A. & McCausland, E. (2012). *Lewis Hine*. Distributed Art: New York.