

Uses of Coal

Many people see coal as a black mineral that people burn in their stoves and furnaces to produce heat. It is also a major source of power generation. Coal, however, has a number of byproducts, and they, in turn, are used to produce a great many products that we are familiar with on a day-to-day basis. Here are some examples:

Coke – carbon dioxide (used in soda water), acetylene used for welding, charcoal briquets, synthetic rubber, linoleum, TNT Explosives, electrical insulation

Coal Gas – sulfuric acid, paint colouring, some street lights

Minerals – baking powder, rubber cement, fertilizers, ammonia (cleaning), smelling salts (used to arouse someone who has fainted)

Coal Tar – insecticides, storage batteries, paint thinner, wood preservatives, varnish, roofing, paving, disinfectants (cleaning supplies)

By products of coal are also found in fireproofing materials, old phonograph records, billiard balls, perfumes, and some medicines.

Activities

In an average day, list as many ways as you can think of that coal affects your life. Write a narrative essay entitled “My Life Without Coal”. Start with electricity, and follow through the many products manufactured by using coal or its byproducts.

Challenge Question

Research to trace the route of a ton of coal from the time it is mined until it is used in the manufacturing of a product that you use everyday. Tell how long it takes and what is involved in each process along the way.

The American Coal Foundation web site has an interesting activity called How Much Does It Cost to Light Your School at the following address.

<http://www.acf-coal.org/pages/activities/how%20much.html>