Day of Disaster
The true story of a deadly mining disaster that changed America

About the Story
Lexile: 930L
For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective:
to identify key ideas from an article about a historical disaster and to write a speech commemorating the anniversary

Key Skills:
mood, author’s craft, literary devices, text structure, key ideas and supporting details

Essential Questions:
• What rights and protections should workers have?
• Why is it important to learn about disasters from the past?
• What are the consequences of our energy choices?

Standards:
This article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards:
R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.7, W.2, SL.1, L.4, L.5, L.6
For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.

Your Teaching Support Package
Find your full suite of materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Video: Behind the Scenes: “Day of Disaster”
Audio:
• The article (English and Spanish)
• Vocabulary
Differentiated articles:
• Lower-Lexile version (printable)
• Spanish version (printable)
Literature Connections: ideas for connecting to curricular texts

Skill Builders to print or project:
• Vocabulary
• Video Discussion Questions
• Close Reading and Critical Thinking
• Preparing to Write: Cherry Mine Speech
• Core Skills Workout: Central Ideas & Details*, Summarizing*, Text Features, Text Structure
• Quiz*
• Nonfiction Elements*
• Contest Entry Form
*Available on two levels
Preparing to Read

Do-Now: Analyze Photos. (5 minutes)
Place photographs of child coal miners around your classroom. (Check out our Ideabook post at Scope Online for recommended collections.) Under each photograph, post these questions: Describe what you see. What do you notice first? What people and objects are shown? What’s happening? When, where, and why do you think this image was made? What does it make you wonder about? Have students jot down their responses and return to their desks when they are done. Invite volunteers to share their ideas.

Watch the video. (15 minutes)
Project or distribute the Video Discussion Questions and preview as a class. Then watch the Behind the Scenes video and discuss the questions.

Preview vocabulary. (8 minutes, activity sheet online)
Project or distribute the Vocabulary Words and Definitions. Review the words a class; do the activity together or assign it as homework. Highlighted words: chaos, dissipating, hoisted, ravenous, saga, stables, toxins, ventilation

Reading and Discussing

Read and discuss the article. (45 minutes, activity sheets online)
• Have a volunteer read aloud the As You Read box on page 5.
• Play the audio at Scope Online while students follow along in their printed magazines.
• Have students work in groups to discuss the following close-reading questions.

Close-Reading Questions
How would you describe the mood of the introduction? How does author Kristin Lewis create this mood? (mood, author’s craft) The mood is terrifying and suspenseful. Lewis creates feelings of terror by using vivid language to describe the intensity of the fire. She creates suspense by revealing to readers that Albert is trapped underground.

In the section “Bright and Brisk,” Lewis writes, “Then they headed off for what they thought would be an ordinary day at the Cherry Mine.” What literary device is she using? What purpose does it serve? (literary devices, author’s craft) Lewis is using foreshadowing. By writing that the miners “thought” that their day would be ordinary, Lewis is hinting that their day would not be ordinary at all. This foreshadowing creates suspense and draws the reader into the story.

Why are the details about the Industrial Revolution in the section “Transforming America” important to the story? (text structure) These details are important to the story because they explain that, at the time of the Cherry Mine disaster, coal was an important energy source for many different industries. They help put the events of the article into historical context.

How does Lewis support her statement on page 7 that coal mining was a “tough” job? (key ideas and supporting details) Lewis supports her statement by listing the many dangers that coal miners faced, including cave-ins, toxic gases, and the risk of explosions and fires. She also explains how physically difficult coal mining is.
In the section “Lonely and Boring,” Lewis asks a series of questions about Albert. What purpose do these questions serve? (author’s craft) These questions help the reader relate to Albert while providing more detail about his life.

How does the information in the section “Scorching Heat” contribute to the article? (text structure) This section reveals how little concern was shown for the safety of workers. Lewis writes that coal continued to be brought up to the surface for 30 minutes after the fire started—while the miners were kept underground. The section also reveals how unsafe conditions were by explaining that there were no alarms or warning systems in place.

Critical-Thinking Questions

The Cherry Mine disaster was a horrific tragedy. Did any good come from it? Explain. Students will likely say yes. The Cherry Mine disaster helped lead to new safety rules, as well as laws requiring companies to pay victims of workplace disasters. The Cherry Mine disaster also helped the movement to end child labor in America.

What can be gained by learning about the Cherry Mine disaster? Answers will vary. Students may say that learning about the disaster can help people understand the human cost of greed, the challenges that children and their families faced at the turn of the century, and the importance of having laws to protect workers. Students may also say that learning about how Americans from all over donated money to help those affected by the disaster can strengthen our faith in humanity. And students may say that learning about it helps them understand how the struggles of previous generations helped lead to sweeping changes that have made our lives safer today.

• Revisit the photographs from the Do-Now. Have each student choose one and write a title and a caption for it.

Skill Building and Writing

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

Have students complete Preparing to Write: Cherry Mine Speech. This key ideas activity will prepare them for the writing prompt on page 10. For alternate tasks, see the box below.

Differentiate and Customize

**For Struggling Readers**

In a well-organized paragraph, explain why it is important to remember the Cherry Mine disaster. Support your ideas with text evidence.

**For Advanced Readers**

In a well-organized essay, explain how the author uses both narrative and informational writing to tell the story of the Cherry Mine disaster. Support your analysis with text evidence.

**For Scientists**

Do research to learn more about the environmental cost of using coal as an energy source as well as the benefits and drawbacks of other energy sources. Present your research in an essay, a podcast, or a slideshow.

**For Photo Journalists**

Explore the work of photographer Lewis Hine and how it affected the child labor movement. Then explore where the movement stands today. Present your research in a slideshow.