#1 Essay
Coal Mining - Interview with Randall Eubanks
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Coal mining is a big part of southern Illinois, so I wanted to learn more about it. The best way to do this was to interview a coal miner, so I looked to my family which has many coal miners in it. I chose my grandfather, Randall Eubanks, a fourth generation miner. He started working in the mines in 1968 and continued for 23 ½ years. He worked in three different mines, the Old Ben 21 for 12 years, Old Ben 24 for 2 years, and the Arch Conant Mine for 9 ½ years. I learned many things about coal mining during my interview. I learned about the mine, a coal miner's life, and the hazards in the mines.

First, I learned about the mine. Each mine my grandfather worked at had different equipment and used different mining methods. All the mines he worked at were shaft mines, which meant miners would go underground to get the coal. Each mine would dig down to where the coal was in the earth and mine it out. The miners would ride down the shaft in a cage, a completely enclosed elevator, to the face of the mine were the coal was. The depths of the shafts would vary at each mine. Arch Mine was 120 feet deep and Old Ben 21 was 660 feet deep. Old Ben 21 had two different shafts that were 3 miles apart. Arch Mine used a gel explosive to create under and over passes for airways to help them breathe. Old Ben 21 Mine used mining cars on rails for transportation of workers and to haul materials. The layer of coal in the earth's crust varies throughout the world. At Old Ben 21 it ranged from 7 to 10 feet tall and at Arch Mine it was 6 to 7 feet tall. When Old Ben 21 shut down there was still several million tons of coal left to mine out. They filled in the mine by dumping dirt and rock into the shaft till it was 10 feet from the top then cemented the rest of it.

Second, I learned about a coal miner's life. The mine was open 6 days a week and miners worked around the clock on three different shifts. In 1977, my grandfather made $8.56 an hour; in 1999 he made around $22.00 an hour. He wore a regular shirt, bibbed overalls, steel toed boots, and a hard hat to work everyday. When he worked in the mines he ran a machine called a ripper to cut the coal out of the face of the mine. He ran a coal hauler that hauled the coal from the face to the belt. He was a roof bolter which helped support the top of the mine. Finally, he worked as a repair man. In an 8 hour shift his mine would mine out 2400 tons of coal. The largest piece of coal my grandfather ever saw was 20 ft. long, 8 ft. tall, and 6 in. thick. Along with the coal, many fossils were found. My grandfather found small invertebrate and a shark jaw. My grandfather liked his job, and he would still be in the coal mines today if the mines had not shut down.

Third, I learned about the hazards in the mines. Coal mining is one of the dangerous jobs in the world and there are many hazards miners had to deal with. Every shift they would have to worry about cave-ins, blackouts, electrocution, gas poisoning, falling rocks, and dangerous machinery. The mines had many safety rules and safety gear to keep the miners safe. In 1977 my grandfather had a canopy above his head when running equipment. He also had gas detectors to prevent poisoning, which was an improvement from the early years in mining when birds were used to detect gas. Eventually, some equipment was run off a remote control, so miners could stay out of the way. The coal miners had a union called United Mine Workers of America or UMWA. The union helped with fair wages, disputes, and better safety measures. If their demands were not met, the union miners would strike to get what they needed. Even with all the safety precautions, the job was still very dangerous. My grandfather's scariest job was pulling support beams down when they were done mining an area. He got hurt in the

mines four times from rocks sliding out and slamming into him and each time he had to have stitches. There were accidents all the time in the mines, and in his 12 years of working in Old Ben 21, there were three fatalities. One man was crushed by coal sliding out and crushing him against a piece of equipment. The second man was electrocuted, and the third man was smothered by a collapsing coal pile.

In conclusion, I learned a lot from my grandfather in the three hours we spent talking. I learned about the mines, a coal miner's life, and the hazards in the mines. I now know how dangerous this job really is, and I am thankful none of my family was seriously hurt. I respect my grandfather and what he did in the past. I am proud to tell everyone he was a coal miner.

Battle of Virden
By Kimmie Blaney
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In January of 1898 the new United Mine Workers of America signed a contract with Illinois coal operators to stop a six month strike. The Chicago Virden Coal Company was one that refused to pay the new wages. The mine owners spent the summer recruiting African American miners from Alabama to break the union of white miners. They also built a fort around the mine.

On September 24, 1898 a trainload of potential strike breaking African-American miners were on their way to Springfield, Illinois when they were informed that they had entered an area where there was a mine strike. That train did not stop but continued on to Springfield. Other African-American miners in Alabama refused to even get on a train for Illinois when they learned they were to be strike breakers.

It had been raining in Virden for days when the Battle of Virden took place. Dozens of members of a newly formed United Mine Workers of America patrolled the railroad tracks. When not patrolling, they slept in a hayloft of a generous farmer.

On October 12, 1898, a train pulled into Virden. It had fifty potential strike breakers on it. The train had come from Birmingham, Alabama. They had picked up detectives from the Thiel Detective Service Company. They were armed with Winchester Rifles. The train stopped just outside the mine stockade. As the strikers attempted to surround the train, the guards opened fire. Then the battle broke out around the whole train. The battle results were, seven miners were killed, thirty were wounded, and four detectives were killed and five wounded. Others in the train were wounded. The train engineer finally accepted defeat. The train left after the battle.

The strikers won the battle. However, the Battle of Virden, October 12, 1898 was the end of the strikers.

Coal Mining
By Ethan Deaton
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Mankind has been using coal since it was first discovered, and it may, in fact, be one of the most important resources in the world. We use coal in our daily lives although you might not notice. One big thing we use coal for is electricity. When you think about it without Illinois' large supply of coal, we wouldn't have any electricity to power our phones, TVs, and computers. Knowing that we use coal for all these things you can probably understand how important Illinois coal is to the world.

The reason Illinois has so much coal is because it used to be covered in swamps a very long time ago. Many of the plants in the swamp died and fell into the water. The water prevented the plants from decaying completely. Eventually it formed material known as peat. As sand, dirt, and clay covered the peat, heat and pressure changed it into carbon deposits. Those carbon deposits eventually formed coal.

The way people use to mine a long time ago was very dangerous. Before drills, miners use to mine coal with simple shovels, picks and their hands. Kids use to work in the mines too. Their job was usually to carry large baskets of coal from deep in the mine to the surface. Before safety lamps were invented open flames were used to light the mineshafts and often caused large explosions. Miners also didn't wear masks while mining coal. Many died of lung disease. Another thing miners had to deal with was cramped spaces and relying on wooden support beams to stop cave-ins. These were all safety hazards.

In modern day mining, many of the safety hazards have been fixed. We no longer use open flames to light the mineshafts; we now use light bulbs. Miners also now carry gas masks to protect themselves. We now do not use shovels and picks to mine coal. Instead miners use large machines to dig the coal out. There are two ways of modern mining: surface mining and underground mining. Two common ways of surface mining are strip mining and mountaintop mining. One example of underground mining is long wall mining. In all ways of mining, dirt and stone is never thrown away. Instead, it is reserved for parks and other things.

Coal Mining in Western Illinois
By Colton Jagers
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Coal mines were very popular during the 1940's in Illinois. Coal was selling for 18 ½ cents a bushel or $2.95 a ton. In 2011, coal sold for about $49.46/short ton. Western Illinois was a big coal-mining county.

Atkinson, Illinois had 2 or 3 coal mines, but it also distributed the coal to the towns all around it. When the Sheffield area mined coal they would send up to 100 railroad cars of coal a day to Atkinson. Then Atkinson would send the coal out to customers.

A big coal mining company in the county was Midland Coal. They had about 125 employees and 3 shifts. The first shift was loading and processing coal. Processing coal was very dangerous because they had the best chance of getting black lung disease. The second shift was a maintenance crew. And the third was for those needed for two stripping machines. Midland Electric Coal had a processing plant at Atkinson and at Lathrop Coal just east of Kewanee. Lathrop Coal closed in 1874. The first Midland strip mine shovels removed 13 cubic yards of earth at a time.

Coal mining was very dangerous in the 1900's because they didn't have the right equipment, and the coal mines kept collapsing. One of the horrible coal mining accidents was the Cherry Coal Mine. On November 13, 1909, the coal miners were sending down the hay to the third vein for the mules. A spark hit the hay and caught on fire. They thought to face the fan outward so it would blow the smoke out. Instead the fire blew to the escape stairs and set them on fire. The only way to escape was the main shaft. There were 12 heroes during the fire. They went down the shaft and helped get the miners out. On the seventh trip, the operator was too late to send down the shaft, and the 12 heroes died a firey death. There were twenty-one men who survived eight days without food and water. They were found dehydrated. We will always remember this terrible accident.

Coal mining has changed a lot over the years. They used mules in the early 1900's, and now we use machinery. They use to need about 400-500 workers, and now we only need about 250-350. There used to be 71 mines in Illinois in 1978 and now there are 21. Even though there aren't as many coal mines, it doesn't mean we don't need coal. Coal is still used as an energy source.

So coal mining was popular even though it was dangerous. Coal miners risked their lives to keep our economy together. Who knows where we would be without coal miners.

Coal Mining in the United States
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Do you ever wonder what coal mining was like before there were laws and regulations? It is amazing how many deaths happened in the coal mines before they were put in place. In 1891, Congress passed the first mine safety law. The laws were only for mines in the US territories. It said they only had to have minimum ventilation, and they couldn't hire children under the age of twelve.

In 1910, the Bureau of Mines was put in charge of finding ways to reduce coal mine accidents. Before the Bureau of Mines was established many people were killed in coal mines in the United States.

Annual inspections started for some underground coal mines in 1952. They could finally issue violation notices but could not give penalties for owners not doing what they were supposed to do.

The Federal Health Safety Act was introduced in 1959. This included surface and underground mine inspections. A surface mine had two annual inspections, and the underground inspections happened four times a year. The Federal Health Safety Act also helped with health standards and gave money to the miners with black lung disease.

The Federal Mine Safety and Health Act passed in 1977 and gave the miners more rights and protection. After this, mining deaths in the United States dropped from 272 to 86 in 2000.

In 2006, the Mine Improvement/New Emergency Response Act was created. (MINER ACT) This required emergency response plans in underground coal mines. They had to have rescue teams. They also had to be told about all mining accidents.

In January of 2010 MSHA introduced "Rules to Live By". This program focused on the 24 standards in the accident categories. This rule will help cut down on deaths and injuries. It focuses on eight rules that are for coal mining. The rules focus on many things to keep miners safe so they can do their jobs. They make sure the mines are ventilated properly, that the mining equipment is working correctly, and that inspections are happening on schedule by certified inspectors.

No matter how many rules there are for coal mining, there are still disasters. In 2010 Upper Big Branch Mine near Charleston, West Virginia exploded. Rescue workers spent more than one-hundred hours trying to find the miners. It was so bad in the mine that the first time they walked through, they walked past four dead bodies and didn't even notice. The explosion had the highest death toll since the 1970 explosion that killed 38 miners in Kentucky. The mine was owned by the Massey Company. In 2008, Aracoma Coal Company, which is connected to Massey, paid 4.2 million dollars in criminal fines and pled guilty to many safety violations. The Upper Big Branch Mine had big problems with methane build up. Inspectors found the mine operators were not checking the methane monitors every 31 days like they were told to do.

On April 30, 2009, regulators stopped work in part of the mine because it failed to follow the methane related safety precautions.

In conclusion, I am amazed how bad the laws used to be in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Coal miners worked in really bad conditions and no one was making sure that they were safe. I was also surprised that children under the age of twelve were working in coal mines. It made me very sad to read the stories about all the coal miners who have died because companies were not following the laws that were written. The Upper Big Branch Mine Disaster never should have happened. The company had been warned many times about the methane problem and that's what caused the death of all those good men. I hope that laws continue to be written to protect the men and women who are just trying o earn a living to take care of their families.

The Impact of Coal
By Casey Jensen
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A man named Joe has a family of four to support. His wife was recently laid off, and financially, it can be hard. At first he was worried he would not be able to support his family. Then he realized just how lucky he was. Joe is a coal miner in Illinois; he makes an average $73,000 a year while the average American makes $63,090 a year. That's about $10,000 more! He even gets more than the average American with a Bachelors Degree; they only get $64,033 a year on average! Joe had never realized just how fortunate he was to have gone into the coal industry. Coal mining has supported him with a job since he was eighteen until today at age forty-two. Totaling up all his paychecks, he had been paid a total of $1,752,000, that's a lot of money. Coal was how he met his wife, how he paid for his children's education and more. To Joe, coal is and always will be at the center of everything good in his life.

In the writing above Joe is a fictional character, although, there are many people very similar to Joe. Over 3,500 people in Illinois are employed as coal miners. The coal industry creates almost one half of Illinois' electricity. That's a lot! Coal is a huge part of Illinois history and more people statewide should know about it. Coal helped get this country on its feet and today it is still helping hold us up. Coal is a blessing to families all over Illinois and deserves to be recognized. That is what my outlook on Illinois Coal is, a blessing to many families all over the state (even families who aren't in the coal business). It gives us electricity. This state runs on coal and that is something to be proud about!

Now here is the most educational part. Coal is a fossil fuel formed from plant material that was buried years ago. Coal takes about 3 million years to form; so it is quite amazing that around two thirds of Illinois has coal underlying it. We have the second biggest coal reserve in the United States. Illinois is eighth in the top ten coal producing states. There are four different types of coal, lignite, sub-bituminous, bituminous and anthracite. The coal in Illinois is bituminous coal. Coal from Illinois is rich in sulfur and very high in energy content making it a better producer of electricity. The coal here contains less moisture than the sub-bituminous type. The carbon content of bituminous coal is generally from 45%-85%. Its heat values are higher than lignite and sub-bituminous. Normally, the coal in Illinois is mined underground. So that is the impact of coal. I hope you enjoyed it and now have a new found appreciation for coal and the people that make it such an important part of our state!

Coal, Family and Pana
By Natalie Kirkbride
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Could you imagine that a little piece of coal could affect a community so much? In Pana, Illinois it affected jobs and how our small town is remembered. Just not one family was affected, but everyone was including my family.

My great grandmother, Elaine Schloz, worked as a payroller and kept books. My great, great grandpa George Ambrose worked as a coal miner. They both worked at Coal Mine No. 1, and my great, great grandpa George also worked in Coal Mine No. 2 before it closed in the late 1920's.

There were other jobs too in the coal mine, such as drillers, who drilled and dug holes and those who found the coal known as miners. Electricians maintained the lighting and electrical equipment and installed lights and electrical and wiring systems. Mechanics worked on the drills and drilling equipment, and when the elevators came out, they worked on those too! Payrollers paid the miners, kept the books, and gave advice to all employees sort of like a manager but not the boss. Drawers or hurriers were usually women or children who brought the mined coal to the surface. The check weigh man weighed the coal after it was brought up by the drawers. It's amazing to know that each person had a specific job, and they knew how to do their job in hot and dusty air.

If you go to downtown Pana, you can see a mural on the sides of the buildings of Coal Mine No. 1. It has two men working and digging, and it looks sort of like they were having fun. Maybe that's why our town reflects on coal mining so much because people had worked long, hard hours mining and had the satisfaction of supporting their families while working in the coal mines. Maybe that's why Pana was so successful. Pana may be a mall town, but it definitely had made its mark in history.

Illinois Coal Mining
By Jack Patterson
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Do you ever wonder what powers your TV or what charges your phones? It's coal. That's right, coal! Coal is not just a black rock. It's really a pretty cool natural resource. It is nicknamed the "black diamond" because it is so valuable.

Back in the olden days, coal miners used pick axes and shovels to mine the coal by hand. Coal miners commonly worked about 11 hours a day. If you were really tall you had to work on your hands and knees. They had very harsh work conditions. It was very dangerous, dirty and sometimes the mine could cave in. Unfortunately, many have died in the coal mining industry.

Now miners use specialized equipment to get the coal out and broken down into smaller pieces. They use heavy machines like bulldozers and conveyors to get the coal transported from under the ground. Presently 3,500 mean and women work in coal mines in Illinois. Now they have laws that help keep the coal mining areas safer and therefore help to protect the miners . Also, advances in mining technology have enabled mines to increase production and become safer work places as well.

There are two different types of coal mining. There is surface mining and underground mining. Surface mining is used more because it's safer and it's cheaper. What makes Illinois coal so desirable is its high BTU (British Thermal Unit) rating. Coal has been mined in 73 counties of Illinois. More that 4,500 coal mines have operated since commercial mining began in Illinois about 1810. Twenty-One coal mines are operating today. That went from a lot to a little. I found it interesting that there is a network of underground freight tunnels in Chicago. They were once used to carry coal to individual office buildings in the heart of Chicago, known as the Loop.

Illinois coal is a great resource that produces a lot of joy for people in the form of electricity. Miners now have heavy machinery to help them mine coal. About 3,500 men and women work in the coal mines right now. Many people may not have known that coal is one of the building blocks for the average person's everyday life. Without coal we wouldn't be able to use all the modern day technology we have at our fingertips.

The Safety of Mine Workers
By Julissa Quinonez
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Whether miners are deep down hundreds of feet below the surface of the earth or above ground, the safety of these workers is important. What it takes to make miners safe underground and above ground is very different. They can never be safe enough, but the changes in safety laws and regulations improved mining conditions which are extremely better than what they use to be.

Underground mine safety has truly improved since the beginning. Ventilation is the most important safety concern because of the gases that come off the rocks. Ventilation provides fresh air, controls the air movement, removes dust, and dilutes gases generated by mining activity. The workers are also supplied with respirators to filter dust particles from the dust in the air they breathe. To help miners see what they are doing, their work area, travel routes, and the machines are supported with lighting. Now days, the risk of the roof collapsing has much less of a chance than before. The roof conditions are constantly checked. Post, jacks, bolts, and beams are some objects used to secure the walls and roofs.

Surface mines are less dangerous than underground mines, but they are still dangerous and yet have also been improved. One huge change is the communication between the workers. Miners have to learn signals that symbolize when an area is going to be blasted. It is extremely important for them to know that their lives depend on it. Many accidents happen when miners get on or off or walk between machines. Because of this, extra precaution must be taught and taken.

One more important way the safety of miners has been changed is the equipment they wear. It doesn't matter if they are above or below the surface; workers are required to wear proper clothes and equipment. Hard hats, steel toed boots, and depending on the job, safety glasses help miners stay protected. At all times underground miners are equipped with self-rescuers which allow them to breath incase of a fire in the mine. They also have to have gas detectors to check if there is an unsuitable amount of gas in the air that could be dangerous to the miner or possibly explosive. Surface miners must have hearing protection while working in areas with high noise levels.

The safety of mine workers continues to be improved. Thankfully the number of injuries has already been decreased in Illinois. Underground and surface mines are now safer due to many changes including the equipment they wear.

Coal, Gold Among Rocks
By Thomas Prosser
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Energy comes in many ways like wind power, nuclear power, and solar power. There is also gold" among the rocks, coal. Coal helps the economy and powers most of your stuff. You might think, "What about the green power sources?' They are good ideas, but they are just ideas. I am not saying coal is completely developed and perfect; I am just saying it is dependable. There is also so much of it. Look how much is in Illinois. Coal adds 1 billion dollars to the Illinois' economy. Coal also powers 52% of our nation, and it is cleaner and safer than it was a few years ago. I will show you how coal stacks up to other power sources.

First up, I will compare coal and nuclear power. Nuclear power needs a ton of water to keep cool and safe from meltdowns. Coal does not need water because coal is more stable than the fuel for nuclear power. Now the cost of nuclear power, at first it costs more to build the power plant, but in time it will be cheaper than coal. The cost does not make it better or worse than coal. Nuclear power, powers 15% of the world's power, but has dangerous byproducts, like toxic waste.

Next, I will compare coal to wind power. You are driving on the road and you see a field. In that field are pillars of metal with propellers. Those are windmills. Those are not the windmills to help farmers, but the ones used to get energy. Windmills take up a lot of land, and it is expensive. They bother farmers. The windmills can only use 59% of the wind's power. They kill birds. For the tiny bit of power that the windmills provide, it's not worth using. Even with 25,000 windmills, they only make 0.1 percent of the world's power, and that is not even the worst thing. The worst thing is people saying it is eco-friendly. Wind power is not even worth comparing to coal.

Finally, I am going to compare coal to solar power. Solar power is more expensive than coal. It has no byproducts. Instead of byproducts, solar power has more sizes of solar panels. An example of this are the ones on calculators and those needed on houses. Coal has a lot of uses for its byproducts. Coal has byproducts used for bricks and other construction materials. Still solar power is not very reliable because it needs a place to be stored at night. You need a lot of solar panels to make power. Solar panels don't need a fuel so it is bad for employment, unlike coal.

To conclude, when coal is compared with other power sources like nuclear power, wind power, and solar power, it makes them look like plain ordinary rocks. I compared coal to two green power sources and another fossil fuel power source, but Illinois coal is still greater. Coal is safer and has less of an impact on the environment. Coal is unlike any of the other power sources. That is why it is considered "gold" among rocks.

Coal ! What Would We Do Without It?
By Karley Ratliff
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Did you know that one average household in Illinois uses between eight-hundred to two –thousand pounds of coal in a month? Coal has been mined in Illinois since the 1800's and is this state's main resource. Eighty-percent of its production is mostly from underground mines. Coal is under about sixty-percent of Illinois, that's thirty-seven thousand square miles! That makes Illinois' rank 8th among coal producing states. Illinois mines more than thirty-three million tons of coal each year!

There are two types of mining used in Illinois: surface and underground. Surface mining is generally less expensive but can only be used when the coal is buried less than two hundred feet underground. There are three kinds of underground mines: slope, drift, and shaft. Shaft is the most common type and these mines may be from one-hundred to one-thousand feet deep! In Illinois, the most common two types of underground mining are longwall and room and pillar. In longwall mining, a cutting machine moves back and forth along a wide face of exposed coal. The method where it creates voids by mining rooms is called room and pillar. Turning at cross cuts in these mines results in a grid pattern. Also, half of the coal remains in the pillars that support the roof from collapsing.

Not only is coal used to make electricity, we also use the by-products it creates. We use this valuable resource to make things like perfumes, medicines, fertilizers, and plastics. We make tons of construction products as well such as concrete, bricks, tar, paint, carpet backing, and many more.

We burn eighty-seven percent of the coal we mine; the main reason is to make electricity with it. We also use it to make coke that is turned into steel. By providing electricity to our state for heat and light, it boosts our economy and helps make Illinois a great state to live in. With all of the additional things we make from coal by-products, coal is a vital resource in Illinois. Coal! What would we do without it?

Illinois' Plants to Coal to Energy
By Nate Thomas
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The coal miner starts early in the morning, he says good-bye to his wife and kids, and drives to the coal mine. As he grabs his helmet and lunch box he walks into the elevator shaft that will take him miles into the earth. Then he turns his head upwards to the sky to see it one last time for another 8 hours. Switching his helmet light on; he turns his head to the left to see his brother by his side. Then he turns to the right to see friends he has known his whole life. Then they descend into the darkness to help fuel millions of machines for the world….

360-286 million years ago, the earth was like a tropical rain forest filled with plants, trees, and swampy areas. Special green plants died, and piled up in water that was warm and shallow that eventually turned into coal. In order for those plants to become coal the conditions need to be perfect. A few of them are: temperature, a special amount of pressure, and a few million years.

There are a few main types of coal. The closest coal to the surface is called Lignite coal. Lignite coal is very soft, and you can see some of the plants left behind. If you go a little deeper into the surface, you will find Bituminous coal (which is found in Illinois). Bituminous coal is kind of hard and has a few layers. And the deepest type of coal is anthracite coal. Anthracite coal is very hard, black, and burns the most heat.

Coal has a special process it goes through to make energy to supply one-third of the world's electricity. The first step is the coal is leveled onto a ramp and put into a machine that cleans and scrubs it. After this process, the coal is turned into a powdery substance. The coal is mixed with fresh air that is heated and blown into a boiler. The boiler then turns into steam that is superheated, and the steam is spun into the turbine blades. The turbine blades spin to power up the generators. The rest of the unused steam travels to the cooling tower, and it is used to heat buildings nearby.

Coal helps Illinois' and the United States' economies. Coal helps our economy by giving people jobs, lowers electricity prices for companies, as well as families. And the United States does not need to rely on other countries for coal which helps our economy. The coal industry can create up to 6 million jobs. These jobs are anywhere from the actual coal miners, to the people that invent new ways to use it, to the people who transport the coal. Since the United States has its own coal mines, it doesn't need other countries to help fuel itself. Our government can save money on shipping costs instead of spending money on foreign fuel sources.

Starting millions of years ago the formation of coal began. Illinois and the United States fortunately found value in this great resource and a process was made to turn the coal into energy. This process has helped Illinois' economy and will continue to provide many jobs for us. It's time we increase our production of coal and lessen our dependency on foreign fuel!