



# LESSON PLAN

WEST VIRGINIA MINE WARS MUSEUM

[wwminewars.org](http://wwminewars.org)

401 Mate Street Matewan, West Virginia 25678

---

## *When Miners United*

In the early 1900s, coal miners and their families lived in company towns. In a company town, the coal company owned everything including the houses. The coal company also owned the only store in town. People came from near and far to work in the mines. Some local boys gave up farming to work in the mines. Some African Americans came from Alabama and other states looking for jobs in West Virginia. And some people left their homes in Italy, Poland, and Hungary in search of work.

As more and more companies mined coal they competed for the same customers. Companies lowered their prices to sell more coal, but then they had to pay the miners less. As miners made less money, their families sometimes did not have enough food to eat or money to fix their houses.

When one miner asked his boss for a pay raise, the boss always said, "No." Miners knew the only way the bosses would listen is if they all refused to work for low pay, but the miners had many differences among them. What do you think were some of the differences?

The miners set aside their differences and formed a union known as the United Mine Workers of America. Working together as a union, they all asked for more money or their work, but the mine owners again said no and threw miners and their families out of the company's houses. When the company's guards tried to put miners in jail for forming the union, the miners fought back, and several miners and company guards died in the battles.

The biggest battle took place at Blair Mountain in Logan County, West Virginia. Thousands of miners marched together as an army to fight the mine guards and free other miners from a jail in Mingo County. Even though they came from many places, they worked together.

They had no way to tell who was a miner and who was a guard. The miners decided to tie a red bandanna around their neck, and they became known as the "red neck army." The red handkerchief became a symbol of unity and solidarity.

The miners fought the guards at Blair Mountain for five days until the U.S. Army arrived. They would not fight the U.S. Army and lost this battle. More than ten years later, the laws changed, and they finally formed their union.



# LESSON PLAN

WEST VIRGINIA MINE WARS MUSEUM

[wvminewars.org](http://wvminewars.org)

401 Mate Street

Matewan, West Virginia

25678

A red bandana like the miners army wore:



Logan County deputies fire at advancing miners from atop Blair Mountain, 1921.



**West Virginia  
State Archives**

Source <http://www.wvculture.org/history/labor/mwnews.html>



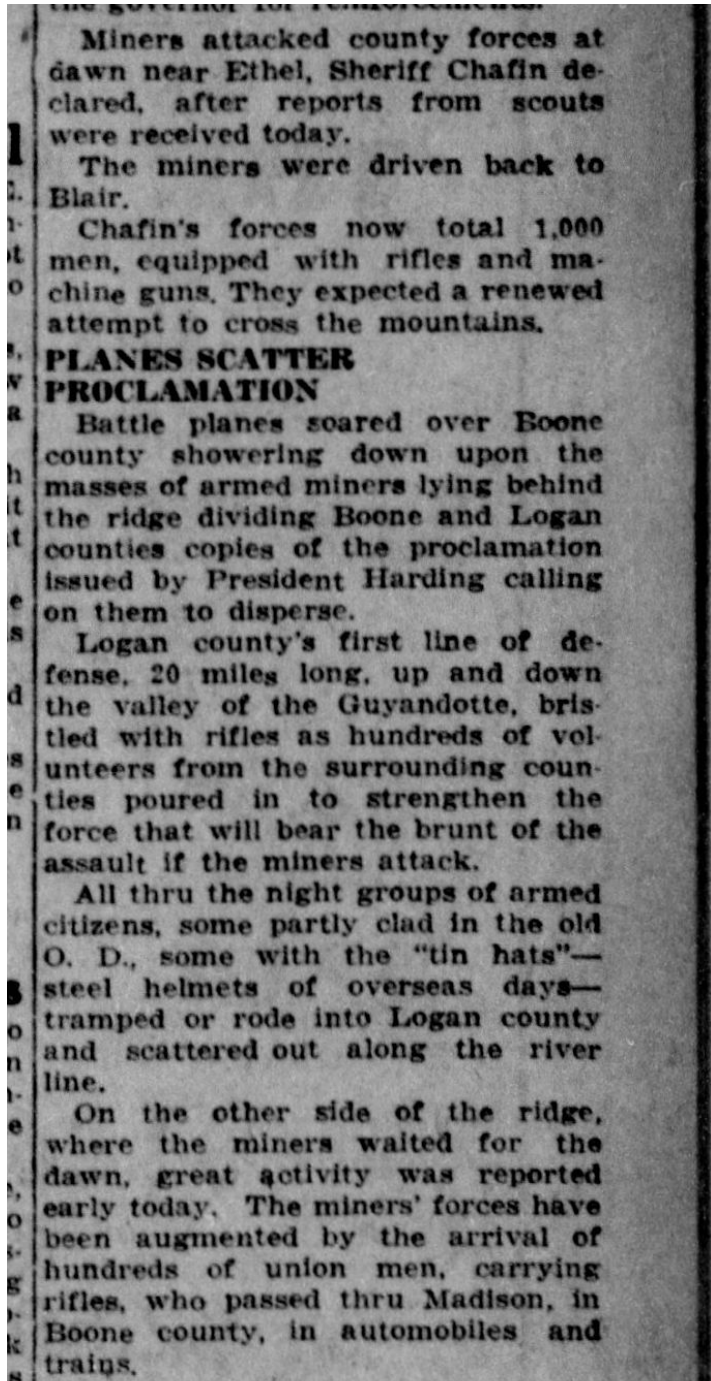
# LESSON PLAN

WEST VIRGINIA MINE WARS MUSEUM

wwminewars.org

401 Mate Street Matewan, West Virginia 25678

Newspaper article titled "Miners Battle Guards," from the *Seattle Star*, August 31, 1921:



Source: <https://guides.loc.gov/chronicling-america-blair-mountain/selected-articles>



# LESSON PLAN

WEST VIRGINIA MINE WARS MUSEUM

wvminewars.org

401 Mate Street Matewan, West Virginia 25678

---

Writing Exercise: Think about what you have learned about West Virginia miners in the early 1900s by reading about them, reading part of a newspaper article, and looking at the photographs from that time. For this exercise, you will use what you have learned to complete sentences. Here is an example:

People came from Poland, Italy, and Hungary to West Virginia because they were searching for jobs and came to work in the coal mines.

Thousands of miners decided to form unions because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Thousands of miners decided to form unions but \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Thousands of miners decided to form unions so \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

There were many differences among miners because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

There were many differences among miners but \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

There were many differences among miners so \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

The miners lost the Battle of Blair Mountain because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

The miners lost the Battle of Blair Mountain but \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

The miners lost the Battle of Blair Mountain so \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.



# LESSON PLAN

WEST VIRGINIA MINE WARS MUSEUM

[wvminewars.org](http://wvminewars.org)

401 Mate Street Matewan, West Virginia 25678

---

## Decorate your own bandana!

The red bandana was a symbol of solidarity, and the miners wore it on the march to Blair Mountain as part of their uniform. Imagine you and your friends are working on a project for the greater good of your community and peers. What would be on your bandana?

If you'd like to share your designs and stories with us, you can send them to us at [minewarsmuseum@gmail.com](mailto:minewarsmuseum@gmail.com) or mail them to PO Box 764, Matewan, WV 25678.



# LESSON PLAN

WEST VIRGINIA MINE WARS MUSEUM

wvminewars.org

401 Mate Street

Matewan, West Virginia

25678

---



## **West Virginia Content Standards (4th Grade):**

*West Virginia History*

**SS.4.2:** Identify the responsibilities and rights of United State citizens.

**SS.4.17:** Analyze the impact of West Virginia's geography on transportation, settlement, jobs, clothing, food, shelter, services, and interaction with others outside the state.

**SS.4.19:** Pose, research, and answer student-generated questions relating to West Virginia (e.g. primary source documents, magazines, online resources, etc.)



# LESSON PLAN

WEST VIRGINIA MINE WARS MUSEUM

wvminewars.org

401 Mate Street Matewan, West Virginia 25678

---

## Optional Videos:

- “The Battle of Blair Mountain was America’s largest insurrection since the Civil War,” *West Virginia: A Film History*:  
[https://www.wvencyclopedia.org/media/29143?article\\_id=532](https://www.wvencyclopedia.org/media/29143?article_id=532)
- PBS Learning Media, “Mines, Miners, and Labor: Sifting through Blair Mountain’s Past.”
- <https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/a135a48d-08db-4cc4-a8e9-ce9da7c4e071/sifting-through-blair-mountains-past/support-materials/>
- PBS Learning Media, “The Mine Wars: Who Worked in West Virginia Coal Mines?”
- <https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/amex28mw-soc-mineworkers/wgbh-america/anexperience-the-mine-wars-who-worked-in-west-virginia-coal-mines/>

## Sources for Further Reading:

- Clio, Miners March: <https://theclio.com/entry/101171>
- Clio, Blair Mountain: <https://theclio.com/entry/22865>
- Corbin, David A. “The Miners’ March.” e-WV: The West Virginia Encyclopedia. 14 December 2016. Web. 08 June 2020. <https://www.wvencyclopedia.org/articles/1825>
- Bailey, Kenneth R. “Battle of Blair Mountain.” e-WV: The West Virginia Encyclopedia. 29 June 2018. Web. 08 June 2020. <https://www.wvencyclopedia.org/articles/1825>
- William C. Blizzard, *When Miners March* (edited by Wess Harris; PM Press, 201