

Life Before & After Electricity



Unit 1: Lignite 101



Assign each student in a grade school or high school class to write a paper on what life was like just before a customer received electricity, and on what life was like just after a customer first received electricity. Have each student contact a senior citizen that they know, whether it be one of their grandparents or a neighbor (an alternative would be to talk to someone who has knowledge of such an experience, for example, someone who has heard about this experience many times from their parents). Ask this person questions such as:

- What was life like before electricity? How did you wash your clothes, prepare food, read at night, dry your hair, etc.? Also, how did you get your work done, whether it be at a business or farm?
- When did you first get electricity? What did you have to do in order to be able to use that electricity (wire home, outlets)? What fuel source provided that electricity (lignite, hydro, etc.)?
- What were your first uses of electricity at your home and business/farm?
- Did the public eagerly anticipate the use of electricity, or were some people skeptical of its use?
- Do you have any personal experiences of electricity generated from lignite, whether it be working in the industry, or living near where it is generated?



Have the students write a report based on the interview with a senior citizen. Reports should be longer for high school students. An additional activity may be to have the students give a short oral presentation to the class on what they learned.