From Roughing It by Mark Twain, 1872

crowded, packed/

complicated or tricky

huge, massive

peak or tip

a small person

areas of pine trees

jaws, large opening

sad poor person

Virginia was a busy city of streets and houses above ground. Under it
was another busy city, down in the bowels of the earth, where a great
population of men thronged in and out among an intricate maze of tunnels
and drifts, flitting hither and thither under a winking sparkle of
lights, and over their heads towered a vast web of interlocking timbers
that held the walls of the gutted Comstock apart. These timbers were as
large as a man's body, and the framework stretched upward so far that no
eye could pierce to its top through the closing gloom. It was like
peering up through the clean-picked ribs and bones of some colossal
skeleton. Imagine such a framework two miles long, sixty feet wide, and
higher than any church spire in America. Imagine this stately lattice-
work stretching down Broadway, from the St. Nicholas to Wall Street, and
a Fourth of July procession, reduced to pigmies, parading on top of it
and flaunting their flags, high above the pinnacle of Trinity steeple.
One can imagine that, but he cannot well imagine what that forest of
timbers cost, from the time they were felled in the pineries beyond
Washoe Lake, hauled up and around Mount Davidson at atrocious rates of
freightage, then squared, let down into the deep maw of the mine and
built up there. Twenty ample fortunes would not timber one of the
greatest of those silver mines. The Spanish proverb says it requires a
gold mine to "run" a silver one, and it is true. A beggar with a silver
mine is a pitiable pauper indeed if he cannot sell.
I spoke of the underground Virginia as a city. The Gould and Curry is
only one single mine under there, among a great many others; yet the

Gould and Curry's streets of dismal drifts and tunnels were five miles in
extent, altogether, and its population five hundred miners. Taken as a
whole, the underground city had some thirty miles of streets and a
population of five or six thousand. In this present day some of those
populations are at work from twelve to sixteen hundred feet under
Virginia and Gold Hill, and the signal-bells that tell them what the
superintendent above ground desires them to do are struck by telegraph as
we strike a fire alarm. Sometimes men fall down a shaft, there, a
thousand feet deep. In such cases, the usual plan is to hold an inquest.
If you wish to visit one of those mines, you may walk through a tunnel
about half a mile long if you prefer it, or you may take the quicker plan
of shooting like a dart down a shaft, on a small platform. It is like
tumbling down through an empty steeple, feet first. When you reach the
bottom, you take a candle and tramp through drifts and tunnels where
throngs of men are digging and blasting; you watch them send up tubs full
of great lumps of stone--silver ore; you select choice specimens from the
mass, as souvenirs; you admire the world of skeleton timbering; you
reflect frequently that you are buried under a mountain, a thousand feet
below daylight; being in the bottom of the mine you climb from "gallery"
to "gallery," up endless ladders that stand straight up and down; when
your legs fail you at last, you lie down in a small box-car in a cramped
"incline" like a half-up-ended sewer and are dragged up to daylight
feeling as if you are crawling through a coffin that has no end to it.
Arrived at the top, you find a busy crowd of men receiving the ascending
cars and tubs and dumping the ore from an elevation into long rows of
bins capable of holding half a dozen tons each; under the bins are rows
of wagons loading from chutes and trap-doors in the bins, and down the
long street is a procession of these wagons wending toward the silver
mills with their rich freight. It is all "done," now, and there you are.

inquiry, investigation

tower

passageway

climbing uphill

You need never go down again, for you have seen it all. If you have
forgotten the process of reducing the ore in the mill and making the
silver bars, you can go back and find it again in my Esmeralda chapters
if so disposed.

**Teacher’s Guide**

Name of Text: **Roughing It by Mark Twain**

First and Last Names of the Question Composers: Angie Angelopoulos, Jim Frost, Nurit Stites

| Questions in Finalized Order | What is the point of this question? Why did you write it. Is there an overarching understanding you are trying to reach with students? Include all answer**s** (words, phrases, sentences with line numbers) |
| --- | --- |
| **(Q1) Reread the excerpt from *Roughing It*.** **Who is the author and what year was this written?****Name the place that Twain refers to in Roughing It?** | Purpose of the question is to orient students to the text, author, and purpose of the text. Student should understand that an underground mine in Virginia City is being describes and compared to the above the ground city. Possible answers: Line 1: Mark Twain in 1872.  “Virginia was a busy city…” Line 3“Under it was another busy city,” Line 4 |
| **(Q2) How does Mark Twain describe the “busy city, down in the bowels of the earth?”** | The purpose of this question is to elicit a visual image of the author’s description of the mine. Possible answers:“great population of men” Line 4-5 “intricate maze of tunnels and drifts…” Line 5-6“winking sparkle of lights,” Line 6-7“These timbers were as large as a man’s body…” Line 9“Imagine such a framework two mile long…” Line 12 |
| **(Q3) In line 22, the author cites a Spanish proverb: “it requires a gold mine to “run” a silver one, and it is true.” What does the author mean?**  | The purpose of this question is to explore the meaning of the proverb and understand that operating a silver mine takes lots of money and resources.Possible answers: It is very expensive to run a silver mine.“imagine what the forest of timbers cost…” Line 17-18“Twenty ample fortunes…” Line 20-21“A beggar with a silver mine…” Line 23-24 |
| **(Q4) In line 25, the author states: “ I spoke of the underground Virginia as a city.” What is the author referring to?**  | The purpose of this question is to show students that the author is describing more than one mine.Possible answers:“…single mine under there, among a great many others;” Line 26The author is referring to the Gould and Curry Mine as one of many among many other mines.  |
| **(Q5) Provide evidence found in the text that illustrates the massive “underground city”.****How large were the tunnels? What was the population of miners?****How far underneath did the miners need to go into the mine?** | The purpose is to realize the extent of the ‘underground city’. To closely distinguish between miners and others who worked at the mines to support the operation.Possible answers: Some tunnels were five miles long, five hundred miners, the mines had the equivalence of thirty miles of streets and about six thousand people working for this operation. “…and tunnels were five miles in extent, altogether, and its population five hundred miners…the underground city had some thirty miles of streets and a population of five or six thousand.” Lines 27-30“…from twelve to sixteen hundred feet under Virginia and Gold Hill…” Lines 31-32 |
|  **(Q6) How does Mark Twain describe the working conditions of the mines?** | The purpose of this question is to discover the author’s message about the hardships of working in the Virginia City mines.Possible answers:Lines 34-49Dangerous- “Sometimes men fall down a shaft…” Line 34Dark- “…you take a candle and tramp through drifts and tunnels…” Line 40Tiring- “…when your legs fail you at last…” Line 47Cramped, in a coffin Line 47-48 |
| **(Q7) In line 42, the author says, “you select choice specimens from the mass, as souvenirs; you admire the world of skeleton timbering…”** **What is the author suggesting?** |  The purpose of this question is to demonstrate that miners may have admired and were awe struck at times working in the mines. Also, miners may have had the opportunity to keep specimens for themselves. These may have been the perks of being a miner.Possible answers:Awesome, you could have a souvenir, some miners may have been proud working in the mines. |
| **(Q8) What type of writing is this piece? Argumentative/opinion, informative, or narrative? How do you know?** | The purpose of this question is to identify genre of writing- possibly to serve as mentor text.Possible answers:Informative, since it provides information about what it was like working in the mines. |
| **(Q9) Why would the author tell you, “that you need to never go down again, for you have seen it all”?** | Line 56: His writing or this story provides accurate description of life underground in the mines and because the conditions were so serve, why would anyone choose to go down and experience. |

Please compose a clear writing prompt or question to follow this close analytic reading. Make sure that your writing prompt/question follows the CCSS writing standards (choose informational or argumentative) and that you use the terminology of the standards. The writing assignment can be a very formal essay or a fairly short piece, as long as it demonstrates that students have understood the document and can use evidence from it effectively.

**CCSSELA Standards: W.4.1. a.b.c.d**

**(Q10) Sometimes authors use hyperbole or exaggeration to make a point. In your opinion, is the title Roughing It by Mark Twain an accurate description of working in the Virginia City mines? Provide evidence from the text to support your claim.**

In the space below, create a very specific checklist that helps teachers what exactly to identify in order to measure student success or difficulty with this particular writing assignment on this particular reading. Make sure to use your grade level’s writing standards as a guide. Be clear!

**Student writes an opinion piece on the topic or text, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.**

**Statement of Purpose/Focus:**

* Introduces a topic or text clearly
* States an opinion

**Organization:**

* Provides and organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer’s purpose.
* Links opinion and reasons using words and phrases (e.g., *for instance, in order to, in addition*).
* Provides a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

**Elaboration of Evidence:**

* Provides reasons that are supported by facts and details