

Resource D: **IGNORANCE AND WANT**

(Facts taken from 'The 1943 parliamentary report into the physical and Moral Condition of Children employed in Mines and Manufactures.')

Stage Direction:

ENTER TWO CHILDREN. IGNORANCE AND WANT: *They were a boy and a girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish; Where graceful youth should have filled their features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of age, had punched, and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds. The GIRL – WANT – is bleak, exhausted, catatonic. The BOY – IGNORANCE – twitches and snarls.*

FACT 1 Children, in several districts female children, are taken into the coal-mines to work as early as the age of five.

CHILD 1 "I've had my hip bad since I was fifteen. I am very tired at night."

FACT 2 In great numbers, work is continued for 15, 16 and even 18 hours consecutively.

CHILD 2 "I'll work from two in the morning till six at night, done so for five years."

FACT 3 No regular time is set apart either for meals or rest. A want of cleanliness is an obvious and constant source of disease and illness.

CHILD 3 "I'll was a dipper's boy for two years, and used to carry the ware backwards and forwards to the dipping tub; it used to disagree with my bowels very much."

FACT 4 Their tender bodies are exposed to unheard-of hardships, the growth becomes stunted.

CHILD 4 "I'll draw the carts through the narrow seams. The roads are 24 to 30 inches high."

FACT 5 They had no knowledge even of the existence of a Saviour.

CHILD 5 "I'll have never heard of another world, nor of heaven nor another life."