

### Task 3: True or False?

Below are three accounts written from the point of view of inhabitants in Coalbrookdale.

1. Highlight any facts which you think can be checked.
2. Use the database to check these points, and correct any points which you find to be inaccurate.
3. What sorts of points cannot be checked using the census?
4. What sorts of evidence could historians use to check whether these points are true?
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of historians using their imagination to fill gaps in the evidence?

#### Extension Task

Produce your own fourth account of a person from Coalbrookdale that could be added to this worksheet.

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#### Mary Sudrass

"I live at the parsonage in Coalbrookdale with the vicar, John Hayes, who comes from Liverpool. There are rumours in Coalbrookdale that we are secret lovers, but at my age (I'm 55) I'm really not interested in that sort of thing. I'm actually his housekeeper. Saying that, I refused to tell those nosey census people whether I am married or not – a lady is entitled to her secrets, after all! As well as myself, there are two other servants at the parsonage: Fanny (the cook) and Sarah (the housemaid). They're good girls, but they're still only children and don't have much experience. Neither of them is married - there isn't a single servant in this town who is, actually – but as soon as they find themselves a husband they'll give up their job. That is, if their husbands are able to get work – over the past 10 years there has been a flood of immigrants from as far afield as France and America, taking our best jobs and breeding like rabbits. I don't know what the world's coming to!"

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#### Joseph Fogerty

"I came here from my homeland of Ireland 2 years ago. At that time work was scarce in Ireland, and Coalbrookdale was crying out for skilled civil engineers such as me to build bridges and machinery to keep the local economy going. Most of the people here are really friendly and appreciate the good work I am doing, but as I am the only person in this town who was born outside of Salop, I get a bit of flack from the more narrow-minded people who think I have stolen their jobs. Saying that, the local census people told me that 78 other people here aren't from the area, which just goes to show that people are keen to use the new railways to move wherever they can find work. I can't afford a place of my own, so I lodge at the moment with the Beardshaw family. They live in a 3-bedroomed house, and I live in a little outhouse with a friend of theirs, Marianne Robbins. It's alright, I suppose, but I'm hoping to start my own business next year and find my own place. I certainly don't want to be a lodger when I'm 70 years old, like Ann Goodwin down the road. That would be too depressing for words!"

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#### Henry Paddock

"I'm 15 years old but I've already been working for 5 years! My dad, who's called Richard, is a bricklayer, and I'm working with him as an apprentice. It's great work – unlike most boys my age I'm not at school, and unlike most grown men here I'm not having to work in a dirty iron foundry all day, and people will always need things building, so I'll never be short of a bob or two. Which is just as well, because my mother and sister naturally don't have any paid work – their place is in the home, if you ask me. Women like that Sarah Webb, who go out to work each morning even though they are married, are a disgrace. Anyway, we earn enough to get by – our house is just the right size and we don't need to get lodgers in to cover the rent for Mr Owen, whose family has owned the street where we live for ages. He's a pretty decent chap – my dad gets on well with him because he's a brewer by trade and like everyone here he likes a drink or two after a hard week's work!"