

## What is Coal?

**Coal** is a black or brownish-black rock that is made from plants that lived and died about 100 to 400 million years ago.



The students and their teacher are examining a piece of coal.

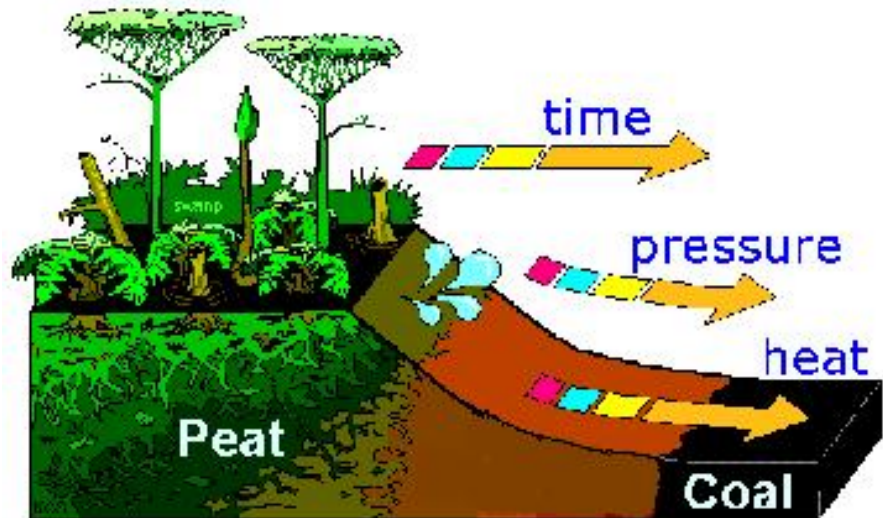
## How did coal form?

Millions of years ago swamps covered much of the land in Illinois. In these swamps there were very large plants and trees. As these plants and trees died they fell into the swamp waters. This process continued for many years forming layers of dead plants.



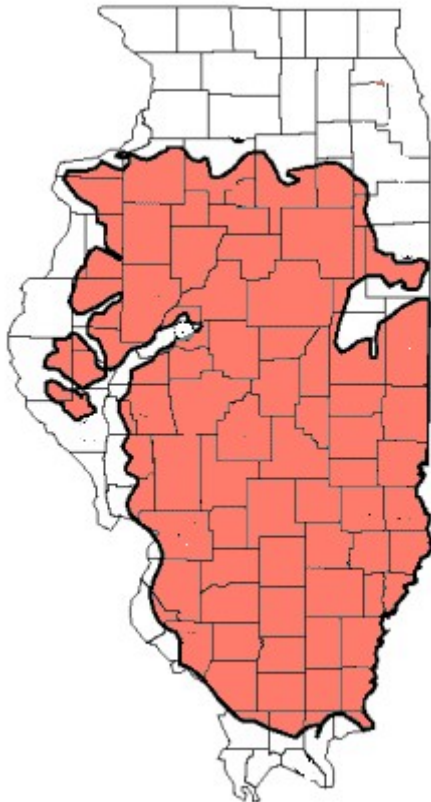
The plants were trapped under the water and did not decay completely. The heavy, soggy layers formed a material called peat.

Dirt, sand and clay covered the layers of peat. Over time, heat and pressure caused the peat to become rich carbon deposits. After millions of years, these carbon deposits formed coal.



The coal contains the energy that was in the plants. The energy in the coal is used as fuel. Because coal has energy from once-living plants, it is called a **fossil fuel**.

### Where is coal found?



Coal is found under 36,800 square miles of Illinois. Illinois has the largest amount of **bituminous coal** of any state.

In some areas of Illinois, the layers of coal are buried 35 feet below the ground. In other places the coal is 1,006 feet below the surface.


The layers of coal are called **seams**.

The shaded area of the map shows where coal is found in Illinois.

**Directions:** In the puzzle below, write every third letter on the line to find the hidden message. Begin by writing the letter **s** on the first line. Count over to the third letter. Write that letter (**o**) on the second line. Continue the pattern until you have used all of the letters.

A Skip Letter Word Puzzle

## THIRD LETTER SQUARE PHRASE

S	F	E	O	A	S	M	N	E	E	A	E	T	N	N
B													I	
O													C	
L													-----	I
N													--	M
E													-----	I
A													--	N
A													-----	E
N													-----	E
O													--	L
C													-----	S
I													--	N
C													-----	U
T	-----	A												
L	F	N	T	O	A	U	S	L	O	P	P	N	M	T

Write the hidden message below.

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