



0. THE SEVEN DWARFS - GERMAN MINERS - Story  
Preface

1. SNOW WHITE - COULD SHE BE MARGARETE?

2. SNOW WHITE - COULD SHE BE MARIA?

**3. THE SEVEN DWARFS - GERMAN MINERS**

4. CHILD MINERS

5. CHILD MINERS - THEN and NOW

6. GERMANY'S FAIRY TALE ROAD

7. WHAT IF IT'S TRUE?

Dwarfs are a part of German folklore. In "Snow White" - known, in German, as *Schneeweisschen* - the dwarfs are miners. Alexander Zick created this illustration, *Schneeweisschen und Rosenrot* ("Snow White and Rose Red"), in the late-19th century.

In addition to natural resources like copper and lead, the Bavarian section of Germany is also known for its salt. *Salzbergwerk* - a salt mine in *Berchtesgaden* located near the *Eagle's Nest* (Hitler's mountaintop retreat) - is the most famous. It has been in continuous operation since ... 1517.

During medieval times, traders created a lengthy transportation route which crossed the Spessart. Mined salt traveled along that 111-kilometer trade route - known as the "*Donkeys' Path*" - to shipping ports along the Main River. Tourists, enjoying the area's gorgeous scenery, can still make the trek along the donkey trail.

For hundreds of years, mines in Germany - just like mines in Britain - were worked by children. Mining conditions were so bad that child miners did not live long. Those who survived often showed the marks of stunted growth. Parliamentary records provide evidence for this:

*... The physical condition of the boys and girls engaged in the collieries [mines] is much inferior to that of Children of the same years engaged in farming operations, in most trades, or who remain at home unemployed. These Children are, upon the whole, prejudicially affected to a material extent in their growth and development; many of them are short for their years.* (Quoted in *Parliamentary Papers*, Volume 15, at [page 184](#).)

People who managed mines also observed that child miners had stunted growth:

*In North Wales, Mr. Samuel Cunnah, manager of the Morton Colliery, Ruabon, states that "He considers early work bad for Children, because he thinks it stops their growth."* (Quoted in *Parliamentary Papers*, Volume 15, at [page 184](#).)

Stunted growth affected child miners even when they were adults. John Russell, a surgeon working at the Dowlais Iron Works, made the point:

*In stature I believe a difference to exist in the male youth from twelve to sixteen employed in the mines and collieries, compared with those engaged in other work, the former being somewhat stunted; and this difference (under some form or other) seems still perceptible in the adult miners and colliers.* (Quoted in *Parliamentary Papers*, Volume 15, at [page 185](#).)

Applying those facts to the story of Snow White - whether she was actually Margarete, Maria Sophia or a totally made-up girl - we can draw some conclusions:

- The miners in the story were probably miners for a long time;
  - If they were adults, they likely started work as child miners;
  - If they were child miners, they could have been afflicted with stunted growth;
  - If that stunted growth continued into adulthood, the miners were short of stature;
  - People of short stature are sometimes [known as dwarfs](#).
- Therefore ... we could theoretically conclude that the miners, in the Snow White story, were adult dwarfs who

began their working careers as children.

What was it like for children who worked in dark, cold mines? We can examine some evidence which has survived the passing years.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-SEVEN-DWARFS-GERMAN-MINERS-Snow-White>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-SEVEN-DWARFS-GERMAN-MINERS-Snow-White>

## Questions 2 Ponder

### What Is Stunted Growth and How Does It Impact Us?

Child miners endured such terrible conditions that they experienced "stunted growth." What kind of mining experiences would it take, in your judgment, for a child to experience "stunted growth?"

Have you ever experienced anything in your life that would cause you to be concerned about "stunted growth?" If so, what was it?

Could "stunted growth" impact a person both physically and emotionally - or - does that condition only apply to physical well-being?

## Media Stream



### German Mines - Salt

Image of Salzbergwerk salt mine, online courtesy Wikipedia.de

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/German-Mines-Salt>



### Spessart - Donkeys' Trail

Map depicting the location of the Donkeys' Trail, online courtesy Erlenbach-a-main.de

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