

## Station I: Slaves (Laurium Silver Mine)

- 1. Learn about the site.** You are at the entrance to Laurium, a silver mine located 25 miles outside of Athens, where the city obtains its supply of silver.
- 2. Read the information about slavery, and take notes.** Carefully read and discuss the information below about slavery in ancient Greece. Then, list three important facts about the lives of Athenian slaves in the Station I section of **Student Handout 2.2A**.

Slaves made up a large portion of the Athenian population. Historians believe that during Athens' Golden Age (circa 460–429 B.C.E.) there were 75,000 slaves living in Athens, a number equal to the number of nonslaves living there. Most slaves were captives from the north and east whom Athenians had imprisoned during wartime. The children of these war captives were particularly valued as slaves, because they could provide many years of service to their owners.

Athenian slaves performed work in many areas. Female slaves were often domestic servants. They wore their hair and their clothing short so nothing would interfere with their rigorous tasks. Male slaves were often factory workers, shopkeepers, ship cargo handlers, miners, and farmers. Both male and female slaves worked in factories making beds, knives, and other household goods. In addition, the city owned slaves—mostly male—and used them as coinmakers, policemen, clerks, and executioners.

A small number of slaves were allowed to work independently of their owners. They practiced trades, or managed shops, and then delivered the profits to their masters. Some slaves managed large estates for absentee owners, overseeing farmhands and selling the produce. Some educated male and female slaves even worked as tutors in Athenian schools.

Many slaves, however, endured great hardships. Often they worked in terrible conditions. Some of the worst conditions were in the Laurium silver mines, just outside of Athens. Slaves, including children, worked 10-hour shifts, in tunnels 300 feet below the earth's surface. The tunnels were only 3 feet high and 2 feet wide, and had little or no air. Slaves were shackled in chains day and night, and they were often whipped if they stopped to rest.