

**Australian Burning Mountain Questions  
Age Techniques?  
By Greg Neyman  
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Answers In Creation Website  
[www.answersincreation.org/mountain.htm](http://www.answersincreation.org/mountain.htm)

An article in the Geology section of the Answers In Genesis web site refers to a mountain in Australia that constantly burns (Australia's Burning Mountain, [answersingenesis.org/docs/3287.asp](http://answersingenesis.org/docs/3287.asp)). This mountain is a perfect example of something that has nothing to do with the age of the earth or dating techniques, but through a clever wording of the article, the author makes it appear that geological dating is inaccurate. Let me explain.

While this bit of reading is interesting, it has little to do with the old-earth/young-earth controversy. Here is the background. The mountain has a seam of burning coal that was lit by natural means, and it has apparently been burning for a long time. The author begins by giving an introduction paragraph (Burning Coal) that explains the general theme of the article.

Then he proceeds in the two sections to give the geological information of the area around the mountain (Subsidence and Fused Rocks and A Blast Furnace Effect). The purpose of these sections is to establish the credibility of the author with the reader. We are to believe that the author is an expert in geology. No problem, I'll admit that this paragraph does that. But the main, hidden purpose of these sections is to lend credibility to the author. If you believe the author is educated on this subject, then you are more likely to believe him/her about his conclusion. It's a standard trick in any writing which tries to convince the reader of a conclusion. Let's move on.

The next section seeks to explain how the mountain started burning (How Did the Fire Start?). The author dismisses the possibility of the fire starting by lightning or a forest fire. However, according to research in the *International Journal of Coal Geology*, coal fires are started by lightning, and by wildfires. Other proven sources of coal fires include spontaneous combustion and human campfires.<sup>1</sup> In case there be any doubt, in the same issue, documented cases of wildfires starting coal fires in Indonesia are discussed.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the authors' claim that fires do not start on coal that is weathering at the surface is false.

The next section the deception of the author is apparent. In this section, labeled A Volcanic Intrusion, the author states that a geologist, noted as a staff member from the University of Newcastle (New South Wales), had previously observed a location where previously molten volcanic rock had cut through the coal seam at some unknown time in the past. The ENTIRE article hinges on this one statement. The author then goes on to say that this is the only reasonable explanation for the fire to start. It must have started by contact between the coal layer and molten lava.

The author then goes on in the next section (Evolutionary Time Challenged) to explain that the nearest volcanic rock is three miles away, and has been dated at 38-41 million years old. It seems logical from his argument that the geologist thinks the coal was ignited 38-41 million years ago. But, let's go back and look at the statement about the geologist. It is said that the geologist observed that previously molten volcanic rock had cut through the coal seam at some time in the past and. Did the geologist ever say that the lava intrusion from 38-41 million years ago ignited the presently burning coal? No, he didn't. He merely said that the volcanic rock intersected with the coal seam. This is a perfect example of how you can pull a statement out of context, and make it say whatever you want.

It is obvious from the evidence presented that the mountain has been burning 6,000 years. However, the author looks at one geologist's statement that lava cut through the coal seam in the past, and then he proceeds to jump to the conclusion that the fire started, by the geologists claims, 38-41 million years ago. This claim is never made by the geologist. The fact that the coal could not have been ignited by the lava flow is apparent, but that doesn't prevent the author from taking a cheap shot at old-earth beliefs. Unfortunately for the author, this article proves nothing.

As a side note, it is said that the mountain has been burning 6,000 years. By young earth creationist estimations, the Flood of Noah occurred about 4,300 years ago. How did this coal fire manage to stay lit, when it was submerged several thousand feet underwater?

## **Conclusion**

This fits into the category of a deception, since the geologist never claimed that the fire started from the lava. Of course, I could be wrong, and they did a poor job of writing the article. If so, let me know. However, I doubt this is the case...surely people who are so set on presenting truthful evidence would have mentioned the quote by the geologist stating "the lava intrusion lit the coal 38 million years ago." Unfortunately for the young-earth creationist, this quote is not in the article.

<sup>1</sup> Geologic History of Natural Coal-Bed Fires, Powder River Basin, USA. *International Journal of Coal Geology*, Volume 59, 12 July 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Coal Fires in Indonesia, *International Journal of Coal Geology*, Volume 59, 12 July 2004.