

# Unit 9 What was it like for children in the Second World War?

## ABOUT THE UNIT

In this unit children find out about the effects of the Second World War on children in their local area, nationally and internationally. There are also opportunities to consider the effects of war on children today. Children use a range of sources, including the recollections of people alive at the time. They consider the reasons for and results of key aspects of the war.

## WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

This unit introduces children to a major event in world history. It relates to the work children did in Unit 4 'Why do we remember Florence Nightingale?' in considering some of the effects of war on people's lives. This unit also develops children's understanding of reasons and results of events in history introduced in Unit 5 'How do we know about the Great Fire of London?'

## ADAPTING THE UNIT FOR A DIFFERENT AGE GROUP

Year 5 and 6 children could:

- focus on comparing a typical local experience with a national experience and explore the reasons for similarities and differences
- consider the messages given in the posters of the time
- study different aspects of the war, eg 'Make do and mend', the role of women, 'Dig for victory'
- compare information about evacuation from different types of sources, eg *Does the picture match the text?*
- compare and contrast the main features of novels about children's experiences in the war in order to identify different experiences
- link work on bombing raids to work in design and technology, as in Unit 6A, 'Shelters', of the QCA scheme of work.

## PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if the children have:

- used written and pictorial sources to gain information
- learnt about life in the time of their parents/carers or grandparents
- talked about how people might have thought and felt about different situations

## VOCABULARY

In this unit, children will have opportunities to use:

- words associated with fighting the war, eg *Blitz, air raid, bomb damage, submarines, allies*
- words associated with evacuation, eg *host family, evacuee, billeting officer*
- words associated with the home front, eg *gas masks, ration books, black out, warnings*

## RESOURCES

- a class time line
- information about the Blitz and warfare eg *pictures of bomb damage, government posters, blackout warnings, gas masks*
- information about evacuation, eg *videos showing children being evacuated, adults talking about their experiences as evacuees, pictures of children being evacuated*
- information about rationing, eg *videos, ration books*
- information about the impact of the war on everyday life, eg *pictures, newspapers, posters*
- local, national and world maps
- information and educational resources about the effects of wars on children
- historical novels about the war
- non-fiction accounts including the diary of Anne Frank

## EXPECTATIONS

at the end of this unit

*most children will:*

*some children will not have made so much progress and will:*

*some children will have progressed further and will:*

demonstrate factual knowledge and understanding of the impact of the Second World War on children in particular and society in general; give reasons for, and the results of, evacuation; identify different ways in which the Second World War has been represented; ask questions and answer them using a range of sources; communicate their learning, using specialist terms in ways that show understanding describe what happened during evacuation and begin to recognise that it had causes; use sources of information to make simple observations about the war explore in greater depth how the war affected children in different ways, and the reasons for these differences; understand the complex and varied feelings that many children had about evacuation

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

**CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN**

- when and where WWII took place
- about the leaders and key events and dates of the war

- the characteristic features of the Blitz and what type of area was most likely to be affected
- to locate where bombing raids took place

- about the effects of air raids
- about the causes of evacuation

- to find out about the experiences and feelings of evacuees, from a wide range of information sources
- to communicate their learning in an organised and structured way, using appropriate terminology

- why rationing was necessary
- about the impact of rationing on the way of life of people living in England during WWII

- an overview of how the war affected people's everyday lives
- about the restrictions on people, how they suffered during the war, their courage and resilience

**POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES**

**What was the Second World War? When and where did it take place?**

Establish what children already know about the war. Use their responses, or provide a brief narrative, to introduce key information, including when the war took place, the main countries involved, why it started (Hitler's invasion of other countries and why Britain tried to stop him), how it was fought (invasion of other countries, mass bombings, sinking of ships using submarines), the names of leaders (such as Hitler and Churchill), and the defeat of Germany and Japan by the allied nations.

Use maps to establish why it was a 'world' war and a time line to locate when it happened.

**What was the Blitz?**

Use selected sources, *eg photographs, a gas mask*, to tell the children about the mass bombing of cities. Discuss why Germany and Britain decided to bomb cities. Use maps, *eg of London or Liverpool*, or children's knowledge, to establish the main targets. Discuss what could be done to stop the bombers, *eg anti-aircraft fire, blackout*.

**Why were children evacuated?**

Discuss with the children the ways families could protect themselves. Show them pictures of shelters, dugouts, the underground, gas masks, etc. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each method.

Show children pictures of bomb damage, and newspaper accounts of the results of air raids. Ask the children to fill in a two-column grid with the headings 'What happened when the bomb landed?' and 'How were people who lived there affected?'

Introduce the idea of evacuation.

**What was it like to be an evacuee?**

With the children's help, produce a list of questions about evacuees. Ask the children to answer the questions using selected sources, *eg photographs, extracts from novels, oral accounts, letters, memoirs*.

Ask the children to imagine they are evacuees and to write a letter home or diary extracts. Ask them to consider why they might want to be evacuated and why not, what is happening to them and how they feel about it. Encourage the children to use their knowledge of evacuation and appropriate terms, *eg billeting officer, host family, evacuation, evacuee*.

**What did people eat during the war?**

Discuss with the children why some types of food were in short supply. Provide descriptions of typical meals and ask them to compare these with what they eat today.

Introduce the idea of rationing. Show the children ration books, or pictures of them. Ask them to calculate how much sugar, eggs, meat, sweets, etc their family would have been able to buy. *How could they have supplemented their rations?*

**In what other ways might the war have affected people?**

Give the children selected sources, *eg photographs of soldiers, women at work, the home guard, a funeral, newspaper headlines*.

Work with the children to list what the pictures show. Consider what can be inferred about the effects of the war on people's lives, and about the qualities people needed to survive.

Ask the children to write captions for one or more of the pictures.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**CHILDREN**

- suggest why it is called a 'world war'
- know and use the names of leaders, key events and dates

- suggest reasons why some areas of a city were more likely to be bombed than others
- suggest how the bombing could be stopped

- suggest how people could have been protected in the war
- suggest why evacuation was used as one strategy to protect children
- explain the effects of bomb damage

- describe some likely feelings and experiences of an evacuee
- use words associated with evacuation accurately and appropriately

- infer causes of rationing
- identify some similarities and differences between foods available during the war and today

- list some of the effects of war on everyday life
- suggest ways in which people suffered

**POINTS TO NOTE**

A class time line should be used to support chronological understanding.

A narrative account could be read or given by the teacher. Alternatively, a video could be used, *eg a VE Day video*.

In the discussion about the 'world' nature of the war, the contribution of Commonwealth countries could be explained. The Imperial War Museum pack *Together* focuses on this aspect.

This introductory activity could be supplemented with a visit to a local war memorial, and by reference to other wars, including contemporary ones, that the children know about.

Explain that 'Blitz' comes from the German word 'blitzkrieg', which means 'lightning war'.

It may be possible to show children local evidence of bomb damage, *eg damaged buildings, derelict land, prefab housing*.

In their work on reading children could read some fictional accounts of bombing raids and compare them with eyewitness accounts. The reading of an extended text set in the period would help the class to explore the effects of war upon fictional characters.

This activity could provide opportunities to encourage the children's moral development.

Children could discuss the issues facing parents who did or did not evacuate their children and why parents might be for or against evacuation.

For safety reasons, children should not try on the gas mask.

The Imperial War Museum has a range of information on evacuation.

Children could read/listen to extracts of novels/stories about evacuation to provide a context for this activity. They could be taught to identify key sentences and phrases which convey information as part of their research, *eg by examining closely the opening sentence of each paragraph in a text*. Use the experiences of the evacuees to establish a distinction between fact and opinion.

This activity provides an opportunity to liaise with a class at key stage 3 who are also studying WWII. For example, key stage 2 children could write as evacuees to key stage 3 children who respond as parents.

The task could be adapted by asking the children to write postcards or labels.

Reference will need to be made to the knowledge of the war that the children gained in the first activities, *eg bombing of ships and docks*, in order to stimulate understanding of the causes and some of the characteristics of rationing.

It may be necessary to point out that many of the foods available today are due to changes in the population structure after 1945 and would not have been available before this date.

This activity provides opportunities to make links with the QCA science scheme of work, Unit 2A 'Health and growth', and Unit 3A 'Teeth and eating'. There are also opportunities to link with Unit 3B 'Sandwich snacks' of the QCA design and technology scheme of work.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

### CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

- that the war affected children in different ways
- that the war created many refugees
- about the treatment of Jewish people during the war

- where and how the local area was affected by WWII
- how to find out about the war in their locality from the recollections of someone who lived through it

- about the effects of WWII on their locality
- to select information from sources
- to compare the local and national experience

- about conflicts going on today and how they affect the lives of children
- to make connections between the Second World War and today

## POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

### What were children's experiences of the war?

Discuss with the children factors that might affect children's experiences of the war, *eg where they lived, their nationality*. Explain that children in many countries were bombed. Locate areas of heavy bombing on the world map.

Establish the idea of refugees having to leave their homes. Refer to the many children and their parents, who were imprisoned and killed because they were Jewish. Read extracts from the story of Anne Frank. Ask children to retell the story in their own words.

### What it was like to be a child living in this area in World War II?

Recap, through question and answer, what the children have learned so far about the war's impact on people of the time.

Help the children to devise a list of questions they would ask someone who was a child in the area during the war, *eg Where did you live? What did you eat? Did you experience bombing or evacuation? How much did you know about what was happening in the war? How did you find out?*

Arrange for someone who was a child during the war to visit the class. Encourage the children to ask the questions on the list. Record the interview. Replay the tape and discuss with the children what they have learned about the history of their area during the war. Help them to identify on a map, local places mentioned by the visitor. Mark the map with a description of what happened there during the war years.

### How did the Second World War affect children who lived in this locality?

Assemble selected sources to show the impact of the war locally.

Ask the children to complete a two-column grid with the headings: 'What does the picture show?' and 'What can we learn about the war in the locality?'

Drawing on the knowledge they have gained from the unit, ask the children to suggest some similarities and differences between the local and national experience.

### What has been done since to prevent another world war?

Discuss with the children areas of conflict in the world today. Tell them about the United Nations and their role in peacekeeping. Discuss whether there is peace in the world today and whether things are better today than they were at the time of the Second World War.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

### CHILDREN

- describe different experiences that children had of the war
- suggest some reasons for these differences
- retell the story of Anne Frank

- suggest appropriate questions to ask about the war in the locality
- record information about the war in the locality

- show knowledge and understanding of how the war affected people living in their locality
- select information from a range of sources to find out about their locality during the war
- identify similarities and differences between the effects of the war locally and nationally

- suggest conflicts happening in the world today
- suggest reasons why the world is/is not better today than during WWII

## POINTS TO NOTE

A range of material is available from the Imperial War Museum and from various charities about refugees, including the Refugee Council.

There are versions of the story of Anne Frank written for primary-age children.

If there is no one with the relevant experience available to talk to the children, local history pamphlets could be used. These often contain first-hand memories of childhood in the war.

Before the visit, a display could be set up showing what the children have learnt so far about the war. This could act as a stimulus for the interview, *eg Does the visitor recognise or remember some of the things?*

Sources of information could include photographs, information about evacuation, ration cards, local newspaper headlines, visits to a local museum or local defences, information about local schools in the war.

Information about conflicts today and their effects on children can be obtained from many charities including the Refugee Council, Christian Aid and the Red Cross, as well as from newspapers.

