



ACTIVITY CARD 2

A Wartime Childhood
KS1 & 2

Potential Learning Outcomes

- To understand differences and similarities between childhood during the Second World War and today
- To understand about the Evacuation of children
- To understand the value of the memories of older people
- To understand and appreciate the contribution of previous generations to Britain's war effort
- To increase awareness and appreciation of local heritage buildings

Introduction

From September 1939, some children were evacuated from the cities to small towns or villages, often many miles away from their homes. Others stayed with their families through the Blitz, or, if they lived in the countryside, had evacuees from other families staying in their houses. To keep themselves entertained during the Second World War, children listened to the radio. A favourite programme was Children's Hour. They could also play records on a gramophone or go to 'the pictures' (cinema). There was a shortage of toys, because many toy factories were making guns or plane parts or other war equipment. Just as today, toys for boys and girls reflected the world around them and society's expectations of the roles they would play within it.

Activity: Speaking & Listening, Reading & Writing (English, History)

My Wartime Childhood - Interview & Newspaper Project

Your class is going to create a wartime-style newspaper about what it's like being a child in Britain during the Second World War, with the pupils becoming investigative journalists. Split into teams, pupils will interview older people in the local community about their wartime childhood memories. Build a project partnership with community organisations such as day centres and senior clubs. Some pupils might have older relatives or neighbours also willing to be interviewed. The interviews can take place at school (if interviewees are able to travel), or off site at a community venue. Remember that interviewees will need to be at least 78 years old or older! Children can learn how to use simple audio recording equipment and cameras for photographing each interviewee. The interviews are then turned into reports, features and articles for the newspaper, which can also be made available online. Copies can also be given to the partner organisations and interviewees as a memento.

To introduce the children to oral history, at the start of the project listen to some of the interviews recorded with local people about their war memories, available on the Street Life website. If you would prefer your group to not do the outreach and do their own interviews, the class could use simply use the Street Life interviews as source material rather than just as an introduction.

Activity: : Listening & Speaking, Writing (English, History)

Far From Home - Interview with an Evacuee

Introduce children to the evacuation of British children from towns and cities into rural areas during the Second World War. Evacuation may now seem a long time ago but there are children across the world today who are growing up amongst wars and conflict. Invite a former evacuee from your local branch of the British Evacuee Association to visit your school to share their experiences with the class (they often bring personal items to show). Devise questions with the class' input. To follow up, ask children to write an illustrated report on what they learned in the session.

Activity: Media literacy, reading & writing, discussion (English, Computing, History)

Toys - Then & Now

Give the class a webquest. Ask them to use the internet, as well as other resources, to research what kind of toys were available in toyshops for children in Britain during the Second World War. Ask them to compile a report on their findings.

Discussion

- How do they compare with today's toys?
- Compare the materials they're made with then and now.
- Do they illustrate any contemporary themes?
- What's the difference between girls' and boys' toys? What do toys tell us about the interests and roles boys and girls were expected to have then? Looking at modern toys, is that different today?
- Ask pupils to choose a modern toy to give a child of that era, giving the reasons for their choice.
- Show the class photographs of shops that sold toys during the War in your town or region. How do those shops compare with today's toy shops? What are the ways we can buy toys today compared with the War era? Take the class on a local history fieldtrip to look at some of the wartime buildings (see Activity: Fieldtrip below).

Activity: Speaking & Listening, Reading & Writing (English, History, Music)

We're on the Wireless! - Children's radio show

The class records its own wartime episode of Children's Hour for the school's website. The episode could also be broadcast or performed live in school assembly. Introduce children to the show by playing:

- Broadcasts of the BBC's Children's Hour from the war period
- The broadcast by Princess Elizabeth (now Queen Elizabeth II) for Children's Hour in October 1940.

Typical Children's Hour content included:

- A story
- News
- A dramatised episode from an adventure or detective series
- A popular song of the period – (for example: "We Are The Ovaltineys", part of a children's marketing campaign by Ovaltine – recordings and lyrics available online)
- A joke
- A talk on an interesting subject (for example: a cinema review of the new film showing in your town's cinema, The Wizard of Oz)

Activity: Fieldtrip (English, Art & Design, Geography, History)

If you can find photos of shops, schools, cinemas and theatres in your town or region in wartime that still exist in some form today, take the class on a photographic fieldtrip to record it. Devise worksheets or a trail to support the visit. Discuss in class what the children observed and their thoughts.

Resources

- Street Life Project – archive photos and oral history: www.hlfstreetlife.org
- The British Evacuee Association: www.evacuees.org.uk
- Imperial War Museums online collections: www.iwm.org.uk/collections
- British Council Film Archive: www.schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/classroom-resources/film-archive-resources
- Wartime audio clips and archive film footage (including radio broadcasts): www.youtube.co.uk
www.britishpathe.com
- Local history source material: Contact your local historical society, library, archive or museum
- BBC's WW2 People's War – personal stories archive: www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/

