



## ACTIVITY CARD 5

Doing Our Bit  
KS1 & 2

### Potential Learning Outcomes

- To understand how people had to adapt their everyday lives to support the war effort.
- To understand some of the dangers ordinary people faced in wartime
- To learn about the roles some civilians took on to protect their communities in wartime
- To increase awareness and appreciation of local heritage buildings

### Introduction

In wartime, it was every civilian's duty to do their best to protect the country from enemy attacks and to keep themselves and others in their community safe, as they tried to go about their normal lives. A 'blackout' was enforced in Britain to make it harder for German bombers to find their targets during night raids.

Every area had its air raid warden, who made sure that people observed the blackout, shepherded people to shelters, organised the firewatchers and reported on the progress of air raids when they were happening.

Air raid shelters saved thousands of lives. During the air raids, people hurried to bomb shelters they had built in gardens, or hid under strong tables in their cellars or, if they lived nearby, went down into underground stations. In an air raid, the blast-force of a bomb exploding could shatter windows along a street. Tape across the windows stopped the glass shattering into thousands of pieces, and causing injuries.

### Activity: Finding information, Drawing/making, Listening & Speaking, Discussion (English, Computing, Art, Geography, History) **My Wartime Home - war measures in the home**

Pupils use the internet, as well as other resources, to research what ordinary British people's wartime homes looked like, both interiors and exteriors, in their town/region during the Second World War.

They then use the information to draw or build a model of their family home as it might have looked during the Second World War, including all the rooms (remember that most wouldn't have had a bathroom or indoor toilet). Their homes should be furnished and decorated in the style of the period, using the pupils' research. Highlight the wartime measures carried out in their home. Include blackout curtains, the lack of metal saucepans and iron garden railings (donated to make munitions, aircraft, etc.), a line in the bathtub to save water, Anderson or Morrison shelters, etc. Follow this up with a presentation by pupils about their wartime homes.

### Activity: Drawing, Discussion (English, Art, History)

#### **"Look Out in the Blackout" - creating safety posters and cartoons**

Introduce children to the reasons for, as well as the realities of, the Blackout measures in Britain during the Second World War. Examining street scenes in contemporary photographs (from your town or region, if possible), discuss where and what type of measures might have been enforced in that location, and how that might have affected drivers and pedestrians at night (including passengers on buses).

Examine posters from the Government's 'Look Out in the Blackout' campaign, as well as cartoons about the blackout by artists like David Langdon (for example, Langdon's Black Out Lines and Billy Brown of London Town cartoons). Using this original material as inspiration, children create their own cartoon or safety poster about the Blackout.

### Activity: Writing (English, History)

#### **"Put that light out!" - Diary of an A.R.P Warden**

Find a photo of a shop in your town or region in wartime (even better if it includes a person who could be the shopkeeper).

Children put themselves in the shoes of a local man who works as a shopkeeper in the daytime and as an air raid warden at night and write a diary entry for one 24-hour period in his life, using the archive shop photograph as inspiration. What events take place on his watch in your town on that particular night that he has to deal with (you could use a real event that took place in a specific street or building in your town, such as a bomb or fire)? Does he meet customers from his shop in his role as a warden? Why did he volunteer to be a warden? The children might also illustrate their diary with drawings.

### **Activity: Decision making, Discussion (English, History)**

#### **What Should We Take? – choosing items to take into an air-raid shelter**

Find out about domestic bomb shelters during the Second World War. Find photographs of people's homes in your town during the Second World War, both exterior and interior shots, and photographs of Anderson and Morrison shelters (in their domestic settings if possible). Discuss.

Find, print off and laminate A4 copies of colour photographs of a wide selection of household and personal items typical of the wartime era, some vital, some useful, some frivolous.

Ask the class to select quickly the pictures of those items they couldn't do without if they had to spend the night in an Anderson shelter in the garden. Discuss each photograph in both the Yes and No piles, examining the reasons for the choices. Some items will change pile as a result of the discussion.

Taking the final Yes pile of items, ask groups to select the 10 items that are most important to take into the shelter. Ask each group to explain the reasons for their choices. See if they can arrange them in order of how vital those 10 items would be.

### **Activity: Dancing, Drawing/Making, Writing (English, History, Music)**

#### **Blackout Boogie – Spitfire Fund school dance**

Schools raised money for the Spitfire Fund in wartime. Organise a wartime dance with and for pupils in a recreated wartime dancehall at school to 'raise money for the Spitfire Fund' (if any money is actually raised it could be donated to a charity of the pupils'/school's choice). Children learn contemporary dance steps to the music of the period. Work with a dance teacher, or bring in a dance company experienced with working with schools (see Resources below).

Show footage of wartime dance styles and British dancehalls in the classroom. Make dance posters and decorations for the dancehall in the style of the period.

Ask pupils to write about their experience and how it has helped them to understand more about life in their town/region during the Second World War.

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

If you can find wartime photos of shops, homes and schools in your town or region that still exist in some form today, take the class on a photographic fieldtrip to record the buildings as they look now. 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](http://www.hlfstreetlife.org)
- Imperial War Museums online collections: [www.iwm.org.uk/collections](http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections)
- Wartime audio clips and archive film footage: [www.youtube.co.uk](http://www.youtube.co.uk) [www.britishpathe.com](http://www.britishpathe.com)
- Local history source material: Contact your local historical society, library, archive or museum
- WW2 People's War – personal stories archive: [www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/)
- The Ragroof Players – Period dance workshops in schools: [www.ragroofplayers.co.uk/tea-dances.html](http://www.ragroofplayers.co.uk/tea-dances.html)