



ACTIVITY CARD 4

Women at War
KS1 & 2

Potential Learning Outcomes

- To understand how local women contributed to Britain's war effort
- To understand how women's roles and status changed as a result of the Second World War
- To understand about Britain's wartime salvage/recycling campaign
- To increase awareness and appreciation of local heritage

Introduction

Before the Second World War, most women had been limited to traditional female roles, such as mothers and housewives. With so many men away fighting, during the Second World War women worked in factories, on public transport, in the military, hospitals, schools and on farms, taking on jobs in industries that women previously did not work in and therefore changing their role and status in society.

The housewives of Britain also made a huge contribution to the war effort by salvaging and recycling pots and pans or anything that was made of metal, which was needed to make vital items like aircraft and munitions. Everything from sardine tins to old meat bones was also useful for the war effort. As most women and girls at that time had been taught to sew from a young age, it fell to them to recycle old clothes and other fabric items rather than buy new ones and use up resources unnecessarily.

Activity: Research, Reading & Writing (English, Art & Design, Computing, Geography, History)

Women at War Story Map - Women's History Month project

Set up a pupil-led local history project, resulting in a display (for example, in a school corridor), for Women's History Month. Pupils use the internet and other resources to dig deep into the contribution women made during the Second World War in their town/region, whether in an official role or as a housewife and mother who salvaged and recycled, also uncovering the personal stories of individual women. The source material should include oral history recordings as well as written accounts and contemporary newspaper articles.

Pupils plot the geographical locations connected with the information they uncover (for example, the street in their town on which a particular housewife lived, or the site of a business such as a shop that was run by a woman, on a Story Map (using an official map of their town/region). The map will form the centerpiece of the display, supported by other material uncovered by pupils' research. Follow up with a photographic fieldtrip to visit the locations on the Story Map and record how they look today (devise worksheets or a trail to support the visit).

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

"This is the BBC..." - Women at War radio report

Pupils write a wartime BBC radio report about a traditionally male role taken on by women in their town or region, describing the experiences of a woman in that job. Ask children to think about the following when writing their report:

- Who are you going to interview about their job for the report?
- Where in your town/region do they work?
- What questions will you ask the women about their experience of working in that job?
- How will you explain to the radio listeners the role of women in that job? What background information will you include?
- What will your report show the listeners about the role of women generally and their contribution to the war effort?

Record the children reading their reports in the style of newsreaders of the war era 'on the BBC' (play some contemporary radio clips in the classroom). The recordings can then be played back in class to stimulate class discussion, and could also be made available on the school's website.

Activity: Discussion, Writing (English, History)

The Right Shoe for The Job – looking at women’s roles

Introduce children to some of the roles women played during the Second World War in your town or region, both traditional and untraditional female roles for that era. For example:

- Land Girl
- Nurse/St John’s Ambulance
- Teacher
- Housewife
- Bus conductor (also known as ‘clippies’)
- Firewatcher

Find colour photographs of women’s shoes and boots from the Second World War era that could be right for each of those roles. Ask pupils to choose a shoe/boot to fit each of the roles (some roles might need more than one type of footwear), and to give the reasons for their decisions. Ask children to write a wartime story inspired by one of the shoe photos.

Activity: Decision making, Planning, Writing, Discussion (English, Maths, Geography, History)

Housewives at War – family meal planning

Wartime housewives had to plan family meals very carefully as many items were limited by rationing. Discuss how housewives helped Britain’s war effort through meal planning and shopping.

Show children contemporary photos from your town/region of the type of shop a housewife would have shopped at.

Plan the meals for one day for a family of four; only using ingredients available at the time. Remember to plan the most efficient use of your family’s weekly ration coupons (try looking at wartime recipes in Eating for Victory produced by the Ministry of Food for inspiration). Write a shopping list of ingredients.

- What methods of transport could she use to get to the high street in wartime?
- Which shops would the housewife need to go to for each item? Greengrocer? Bakery? Butcher?
- How many coupons will you need to buy the rationed items on your list?
- Which items aren’t rationed?
- Convert the price of an unrationed food item to modern currency and compare with the average price of the same item today.
- How will she get the shopping home?
- How would you buy and bring home the shopping today?

Resources

- Street Life Project – archive photos and oral history: www.hlfstreetlife.org
- Salvage poster aimed at housewives: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/theartofwar/prop/production_salvage/INF3_0219.htm
- Imperial War Museums online collections: www.iwm.org.uk/collections
- Wartime audio clips and archive film footage: www.youtube.co.uk 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/
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