



ACTIVITY CARD 3

Potato Pete Project
KS1 & 2

Potential Learning Outcomes

- To understand how Government-led food campaigns encouraged efficiency
- To understand people's limited daily diet in wartime Britain
- To understand how people obtained food in wartime
- To increase awareness and appreciation of local heritage buildings

Introduction

Before the Second World War, Britain imported large amounts of food by sea to feed its people. From the start of the war, British shipping was attacked by German U-boats and aircraft. Food supplies dwindled. The Government's response was to make Britain more 'self-sufficient'. Flowerbeds and parks were dug up to plant vegetables, as part of the 'Digging for Victory' campaign. Although meals were often simple, nobody in Britain starved, unlike people in Europe. Meat was limited, so vegetables became the foundation of the daily diet. Potatoes were one of the few foods not rationed. The potato became the focus of a campaign to encourage people, particularly children, to value vegetables. The campaign even had a cartoon character, Potato Pete, who had his own rhymes and recipe book.

Activity: Discussion (English, History)

Cheap as Chips

Supermarkets didn't exist until long after the War. Ask pupils to consider where people would have shopped for potatoes during wartime in your town. Which types of shops would have sold raw or cooked potatoes? Don't forget to include chip shops, canteens and restaurants. Show the class photographs of shops that sold potatoes during wartime in your town or area. How do those shops compare with today's shops? To follow up, take the class on a local history fieldtrip to look at some of the wartime shop buildings (see Activity: Fieldtrip below).

Activity: Drawing (Art & Design, History)

Potato with Everything! poster campaign

Using the original Potato Pete campaign posters for inspiration, design new posters for display in a wartime shop window, encouraging the public to eat more potatoes.

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

Potato Poetry

Introduce pupils to the wartime Ministry of Food's Potato Pete campaign using source material. Play audio clips of Potato Pete campaign songs in class. Ask pupils to learn and recite this (or another) Potato Pete campaign rhyme by heart (try putting it to a familiar tune):

Potatoes new, Potatoes old
Potatoes in a salad cold
Potatoes baked or mashed or fried
Potatoes whole, potatoes pied
Enjoy them all including chips
Remembering spuds don't come in ships.

Follow this up by asking pupils to write their own Potato Pete campaign poem or song (they could set it to a current pop tune).

Activity: Writing & Drawing (English, Art & Design, History)

Digging for Victory comic book

Introduce the class to the Digging for Victory campaign, using contemporary source material including photographs, posters, public information leaflets and archive footage. Find photographs of people's homes in wartime from your town or region.

Create comic books illustrating a year in the life a family living in your town in wartime. The family digs up their garden to grow vegetables. This is done to supplement their diet at a time of rationing, but at the cost of their flowerbeds and play area. How does each member of the family feel about digging up their garden? Who does what job? What advantages/challenges does it bring to their lives? What do they learn? Encourage pupils to think carefully about what would need doing in the garden in each season. Ask pupils to base their illustrations of their story's family's home on contemporary photographs of wartime houses in your town or region.

Tip: For ideas about page format and story structure/pace, have a look at *Ethel & Ernest* by Raymond Briggs (author of *The Snowman*).

Activity: Drama/Art/Writing (English, Science, Art & Design, Geography, History) **Potato Theatre - "From Mud to Spud"**

With the class, create a puppetshow, a short play or drama improvisation (working in groups of 5-6), telling the story of how a potato in wartime started as a seed planted in the ground on a farm in your local area and ended up on the plate of a child in a home in your town.

Follow the potato's story through harvesting and transport to a local shop, where it's bought by a housewife to feed her family. You might like to add a delivery boy on a bike to the story! To inspire creative ideas, show the class photographs of farms and local shops in your area during wartime.

Tip: This is a great opportunity to introduce pupils to wartime diversity themes, such as the use of foreign POWs on farms in your region and the girls of the Women's Land Army.

Alternative activity - write Potato Pete's life story in the form of a diary told from the character's perspective, from farm to shop to plate.

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

If you can find photos of a shop in wartime that sold vegetables and the building still exists 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
- Imperial War Museums online collections: www.iwm.org.uk/collections
- Wartime audio clips and archive film footage (including radio broadcasts): www.youtube.co.uk
www.britishpathe.com
- POWs in East Cambridgeshire: www.richsoilrichheritage.org.uk
- 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/

