

Living through the War: Part One

THE Second World War greatly affected the lives of British people. For six years civilians lived dangerous and disrupted lives, as you will see on the next six pages.

Waiting to be bombed

Britain was preparing for war well before it actually started. During recent wars in Spain and the Far East there had been awful bombing of towns and cities. The government expected the same to happen in this war and precautions were being taken months before the War began.



SOURCE 1 A photograph taken in February 1939. 'Anderson' bomb shelters are being delivered in London. The shelters were sunk into the ground in people's back gardens

SOURCE 2 'Black-out' instructions issued by the government in July 1939

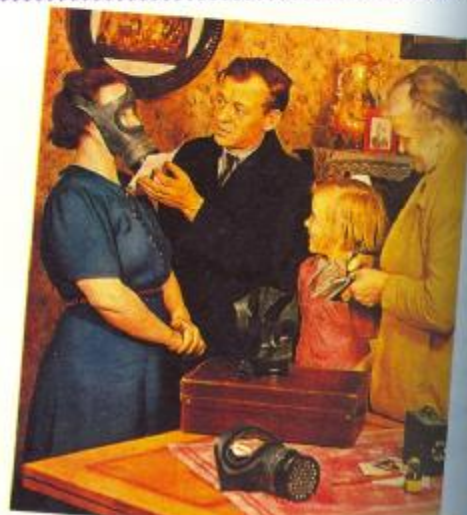
Windows, skylights, glazed doors, or other openings which would show a light, will have to be screened in wartime with dark blinds or blankets, or brown paper pasted on the glass so that no light is visible from outside. You should now obtain any materials you may need for this purpose.

All street lighting will be put out.

On 1 September 1939, two days before war was finally declared, the black-out was introduced.

Everyone, however young, had to have a gas mask (see Source 3), and 38 million gas masks were issued. They had to be taken everywhere. Their smell of rubber and disinfectant made many people sick. Leaflets such as Source 4 were sent out to every house to explain what to do in a gas attack.

SOURCE 3
A photograph of a family practising wearing their gas masks in 1939



OFFICIAL INSTRUCTIONS ISSUED BY THE MINISTRY OF HOME SECURITY

GAS ATTACK

HOW TO PUT ON YOUR GAS MASK

Always keep your gas mask with you – day and night. Learn to put it on quickly.

Practise wearing it.



1. Hold your breath. 2. Hold mask in front of face, with thumb inside straps.
3. Thrust chin well forward into mask, pull straps over head as far as they will go.
4. Run large round face-piece taking care headstraps are not twisted.

IF THE GAS RATTLES SOUND



1. Hold your breath. Put on mask wherever you are. Close windows.
2. If out of doors, take off hat, put on your mask. Turn up collar.
3. Put on gloves or any fabric in pockets. Take cover in nearest building.

IF YOU GET GASSED

BY VAPOUR GAS Keep your gas mask on even if you feel discomfort. If discomfort continues go to First Aid Post.

BY LIQUID or BLISTER GAS			
<p>1 Dab, but <i>don't</i> rub the splash with handkerchief. Then destroy handkerchief.</p>	<p>2 Rub No. 2 Ointment well into place. <i>(Buy a tin, far away from any chemicals. In emergency situations supply Beach Cream Inc.)</i></p>	<p>3 If you can't get Ointment or Cream within 5 minutes wash place with soap and warm water.</p>	<p>4 Take off at once any garment splashed with gas.</p>

SOURCE 4 One of the leaflets sent to every household in September 1939

1. Look at the instructions in Source 4. This leaflet frightened people so much that there was a sudden flood of marriages and people writing wills. Why do you think this was?
2. List the precautions taken by the government in 1939. Explain the reasons for each one.
3. Explain how civilians' lives were changed even before the War started.

Evacuation

Heavy bombing was expected in Britain's large industrial centres. The government thought that people would be safer in the country, so plans were drawn up to EVACUATE people from the cities.

Britain was divided into three

zones:

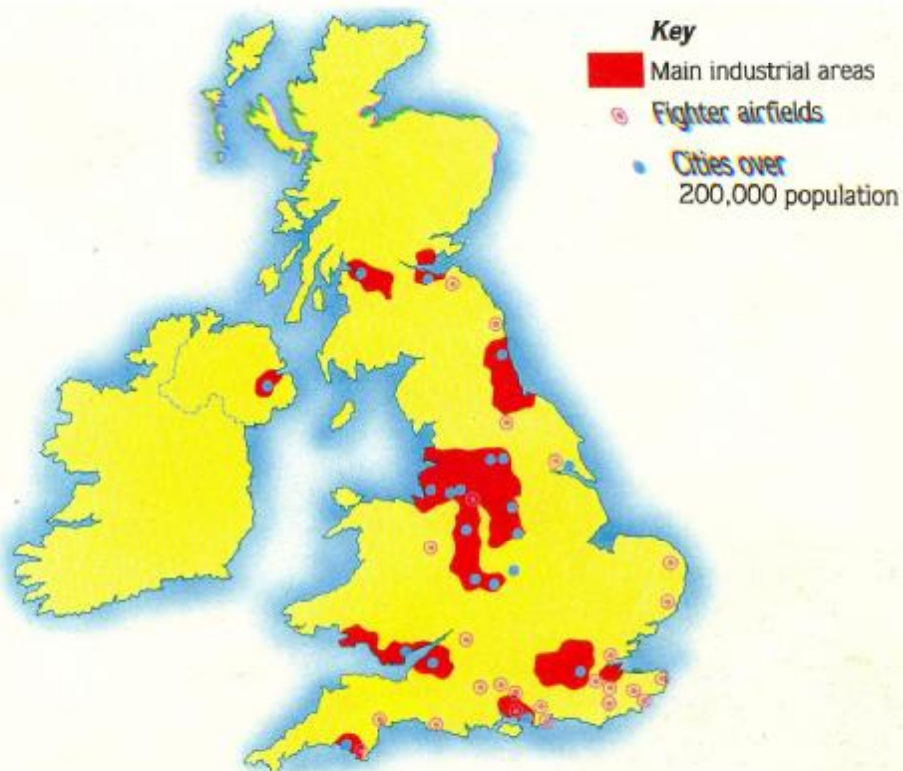
- evacuation areas, where heavy bombing was expected
- reception areas – mostly country areas, safe from bombing. The evacuees would move here, and stay with local families
- neutral areas, which might suffer light attacks. Nobody would be evacuated from or into these areas.

1. On your own copy of Source 6, shade in where you think the evacuation areas, reception areas and neutral areas were.
2. About thirteen million people lived in the evacuation areas. But there was room in the reception areas for just 4.8 million people. The government said that certain groups of people should be moved first. Which groups of people would you have moved first?

On 1 September 1939, the day Germany invaded Poland, the evacuation of people from the large cities began. The government used posters, leaflets and messages on the radio to persuade parents how important evacuation was. Trains and buses were prepared.

Some people made their own evacuation arrangements and stayed with friends or relatives. Others went abroad to Canada and Australia.

SOURCE 5 Numbers of people evacuated by the government in September 1939



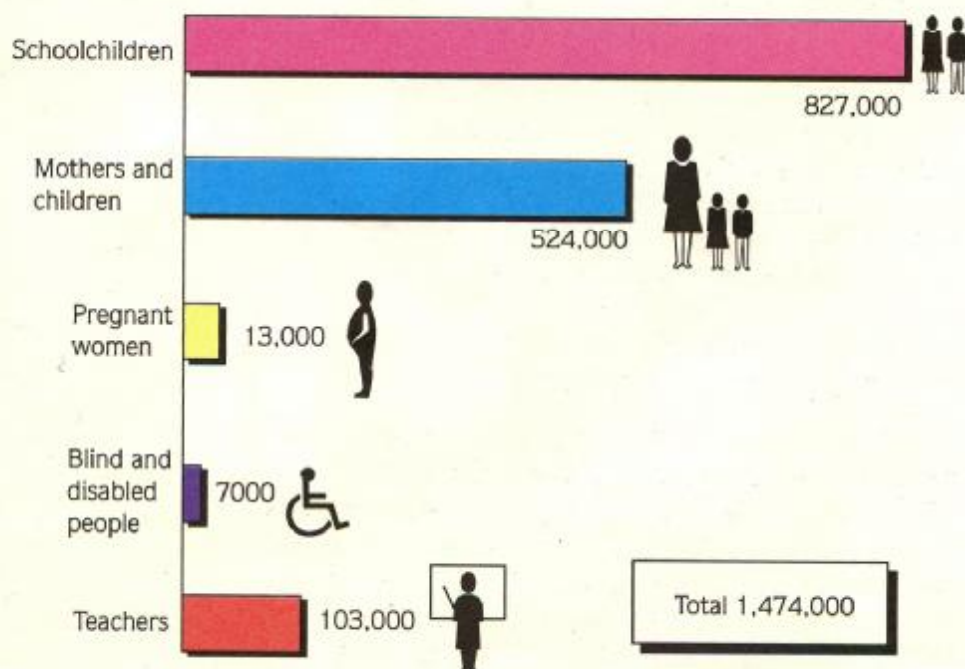
SOURCE 6 Industrial areas and centres of population

Enormous numbers of people were evacuated. Altogether, nearly one and a half million people moved in September 1939. Most of these were moved in one weekend! The country's entire transport system was taken over for evacuation for four days.

Activity

Imagine you are going to be evacuated to another part of the country. Write out a list of the essential things you would need to take with you.

Your teacher will give you a list of what the evacuee children were told to take. Compare the two lists.



Living through the War: Part Two

The Blitz begins

THE afternoon of 7 September 1940 was a glorious one. Many Londoners were enjoying the late summer sunshine when at 4.36 p.m. the air raid sirens started. Within minutes, wave after wave of German bombers appeared, showering London with bombs.

It was the terraced houses in the East End, near to the factories and docks, which suffered most. Many men, women and children were appallingly injured. Others were blown to pieces, so that nothing remained. Of some there was only a foot, a hand or a piece of raw flesh left. The 'all clear' didn't sound until 5.00 a.m. the next morning. The Blitz had begun.

During these first twelve hours 436 people were killed and 1600 severely injured. Two months of nightly bombing followed. Then the Germans turned their attention to other cities, such as Liverpool, Glasgow and Coventry. The Blitz did not end until May 1941. By that time 1,400,000 people in London had been made homeless. Across the country 43,000 people were killed.

During an air raid people relied on Civil Defence workers, who included the Auxiliary Fire Service, Air Raid Precautions (ARP) wardens and the First Aid Post, to do the most dangerous jobs. Many of these workers were unpaid part-timers with other jobs, and many were women.

The ARP wardens (one in six of whom were women) patrolled their areas once the air raid warning siren had gone. They called the emergency services, and as they were often the first at the scene they rescued people and helped put out fires.

SOURCE 1 An artist's reconstruction of the inside of an Anderson Shelter

SOURCE 2 A first-hand account of the Blitz, by a member of the First Aid Post, 14 September 1940

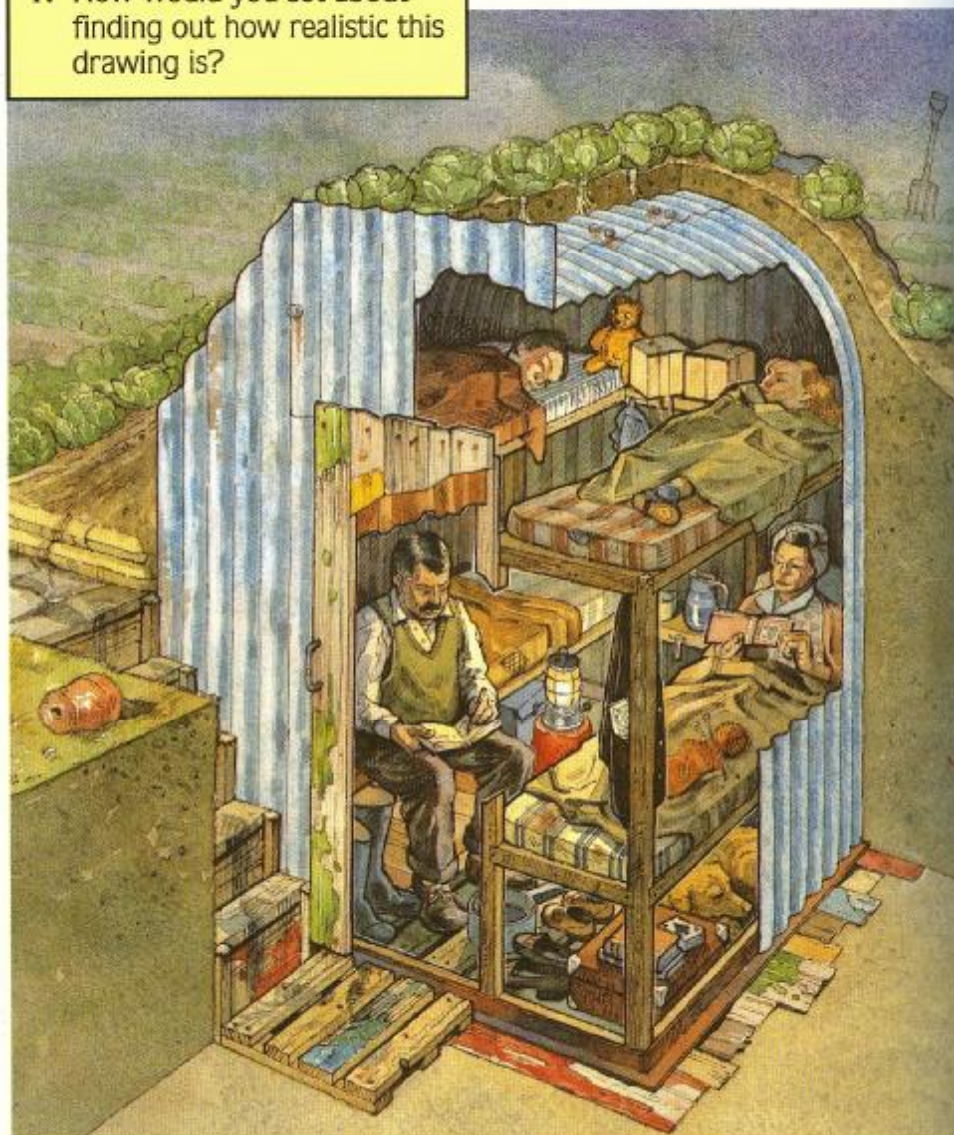
“The church was a popular shelter. People felt that nowhere would they be safer than under the protection of the Church – so it was full when the bomb fell.

The bomb had burst in the middle of the shelterers, mostly women and small children. The scene resembled a massacre with bodies, limbs, blood and flesh mingled with little hats, coats and shoes. The people were literally blown to pieces. The work of the ARP services was magnificent – by nine o'clock all the casualties were out.

After a heavy raid there was the task of piecing the bodies together in preparation for burial. The stench was the worst thing about it – that, and having to realise that these frightful pieces of flesh had once been living breathing people. It became a grim and ghastly satisfaction when a body was reconstructed – but if one was too lavish in making one body almost whole then one would have sad gaps. There were always odd limbs which did not fit, and there were too many legs. Unless we kept a very firm grip on ourselves nausea was inevitable.

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1. How would you set about finding out how realistic this drawing is?





YOUR NEW RATION BOOK

HOW TO REGISTER WITH THE SHOPS

The new Ration Books are now being distributed. As soon as you receive your new Book you must fill in the particulars as explained below, and then take the Book to the shops for fresh Registration. It has been found possible to allow immediate Registration, and the sooner you register the better. This is what to do:—

- 1 On the pages of coupons for Rationed Foods (Meat, Bacon, Butter and Sugar) you must fill in your name and address (BLOCK LETTERS) in the space provided in the centre of each page.
- 2 At the foot of these pages are spaces marked 'Counterfoil'. Here you must write your name and address, the date, and the name and address of the shop where you wish to buy the particular food during the six months' period beginning July 8th.
- 3 Inside the front cover of your Ration Book you must write the names and addresses of the shops.
- 4 As soon as you have done this, take the Book to each of the shops with whom you intend to register, so that they may cut out their counterfoils.

EVERYONE MUST REGISTER FOR THE NEW PERIOD

The Ministry of Food is responsible both for the supply and quality of rationed foods. No retailer is, therefore, in a better position than another to secure supplies of rationed foods, nor can one retailer promise to provide a better quality than another.

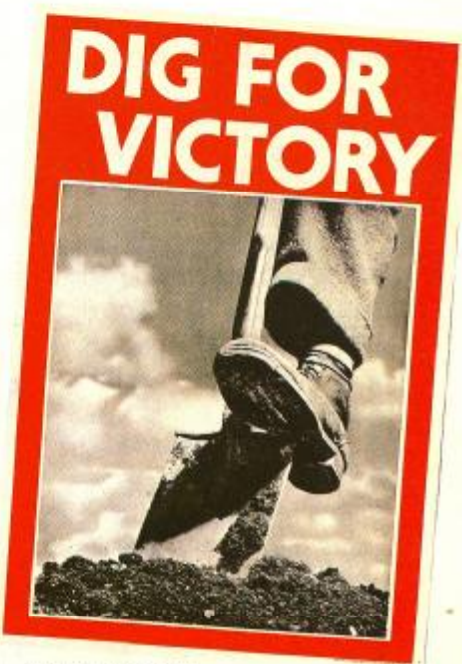
SOURCE 34 Government instructions for using a ration book

SOURCE 35 The Picture Post newspaper advised its readers how they could spend their 66 clothing coupons wisely

1 dress or dressing-gown or jacket	11
2 pairs of shoes	10
6 pairs of stockings	12
1 nightdress, 1 lingerie set, 1 slip	13
2 pairs of gloves	4
1 jersey, 1 cardigan	7
In reserve – for apron, scarf, etc.	8
This makes up your coupon total	66

<p>MONDAY BREAKFAST (each day)— <i>Porridge or any breakfast cereal with fresh or stewed fruit, followed by bread and butter or toast and marmalade</i> <i>Eggs occasionally if means allow</i> <i>Milk to drink or milky tea.</i> DINNER — <i>Vegetable soup made with bone stock, or</i> <i>Jacket sausages (for the older ones).</i> <i>Raisin hasty dumplings with golden syrup</i> TEA-SUPPER — <i>Blackberry Bake.</i> <i>Wholemeal bread and butter.</i> <i>Cocoa.</i></p> <p>TUESDAY DINNER — <i>Mutton pie. Jacket potatoes. Baked or stewed apple.</i> TEA-SUPPER — <i>Macaroni cheese</i> <i>Bread and butter.</i> <i>Fresh fruit.</i> <i>Milk or tea.</i></p> <p>WEDNESDAY DINNER — <i>Braised flank of beef. (Beef should be boned and rolled, keeping bones for soup, and braised in large saucepan with vegetables round.)</i> <i>Chocolate blancmange.</i> TEA-SUPPER — <i>Scrambled eggs on toast.</i> <i>Stewed dried apricots.</i> <i>Milk drink.</i></p>	<p>THURSDAY DINNER — <i>Baked marrow. (Stuff with remains of yesterday's beef, minced.)</i> <i>College pudding</i> TEA-SUPPER — <i>Mixed Vegetable Casserole.</i> <i>Oven-toasted bread and jam.</i> <i>Milky tea or fruit-juice drink.</i></p> <p>FRIDAY DINNER — <i>Bombay Rice</i> <i>Cabbage</i> <i>Golden Apples</i> TEA-SUPPER — <i>Vegetable Salad. (A mixture of any diced cooked vegetables – carrots, peas, potatoes, beetroot, – on lettuce.)</i> <i>Wholemeal Bread and Butter.</i> <i>Rice Pudding and Top Milk.</i></p> <p>SATURDAY DINNER — <i>Liver casserole.</i> <i>Mashed potatoes. Greens.</i> <i>Milk jelly.</i> TEA-SUPPER — <i>Bread and Butter Pudding.</i> <i>Fresh or stewed Fruit.</i></p> <p>SUNDAY DINNER — <i>Boiled Beef, Carrots and Dumplings, Greens.</i> <i>Golden Sponge Pudding.</i> TEA-SUPPER — <i>Cheese and Tomato Sandwiches.</i> <i>Cake.</i> <i>Milk Drink.</i></p>
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SOURCE 36 A week's menus, from a government information leaflet



SOURCE 37 A government poster showing a popular slogan

Activity 1

Design a poster persuading people how important rationing is.

Work in groups.

1. Make a list of all the ways in which people's lives were changed during the War. You will need to refer to pages 152–157 and 164–171.
2. Draw a timeline for 1939–45 and mark on it when these changes or events affected people.
3. Decide which of the changes mainly affected children, which affected women and which affected men.
3. Decide which change was most inconvenient.
4. Decide which change would be welcomed the most.
5. Write four paragraphs comparing your life today with life during the War. Think about:
 - what the main differences are
 - whether you would like to have lived then
 - which things you would have found most difficult to live with
 - which things you would have enjoyed.

Activity 2

You are a housewife who is also a war worker. You have kept a diary during the first three years of the War. Write down six entries from 1939–41.