

Home Front

Activities in this section look at what life was like for men, women and children on the Home Front.

Evacuees

Key Stage 3

History:

Chronological understanding

Change and continuity

Cause and consequences

Interpretation

Key Stage 3

English:

Competence

Creativity

Cultural understanding

Critical understanding

Overview of the activities

Using original sources of information to find out about the past.

Examining what life was like during the Second World War.

Comparing newspaper accounts

Aim of the activities

To examine what life was like on the Home Front for evacuees and their families.

Resources

PowerPoint Presentation (photographs, government documents and posters)

Newspaper article

Venues

The activities are suitable for use at venues with an interest in the Home Front: (RAF Cranwell, Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre, Metheringham Airfield Visitor Centre, Thorpe Camp Visitor Centre.)

Roles

Journalist or evacuee

Activity 1: Evacuation

The purpose of the activity is to help young people look at different sources of information and see what these tell us about the past.

Introduction

Explain that at the start of the War the decision was made to evacuate children and women with very young children out of cities to places of safety in the countryside. This meant moving large numbers of children away from their homes. Many travelled by train. Often they had no idea where they were going or where they were going to stay. Millions were evacuated. Often, when they arrived in country villages the evacuees met local people who had offered to take them in. Adults would look at the children and choose which ones they wanted. Imagine what it was like for the children waiting to be chosen. Some loved their new homes but many hated them.

Activity

Use the PowerPoint presentation to show the transcripts of the government documents to show how parents were informed about evacuation.

Children who remained in the cities lived with the threat of dropping bombs.

This activity explores the evacuation operation from different perspectives:

- newspaper account
- documents from the time.

There is a transcript of an article taken from the Lincolnshire Echo on 1st September 1939. It describes the arrival of evacuees from Leeds at Lincoln Station. The article is quite long and the language is very different from language used in newspapers today. The article can be broken down into sections to study.

Next

When you have introduced the topic, divide the class into small groups and give them part of the article to consider. Ask young people read different sections of the article and summarise the article.

Comprehension

What do they think this piece of text is from?

What sort of writing is it? Is it fiction, non-fiction?

When do they think it was written? Today, a few years ago, a long time ago?

What is it about?

What are the key events, places, people?

Activity

Ask young people to write about the evacuation of children from Leeds to Lincoln. Can they write a creative piece of writing from the perspective of a child from Leeds being away from home or from the point of view of a child in Lincoln having a child from Leeds billeted with them?

Extension

Ask young people to plan a documentary about children who were evacuated in the war.

How would they structure the programme?

Who would they interview?

What questions might they ask?

What might they need to take into account? Sensitivities etc (For example, many people who were involved in the War even now do not like to talk about it)

Many of the venues have posters, letters, articles and artefacts about evacuation that may help young people to plan their documentary.

Discussion

How do young people think people might react to being evacuated today?

What are the main issues?

Activity 2: Newspapers then and now

This is an alternative activity that focuses purely on the newspaper article.

Preparation

You will need the article from the Lincolnshire Echo and either a selection of modern newspapers or a selection of modern newspaper articles that focus on conflict. (Take care to ensure the material is appropriate for your group of young people).

Introduce the session.

Young people are going to look at articles from newspapers that relate to conflicts. Give them transcripts without the name of the newspaper.

Ask them to look at the articles carefully. Look for clues; how do we know when this article was written? Look at the headline: the who, what, when, where, how and why of this story. What is the event?

Can young people identify:

- facts
- opinions
- emotions

in the articles?

Plenary

Ask the young people to report back by giving a summary of the article and their view of when it was written and the type of newspaper it was written for. Show the title of the newspaper the article was from and the date.

Activity

Ask the young people to write a newspaper article about an event from the Second World War. The style must match the journalistic style of the newspaper.

Plenary

Ask young people to read their articles and ask the group to decide which newspaper they are writing for.

Extension activity

Take a paragraph from each of the newspapers and look at the length of sentences, the complexity of words (number of syllables) and the length of articles. Which has the least complex structure? Which has the most complex structure. Why? What does this signify if anything?

Background information

On 1st September 1939 two days before Neville Chamberlain declared that Britain was at war with Germany, an evacuation programme was put in place. Children and women with very young children were moved out of cities to places of safety in the countryside. This meant large numbers of children were taken away from their homes. Many travelled by train. Often they had no idea where they were going or where they were going to stay. Millions were evacuated.

Often, when they arrived in country villages, the evacuees would go to village halls to meet the local people who had offered to take them in. Adults would look at the children and choose which ones they wanted. Imagine what it was like for the children waiting to be chosen. Some loved their new homes but many hated them.

Children still went to school during the War. As soon as they heard the air raid sirens they would go to public shelters or to classrooms that had been strengthened with sandbags.

Some children were evacuated for the whole six years of the war and didn't see their parents during that time. Others were luckier and their parents were able to visit regularly.

After the War, many children who were evacuated were told that they were the lucky ones and that they had been taken out of danger. Many adults who were evacuated suffered long term effects of the experience, even though they may have been placed with caring people, the sudden separation from their parents proved to be traumatic for many. Many felt they were not able to talk about the experience. Evacuation had many long-term consequences for the families involved. Young people may have grand parents or great grandparents who were evacuated in the War.

An LCC Government Evacuation Scheme poster, advising parents about the start of the evacuation process.

GOVERNMENT EVACUATION SCHEME

The Government have ordered evacuation of school children.

If your children are registered for evacuation send them to their assembly point at once.

If your children are registered and you wish them to be evacuated, the teachers or the school keeper will help you.

If you do not wish your children to be evacuated you must not send them to school until further notice.

Posters notifying the arrival or parties in the country will be displayed at the schools at which the children assembled for evacuation.

Government issued a leaflet War Emergency Information and Instructions:

If you live in one of these areas and have a child or children of school age who you wish to be evacuated you should send them to school on the day which will be notified to you. Each child should have a handbag or case containing the child's gas mask, a change of underclothing, night clothes, house shoes or plimsolls, spare stockings or socks, a toothbrush, a comb, a towel, soap and face cloth, handkerchiefs and, if possible, a warm coat or mackintosh.

Each child should bring a packet of food for the day. School children will be taken by their teachers to homes in safer districts where they will be housed by people who have already offered to receive them and look after them. Parents of school children living in these areas area strongly urged to let their children go. Parents will be told where the children are as soon as they reach their new homes. The cost of the journey will be paid by the Government. Posters will be exhibited at the schools showing the times when mothers with children below school age should assemble at the schools, unless they have been notified in some other way. Mothers and other persons in charge of children below school age should take hand luggage with the same equipment for themselves and their children as for school children. The names of the children should be written on a label or strong paper and sewn onto their clothes.

Children were allowed to take just one toy.

http://asafelacetogo.org.uk/?location_id=215**Children at war**

Lincolnshire Echo, Friday September 1st 1939

LINCOLN RECEIVES FIRST CHILD EVACUEES

Scene of Calm Efficiency at Railway Station

SOME PASSED ON TO VILLAGES: OTHERS REMAIN IN CITY

Lincoln commenced its share in the great evacuation scheme shortly after 10 o'clock this morning.

From the first, the arrangements worked with perfect precision and an entire absence of confusion.

The first train-load of Leeds children arrived at the Lincoln L.N.E.R station. The numbers of children received were much smaller than those for which provision had been made. It was estimated that only about one-third of the maximum number which had been expected came on the first trains.

There was adequate staff to deal with the full numbers had they arrived and the whole work was efficiently handled in every particular.

The first train was due in at 10.28 a.m. It arrived to the minute. As it drew in to No. 5 platform a voice announced through the loudspeakers: "When the train stops the children will get out and wait on the platform." This and every subsequent instruction was immediately and implicitly obeyed. The children all wearing identification labels, carrying their gas masks in cartons and bags containing clothing, quickly assembled with their teachers. The next instruction came: St Anthony's School will move out of the station to the yard outside where they will assemble at the places marked for them." In the station yard were cards placed on wooden stands bearing the names of the Leeds schools, and each party moved to its appointed place. In less than five minutes the platform was cleared.

QUICK WORK

The loudspeaker again took up the direction to affairs and ordered the various schools to one or other of the double-decker buses drawn up in the station yard.

In less than half an hour from the train entering the station the last bus had moved off.

The first contingent were booked for villages in the North Kesteven Rural District. Shortly after they had gone there arrived the first lot of evacuees for Lincoln city.

The same system worked again with exact smoothness and steadiness. The buses in this case took the children to two of the five distribution centres which have been opened at the following schools: St Giles, Mount street, Bracebridge, Skellingthorpe road and Rosemary.

RATIONS ISSUED

At these schools the children received their rations for 48 hours. They were each handed a paper carrier in which were a tin of meat, a tin of sweetened milk, a tin of unsweetened milk, a pound of biscuits, a quarter pound block of chocolate.

The issue of rations was completed in a few minutes, a large staff of packers having done a lot of preliminary work.

Members of the Women's Voluntary Service assisted the teachers to issue the rations.

Children then went to classrooms for splitting up into small parties for drafting to their billets.

The behaviour of the children was excellent. There were no tear-stained faces.

A teacher from Leeds told an Echo reporter that it had been the same throughout the journey.

"Some of them look upon it as a glorified camp." he said. " One of the first questions I got was, 'Please sir, shall we be able to play Rugby?'
"Some of the children have been promised big parties when they return home."

One child, evidently thinking Lincolnshire meant somewhere near the seaside, had brought as seaside bucket, which formed an incongruous addition to gas mask and other luggage.

Mr C.W. Hooton, Chief Billeting Officer for Lincoln and Mr Robert Epton, for the Welton and North Kesteven Rural Districts, were at the station.

Both expressed themselves as well satisfied with the progress of the dispersal of the children.

Mr. L. E. Allbones chairman of North Kesteven Rural Council, stated that he had inspected arrangements made in the villages in his area and was assured that everything possible would be done for the evacuees.

CARS LOANED

All the Lincoln school teachers were on duty today assisting in the work at the station or the schools.

A number of cars were available for taking children to the more distant billets in the city and the number will be increased to-night. These vehicles have been offered voluntarily.

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DEAN'S OFFER

In a message to the Echo, the Dean of Lincoln, Very Rev. R.A. Mitchell says: "It has occurred to me that some of those who have the care of evacuated children may be at a loss, especially during the first few days before the children know their way about, to find ways and means of occupying the spare time of the children.

"The Cathedral is an easy place to find and if any children are sent there we will do our best to look after them and if need be to direct them and to see them on their way to the houses where they are staying.

"They will also be very welcome to play, so far as space permits, in the Deanery garden, to which there is direct access from the Cathedral itself.

Newspaper activity sheet

Newspaper Story
Read the stories, you can team read them if you like.
What does the title of the article tell you?
Are you able to list the five Ws? Who is this newspaper story about? Does the story mention any other people? What has happened? Where did it happen? When did it happen? Why did it happen?
Is there anything unusual about this article?
How do you think the people felt? Can you pick out five adjectives?
When do you think this article was written? Why do you think this?
How is this different to a story you might see on the news or in a newspaper today?