

Children in the Second World War - Key Stage 2

Video Script

Memorial: National Memorial to the Evacuation: Every Which Way **Presenter:** Jon

Today we will be looking at how the Second World War affected children from Britain, especially those who lived in big cities like Birmingham, Liverpool and London. The government expected that Nazi Germany was going to attack those cities, probably from the air. These air raids would target factories to prevent Britain being able to produce weapons for the army and cities with large docks would also be attacked to disrupt supplies of food, fuel, and other raw materials.

The government decided that children, pregnant women, and other vulnerable people would be sent to safety in the countryside. They were known as evacuees. Over three million people were evacuated, with some going to stay with relatives in other countries, such as America and Canada.

For some families, things were quite easy. My own family, for example, were very fortunate. My uncle had a holiday cottage in Norfolk, and it was decided that my mum, my brothers and my sister, along with all of their cousins and aunts would go there. So, they were all able to stay together, but it must have been quite cramped.

For most, though, it was very different, at least at the beginning. Try to imagine what it might have been like.

You set off to school, but today, instead of just having your gas mask and school bag as usual, you also have a small suitcase, and a cardboard label with your name on it. When you get to the school there is a bus waiting for you. Are you going on holiday?

But no, your mother isn't coming with you. She works in a factory that makes shells for the army. Next thing you know, you are in a train heading out into the countryside. You have never seen so many trees before in your life. And what are all those things in the fields? Cows? Sheep? You ask the other children on the train if they know where they are going. Nobody seems to know. Finally, the train comes to a station and you get off.

A man they call the Billeting Officer looks at your name label, and then looks at some notes on a clipboard. "You're with Mr & Mrs Thompson" he says, and points to an old couple standing at the end of the platform with two other children that you have never seen before. The children, a boy of your age and his sister, are also evacuees. Their father is a soldier, and their mother works in a factory that makes parachutes for the air force.



Life with Mr and Mrs Thompson and the two other children is nothing like living in a city. As well as your schoolwork you have to do chores around the farm. You feed the chickens and collect the eggs. They are lovely and fresh, though, which makes a nice change from having powdered egg. Then you have to help with the vegetable patch, and in the mornings, help milk the cows. You never knew that milk came from a cow, you have only seen it in bottles.

You find it hard to understand the local people. Their accents are very different to yours, and sometimes you have to ask them to repeat themselves until you understand. You worry that they might think you are stupid. The local children don't always allow the 'city kids' to join in their games. You often feel lonely, and you miss your mother and father so much.

This memorial is called 'Every Which Way' and it tries to describe what it must have been like for the evacuees. It was created by an artist called Maurice Blik. He was born in Amsterdam, just before the war started, and spent some of his early childhood in Belsen, one of the Nazi concentration camps. He now lives and works in England.

At first glance the sculpture is simply of a group of children waiting for a train, or a bus. But if you look more closely, the children all have name labels. Each carries a gas mask in a cardboard box. Some of their clothes, and even their hands are back to front. Look at the suitcases, too. Some of them are split or torn. All these little details help us imagine how confusing, upsetting and disorientating it must have been for the children involved.

Many of the evacuees settled well into their new lives. Some liked living in the country so much that they stayed on after the war was finished. But they must have been constantly worried about their family and friends who had stayed in the city. Would they be alright? When the grown ups had finally stopped fighting and the war was over and they could go home, would their house still be there? Their school? Their local park? How much would be left?



Eventually, of course, the war was over, and many people returned to their home cities. Some people had to find new homes in new cities, and to even new countries. Despite the enormous damage to buildings, with entire streets being destroyed, fewer people than feared had been killed. The process of rebuilding could begin, and many families separated by war could, at last, be re-united. However, lots of people had died and many families had somebody missing when they came back together.

Evacuees and their families made a big sacrifice. Some children's parents were soldiers, sailors or airmen and may have died in the war. Many women worked in factories or on farms. All of these people served their country and helped Britain and its allies win the war.

Children from other countries also had to move to try to escape the war. Many Polish children were refugees and were sent to live in Kenya or India.

Meanwhile, many Jewish children living in Europe had to go into hiding with their families or flee the country, as Jewish people were being hunted by Nazi Germany. Around ten thousand children were transported to the United Kingdom from Europe as part of a mission called Kindertransport. Bringing them to the United Kingdom meant that they could be safe, however children had to go on their own as their parents were not allowed to come with them.

The war affected children's lives in many different ways, and a lot of children had to leave their families.

Think about your lives today, and how children living in the Second World War must have felt.

****END****

CHILDREN IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR ANSWERS

Session One

Questions after watching the film.

What places in Britain did the government think that Nazi Germany would attack by air?

Cities, Factories, Docks

Who were the people the government wanted to move to safety?

Vulnerable people, Children, Pregnant women

Can you name two things an evacuee would take with them?

Any of these; gas mask, a label, suitcase / bag, school bag, clothes, maybe a toy

Where was the artist Maurice Blik born?

Amsterdam

10,000 Jewish children escaped their home countries and came to Britain. What was the name of the mission they came with?

Kindertransport

The Second World War / Family Life in the Second World War

When did the Second World War begin?

1 September 1939

Name two countries that were Allied countries.

Choose two of these; Britain, France, Poland, the Soviet Union, the USA (Pre-partition) India, Canada

As well as Nazi Germany, name two other countries that were Axis Powers.

Italy, Japan

What date did the Second World War end in Europe? What is this day called?

8 May 1945, it was called Victory in Europe Day, or VE Day

What day did the fighting end in the Far East? What is this day called?

15 August 1945, it was called Victory over Japan Day, or VJ Day.

How old were the men that were called to join the British Armed Forces?

18-41

Some men did not have to go to war because the jobs they did were important. Name two of the jobs that were exempt.

Choose from; mining, farming, teaching

Children in the Second World War

What were the British Government worried about being dropped on British cities?

Bombs

Who were evacuated to safe places?

Vulnerable people, children and pregnant women

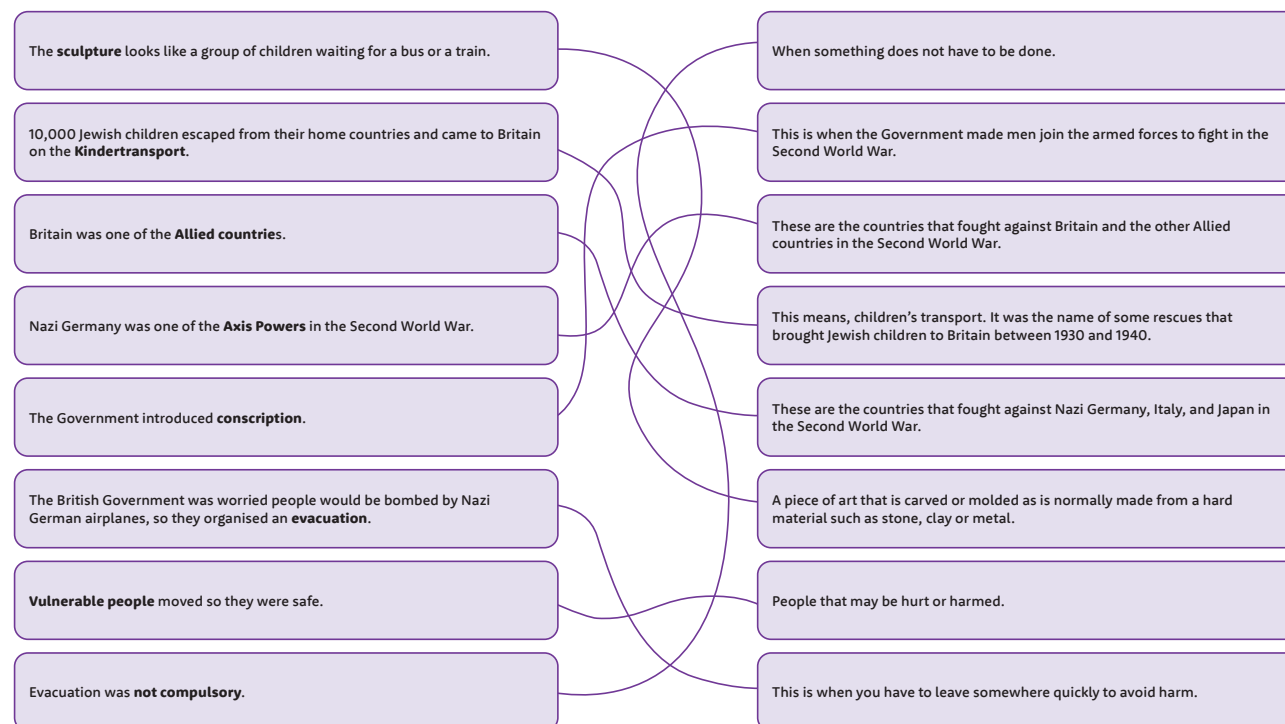
Do you live in a city or in the countryside? Do you think you live in an area which was evacuated or reception area (an area where evacuees came to live)?

Each child to think about where they live. Could use the internet for research.

How do you think children felt when they were being evacuated?

This can be an answer that can be discussed rather than written down.

Vocabulary mix-and-match



Creative Writing Activity

Imagine that you are on the ship, returning home with Michael. In the space below, describe the journey.

The creative writing should try and describe these questions

What is the journey like?

What can you see, smell, touch, taste and hear?

How are you and Michael feeling on the journey?

Session Two

Jean's Diary

How do you think Jean was feeling as she travelled back to London from Hirwenydd?

Any three words can be chosen from below.

Scared, Happy, Worried, Nervous, Confused, Excited, Angry, Uncertain, Lonely

Pretend that you are Jean, travelling back to London. Write a diary entry describing how you are feeling? Try to include the three words you chose.

The answer should be in the form of a diary entry with three of the words above used in the writing.

Second World War Map

The map should look like this.



Evacuation Suitcase Activity

The suitcase should have drawings of what the children would take with them.