

Ellie's History Lesson: Life on the Home Front

Learning objective: To understand the challenges and experiences of children living in Britain during the Second World War.

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions. Use full sentences where appropriate.

Ellie the elephant loves uncovering the stories of the past. During the Second World War (1939–1945), life in Britain changed dramatically for children. With cities becoming dangerous due to air raids, thousands of children were evacuated to the countryside to stay with host families. This was known as 'evacuation'.

Back in the towns and cities, the 'Home Front' was a hive of activity. Food was scarce, so the government introduced rationing to ensure everyone had a fair share. Families used ration books to buy limited amounts of sugar, butter, and meat. Many people grew their own vegetables in 'Victory Gardens' to supplement their meals. To stay safe during nightly bombing raids, families built Anderson shelters in their back gardens. These were made of corrugated steel and partially buried in the ground. Despite the fear and uncertainty, communities pulled together, sharing resources and supporting one another. Children often helped with the war effort by collecting scrap metal or knitting socks for soldiers. It was a time of immense bravery and sacrifice, where ordinary people found extraordinary ways to contribute to their country's resilience.

Word bank: Evacuation · Rationing · Anderson shelter · Home Front · Contribution

1. What was the purpose of an Anderson shelter, and what materials were they made from? (2 marks)

2. Identify two ways that children contributed to the war effort according to the text. (2 marks)

3. Why do you think the government decided to introduce rationing for items like butter and sugar? (2 marks)

4. Explain why life might have felt frightening for a child living in a city during this period. (2 marks)

5. Do you think being evacuated to the countryside was a positive or negative experience? Justify your answer using evidence from the text and your own historical understanding. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a scene of a 'Victory Garden' showing vegetables growing and a small Anderson shelter in the corner of the garden.



Extension challenge: Imagine you are a child being evacuated in 1940. Write a short diary entry explaining how you feel about leaving your home, what you packed in your suitcase, and what you hope to find when you arrive at your new destination.