Ellie’s History Lesson: Life on the Home Front

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

Read the text carefully, then answer the questions below. Use evidence from the text to support your points.

During the Second World War, life in Britain changed dramatically for families. Ellie the elephant, who loves studying history, explains that while soldiers fought abroad, the 'Home Front' was a hive of activity. To keep children safe from the dangers of air raids, the government organised mass evacuations. Thousands of children were sent from busy cities to the countryside, carrying only a small suitcase and a gas mask. Back home, food was scarce, so the government introduced rationing. Families were given ration books to buy limited amounts of items like sugar, butter, and meat. To ensure everyone had enough, people were encouraged to 'Dig for Victory' by turning flower gardens into vegetable patches. At night, families often huddled together in Anderson shelters made of corrugated steel, listening to the wail of sirens. Despite these challenges, communities showed incredible resilience, sharing what they had and supporting one another through the darkest years of the conflict. It was a time of immense sacrifice, but also a time when neighbours relied on each other to keep spirits high.

Word bank: Evacuation · Rationing · Home Front · Air raid · Anderson shelter

1. Identify two items that children were required to carry with them when they were evacuated to the countryside. (2 marks)

2. What was the purpose of a 'ration book' during the war? (2 marks)

3. Why do you think the government encouraged people to 'Dig for Victory'? (2 marks)

4. How might a child have felt moving from a busy city to the countryside? Use evidence from the text to explain your answer. (2 marks)

5. Ellie mentions that communities showed 'incredible resilience'. Do you think sharing resources helped people cope with the war? Explain your answer. (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a scene of a 'Dig for Victory' vegetable patch in a back garden, including an Anderson shelter in the corner of the garden.

Extension challenge: Research the role of the Women's Land Army during the Second World War. Write a short diary entry from the perspective of someone working on a farm to support the war effort.