

Second World War – Teacher Notes

Starter:

- What do we already know about World War II?

Pupils can recap ideas that they have already learnt during lessons or things they may know from their own knowledge for example grandparents or great grandparents going to fight/ what evacuation is/ rationing

Outbreak of war (Slide 2)

- When did World War II start?

1st September 1939 (ended 1945)

- What do you think happened in your school when the war started?

Slide 2 – Schools would have been closed. School log books state ‘Sept 4. School closed according to instructions owing to outbreak of war’ and ‘4.9.39. School closed – for week at least – owing to declaration of hostilities’

Air raids (Slides 3 – 21)

- What were air raids?

Air raids were when enemy aeroplanes flew over Britain and dropped bombs on the buildings below. This caused lots of damage to the buildings. There were often people in these buildings, and the bombs dropped during air raids injured and killed many of them. Air raids were also known as the Blitz (from the German word Blitzkrieg meaning ‘lightning war’ because it happened so quickly with limited warning.)

- What happened during an air raid? (Use the link to play siren)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/school-radio/history-ks2-world-war-2-clips-air-raid-siren-sounds-the-warning/zntfwbk>

When people heard the siren they would leave their homes and go to a shelter. This could be an Anderson shelter in the garden, or a community shelter near your house.

- What did children at school have to do?

Slide 3 - The log book tells us that the children at Ninian Park School who lived nearby would be sent home and the others sent to shelters. They would stay there until the ‘all clear’ siren sounded (use the link to play the all clear siren).

The children would practice this in school, in the same way that you practice what to do if the fire alarm sounds.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/school-radio/history-ks2-world-war-2-clips-air-raid-siren-sounds-the-all-clear/z7ngy9q>

- What other rules do you think people had to follow to stay safe in air raids?

Slide 4 – Gas Masks: Everyone had to carry a gas mask everywhere they went. Children would take them to school. Special gas masks were made to fit over prams to protect babies.

Lighting Restrictions: People had to cover windows and doors with blinds or dark paper so that the enemy aeroplanes couldn't spot them from the sky. If they saw lights they would know that there were buildings and people below, and would bomb them. Street lights were dimmed or switched off, so it was difficult to see at night. Car head lights were dimmed, with special shades fitted above them to stop the lights shining up towards the sky. There was a special name for these lighting restrictions – blackout.

Fire Precautions: When bombs hit buildings they often caused fires. People were told to clear their attics so that they didn't have things in them which could burn. They were told to keep full buckets of water in their house, or to leave the used water in the bath, to help put out any fires.

- Who do you think made sure people kept to these rules?

Slides 5 and 6 - Air Raid Wardens (sometimes known as the ARP wardens – Air Raid Precautions wardens) helped protect people from the air raids. They patrolled the streets during a black out and made sure there were no lights on. It was a very dangerous job. The air raid wardens were mostly older men or women. This is because the younger men would be away fighting in the war.

- Look at these photographs of some air raid wardens from Cardiff. Why do you think people needed gas masks?

Slides 5 and 6 – The bombs could contain poisonous gas. Everyone in the country was given a gas mask, even babies, and they had to be carried with you at all times. Gas had been used in the First World War so a lot of people were scared that it would be used in the Second World War, although it was created and stockpiled it was not used in WWII. It was not very easy to breathe while wearing the gas mask and it made many people feel sick.

- Look at this map showing bombing sites in Cardiff. Do you recognise any of the places?

Slide 7 - This map shows some of the bombs that fell on one night. Black = where the bomb hit, green = area damaged by that bomb. The raid was aiming for the docks but hit places such as Queen Street, Splott and Adamsdown.

- Look at these letters about air raids in Cardiff. How do you think the lady writing the letter felt about the bombings?

Slide 8 - (8th Jan 1941) This letter was written by a lady called Pat who lived in Riverside in Cardiff during the Second World War. Her boyfriend, Jack, was away serving with the RAF. Pat wrote to him every day. Her letters describe how Cardiff was affected by the War. In this letter Pat writes, 'We ourselves had a "Blitz" in Cardiff a few nights ago. We had a good few land mines, explosives and incendiaries dropped very near where we live. Some people are rather badly off, no homes... it was Neville Street that copped it about the worst I think... all our slates came off and of course we had a lot of holes in the roof...'

Pat tells us that many people in Cardiff lost their homes because of the air raids.

Slide 9 - (22nd May 1941) This is another letter written by Pat to Jack. In this letter Pat writes, 'I suppose you've noticed the change of address? The reason is that there is no more five Brooke Street, because in the last Blitz on Cardiff Hirrell's street had some German property dropped on it, and consequently all the houses on the street have been condemned...'

Pat tells us that the people in the house '...escaped with nothing more than a few scratches and bruises'. They were very lucky.

- Look at these photographs of bombed houses in Cardiff. What can you see?

Slides 10 -13 – These photographs show the damage caused to houses in Cardiff by bombs dropped during air raids between 1941- 42. Most houses had air raid shelters built to protect themselves from bombs – some were built in gardens (called Anderson Shelters), some were inside houses that could also be used as a table (called Morrison Shelters). People were encouraged to go underground, in London for example people often slept in underground tunnels during a raid.

- What do you think happened to people whose houses were hit by bombs? (log book entry – emergency kitchens set up in school)

Slide 14 - if your house was damaged you could apply to the government to have help getting it repaired. You could also go to community kitchens to get food if your kitchen was damaged and you couldn't cook at home.

Slide 15 - Local buildings such as schools would be 'taken over as a Rest Centre after heavy raid'. The Rest Centre was run by the teachers meaning children couldn't go to school.

- Look at this log book entry. What happened to this school during the war?

Slide 16 - Although they weren't targeted by bombers, schools were sometimes hit by accident. This log book entry tells us that Ninian Park School in Grangetown, Cardiff was hit by a bomb. 140 panes of glass were broken in the windows, there were 3 holes in the roof, and the school was left without water, gas or heating. This

would have been very sad for the teachers and children to see, but the head teacher was just glad that no one was injured and that the damaged could be repaired.

- Do you think many people were hurt in the bombings?

Slide 17 – This photo shows a girl called Anne who was injured in July 1941 along with her mother during a raid and went to Ogmores-by-Sea to recover.

Slide 18 – A photo of Anne and her classmates at Rumney Junior School.

Slides 19 – 21 – These show letters from Anne's friends and teacher at school. One girl, Jean (Slide 20) even sent Anne a chocolate bar which would have been very special at a time when rationing meant chocolate was difficult to get.

3. Evacuation (Slides 22 – 29)

- Do you think it would have been safe to live in big cities such as Cardiff and Swansea during the war?

No, air raids were mainly focused on bigger cities to try and cause as much damage as possible.

- This entry from a school log book tells us about something called evacuation. What was evacuation?

Slide 22 – 'Meeting of head Teachers at Technical College to discuss evacuation of school children'.

Evacuation was when children were sent away from big cities to the countryside to protect them from bombing raids. Children had labels attached to their clothes as if they were parcels. They were separated from their family and brothers and sisters could be sent to different hosts to be looked after. They had to make new friends and start new schools. Some of them had never been to the countryside before.

- This letter tells us about children being evacuated from Cardiff.

Slide 23 – 'Did you know Jack, that some of the children are being evacuated from Cardiff, those in dangerous areas such as :- the docks and round - about the Dowlais works (the steel works)'

- Where did evacuated children go?

Slides 24 - 25 – they were sent to safe places such as the country side or even abroad. Slide 25 shows a log book entry showing '59 in groups registered here – all of whom left on Saturday (for Treherbert)' which is less than an hour away from central Cardiff!

- Look at these cards for two sisters who were evacuated from Cardiff.

Where were they sent? How old are they? Do you think it would have been scary being sent all the way to Canada on your own?

Slide 26 – They were sent to Canada (see card title 'Department of Pensions and National Health, Canada) and were 7 and 10 years old when they were sent to Canada by themselves.

4. Rationing (Slides 27 – 36)

- We know now that Cardiff was bombed during the war because of the docks, to stop coal being exported and to stop supplies coming in to the country. The bombing meant it was difficult for ships to bring supplies to the UK, including Cardiff. What do you think happened because of this?

There was a shortage of food and supplies.

- If there wasn't as much food as usual, what do you think happened?

The Government introduced rationing so that everyone got an equal share.

- How did people get their rations?

Slide 27 – This shows a ration book. People were only allowed to go to certain shops to collect their food. Once they got their weeks' worth of food, it was marked in the ration book so everyone got the same amount.

- What sort of foods do you think were rationed?

All sorts of everyday foods such as bread, butter and eggs as well as food from abroad like bananas and sweets.

- Look at this log book entry; it mentions gifts from the US. Why do you think they'd be sending gifts?

Slide 28 – 'The gifts comprised boxes of sweets and games'. We didn't have many sweets or toys here due to shortages and rationing.

- Look at this log book entry. It mentions something called Dig for Victory. What do you think this was?

Slides 29 – 32 – These show the government's plans to encourage people to grow their own food in their gardens or allotments. School children were encouraged to pick fruit and make jam.

- Look at these log book entries about shortages of other supplies. What else is rationed? (paper, soap, clothing etc.)

Slide 33 – This shows the rationing of soap and paper. Clothes were also rationed leading to the 'Make Do and Mend' campaign.

- This log book entry mentions Make Do and Mend. What do you think this was?

Slides 34 – 36 – This encouraged people to make clothes at home or repair their old clothes instead of buying new ones. People also often knitted things such as gloves and hats for the men who were away fighting.

5. Invasion (Slide 37)

- Who won the Second World War?

Britain

- If we hadn't won the war, what do you think would have happened?

Britain would have been invaded by Germany.

- Do you think people were scared that this might happen?
- Look at this document which told people what to do if there was an invasion

Slide 37 - People are told to stay where they are and not try to run away from their homes. They are also told not to spread rumours which might scare people.

6. VE Day (Slides 38 – 39)

- Look at these log book entries. They mention something called VE day. What did people do on this day? What happened at School?

Slide 38 – School was closed for 2 days and the hall was decorated. They held a thanksgiving service.

- Do you know what VE day was?

Victory in Europe Day was celebrated on 8th May 1945 to mark the end of WWII

- How do you think VE day was celebrated?

Slide 39 - Street parties like the ones for the royal wedding in 2011. In this photo there are lots of children and women and some older men but most of the younger men hadn't come home from the war yet.

- Do you think people were glad when the war ended?

Plenary ideas:

- What have you learnt that you found really interesting?

- What are the three most important words from this activity?
- What would you like to learn more about?

Possible activities based on this workshop:

- Design the best shelter you can using the materials you are given.
- Design a poster to encourage people to fight in the war or grow their own food – try to use words that persuade people!
- What 10 items would you pack in your suitcase if you were being evacuated?
- Everyone was allowed 48 coupons for clothes to last a whole year. A coat = 5, trousers = 6, a skirt = 4, a dress = 5, pyjamas = 6, a cardigan or jumper = 5, pants = 2, shoes = 2, gloves, hats or scarves = 2 and socks = 1. What would you buy to last you all year? Remember your total can't go over 48.