

THE EVACUATION OF CHILDREN DURING THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

WORD BOX:

The Battle of Britain:
July 1940 - September 1940.

An evacuation / an evacuee

Air raids

A carrier bag

ACTIVITY 1: Answer the questions about source 1 & 2:



SOURCE 1: An early start to evacuation is made by children of Myrdle School in Stepney (London). The children assembled at school at 5am on Friday 1 September 1939. This photograph shows evacuees and adults walking along a street carrying suitcases and gas mask boxes (Source: Imperial War Museum).

SOURCE 2: A group of evacuees from Bristol arrive at Brent railway station near Kingsbridge in Devon, 1940 (Source: Imperial War Museum).



a. Describe how the children were evacuated (meeting point; departure and arrival cities; transport; personal belongings).

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b. When were they evacuated? What important event took place on that day?

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ACTIVITY 2: Answer the questions about sources 3 & 4:

SOURCE 3: Evacuating from London:

Ken Long was ten and a half years old when he was evacuated from London on 1 Sept. 1939.

“We ended up at a little village in Somerset¹ called Uphill. I was very fortunate to be eventually billeted together with another boy on a poultry and cider farm, in the country, and only 200 yards² from a sandy beach on the Bristol Channel and we had a Labrador dog - heaven! The owners were a childless couple who treated us wonderfully, Mr and Mrs Howe. She was a most attractive and kind lady. I still visit and correspond with her at the same address, she’s 94 now.

By early summer 1940 there had been very few bombing attacks, the miracle of Dunkirk in May was followed by the start of the Battle of Britain. As a consequence many children had gone back home to the cities and their parents, including me.”

Extracts from a story submitted to
the People's War website (BBC) by Ken
Long contributed in 2003.

¹ County in South West England.

² 200 yards ≈ 183 meters.

SOURCE 4: A tragic evacuation story:

On 17 Sept. 1940, HMS¹ City of Benares, evacuating children from Liverpool, was torpedoed by a German submarine in the Atlantic Ocean. 77 of the 90 children on board were killed. Among them was Beryl Myatt, aged nine.

“I am very distressed to inform you that in spite of all the precautions taken, the ship carrying your child to Canada was torpedoed on Tuesday night, September 17th. I am afraid your child was not among those reported as rescued, and I am informed that there is no chance of there being any further lists of survivors from the torpedoed vessels.

Like so many parents you were anxious to send your child overseas to one of the Dominions² to enjoy a happier and safer life. You courageously took this decision in the interest of your child, believing that this course was better than leaving the child here in a vulnerable area subject to continuous air raids. Hitherto there have been no casualties among the thousands of children sent overseas.”

Extracts from The Children's Overseas
Reception Board's letter of condolence to Beryl
Myatt's father, 19 September 1940 (Source: Imperial
War Museum).

¹ His Majesty's Ship.

² Former British colonies that fought for Great Britain during WW2.

a. In each source, where were the children evacuated to? Did the first child know the family he was staying with?

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b. *Source 3*: Was the evacuation a happy or a painful memory for the author? Justify your answer.

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c. *Source 3*: Why were the children sent home? Was it the right time?

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d. *Source 4*: Why did parents decide to send their child abroad? Was it always safer? Justify your answer.

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FINAL TASK: CREATE A PODCAST ABOUT YOUR OWN EVACUATION STORY:

Imagine that you were 14 at the beginning of the war and had to be evacuated from your home in London. Create a podcast of about 2 minutes and tell your own evacuation story.

Instructions:

- *You will first write your story on a draft;*
- *You will use the following keywords: **Second World War, Battle of Britain, air raids, evacuee/evacuation, carrier bag, gas mask;***
- *You will use information from your previous answers: introduce your **home and family**, describe the **journey** and where you stayed (choose between an evacuation to **the countryside** or **abroad**);*
- *Finally, you will record your story.*

LESSON:

As soon as the war began, millions of **children** were **evacuated** from the targeted areas because of the threat of continuous **air raids**. They were sent **abroad** (Canada, New Zealand...) or to the **countryside**. They stayed with their relatives or with strangers. As nothing happened immediately, they were sent home at the beginning of 1940.