

# World War II: Britain at War

Timeline, key words, source investigation and life on the Home Front.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

**Learning objective:** I can describe and explain how the Second World War affected life in Britain.

✓ I can order key events   ✓ I understand key vocabulary   ✓ I can ask questions about a source

**1 Timeline** Put these events in the order they happened. Write 1 (earliest) to 7 (latest) in the boxes.

**A 3 September 1939** – Britain and France declare war on Germany.

**B 1 September 1939** – Germany invades Poland. Evacuation of children from British cities begins.

**C 8 January 1940** – Food rationing begins in Britain (bacon, butter and sugar).

**D September 1940** – The Blitz begins: heavy bombing of London and other cities.

**E 8 May 1945** – VE Day – Victory in Europe is celebrated.

**F July–October 1940** – The Battle of Britain is fought in the skies over southern England.

**G May–June 1940** – Over 300,000 Allied soldiers are rescued from the beaches of Dunkirk.

**2 Key words** Match each word to its meaning. Write the letter in the box.

1 evacuee

**A** technology using radio waves to detect approaching aircraft

2 rationing

**B** covering windows and turning off lights at night so bombers could not see towns

3 the Blitz

**C** volunteers, often older men, trained to defend Britain if it was invaded

4 blackout

**D** a curved steel shelter, partly buried in a garden, for protection during air raids

5 Anderson shelter

**E** a child moved from a city to the countryside for safety

6 Home Guard

**F** limiting how much food and other goods each person could buy

7 radar

**G** the bombing of British towns and cities by German aircraft, 1940–41

## World War II: Britain at War

### Source: an evacuee's diary

*Monday* – We arrived in the village late this afternoon, all of us with labels tied to our coats and gas masks in boxes. A lady with a kind face took me and my little brother home with her. Her cottage has no electric light, only lamps.

*Tuesday* – I helped feed the hens this morning. I have never seen a real hen before! The food here is plain but there is plenty of it. Mum's letter came today. I miss her terribly, but she says London is too dangerous for us now.

This is an imagined diary, written for The Teacher Vault, based on the experiences of real evacuees in 1939.

### 3 Investigate the source

1 Why did the children have labels tied to their coats?

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2 Find **two** differences between the village and the child's home in London.

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3 How does the writer feel about being evacuated? Use evidence.

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4 This source is imagined. What could a historian use instead to find out about real evacuees?

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### 4 True or false?

|                                                           | TRUE                     | FALSE                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Children were evacuated to keep them safe from bombing. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 Rationing began in 1945.                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 The Battle of Britain was fought mainly at sea.         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 Many evacuees were sent from cities to the countryside. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## World War II: Britain at War

### 5 Think like a historian

- 1 Why was the Battle of Britain a turning point for Britain?

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- 2 Why was food rationed during the war?

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- 3 People's experiences of the war were not all the same. Give **one** example of how two people's experiences might have been different.

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### 6 Write a postcard

Imagine you are an evacuee. Write a short postcard home describing your first week. Use at least **three** facts from this sheet.

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# Answer Key

## World War II: Britain at War

| Question                        | Answers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1 Timeline</b>               | <p>Correct order: B, A, C, G, F, D, E</p> <p><b>1 September 1939</b> – Germany invades Poland. Evacuation of children from British cities begins. → <b>3 September 1939</b> – Britain and France declare war on Germany. → <b>8 January 1940</b> – Food rationing begins in Britain (bacon, butter and sugar). → <b>May–June 1940</b> – Over 300,000 Allied soldiers are rescued from the beaches of Dunkirk. → <b>July–October 1940</b> – The Battle of Britain is fought in the skies over southern England. → <b>September 1940</b> – The Blitz begins: heavy bombing of London and other cities. → <b>8 May 1945</b> – VE Day – Victory in Europe is celebrated.</p> |
| <b>2 Key words</b>              | <b>1 E; 2 F; 3 G; 4 B; 5 D; 6 C; 7 A</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>3 Investigate the source</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. So that adults knew who each child was and where they were going (name, school, home address) – it helped organise thousands of children.</li> <li>2. Any two: no electric light (lamps only); hens/farm animals; quieter/safer; plainer food but plenty of it.</li> <li>3. Mixed feelings: excited/curious (“never seen a real hen before!”) but homesick (“I miss her terribly”).</li> <li>4. Real diaries and letters, photographs, newspapers, government records/posters, or interviews (oral history) with people who were evacuated.</li> </ol>                                                                         |
| <b>4 True or false?</b>         | <b>1 True; 2 False</b> – it began in January 1940; <b>3 False</b> – it was fought in the air, by the RAF against the Luftwaffe; <b>4 True</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>5 Think like a historian</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The RAF stopped the German air force from winning control of the skies, so Germany postponed its planned invasion of Britain; it showed Germany could be resisted.</li> <li>2. Ships bringing food to Britain were attacked by German submarines (U-boats), so food was scarce; rationing shared it out fairly so everyone got enough.</li> <li>3. e.g. a child in London faced bombing, while a child in a quiet village did not; women took on new jobs in factories or on farms (Land Girls) while men served in the forces; refugees such as Kindertransport children had left their families behind.</li> </ol>           |
| <b>6 Write a postcard</b>       | <p>Look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least three accurate facts (e.g. labels, gas masks, rationing, blackout, new jobs on the farm)</li> <li>• Feelings shown with evidence</li> <li>• Written in the first person, past tense, as a postcard</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

**Teaching note:** the National Curriculum KS2 history programme of study includes a study of an aspect or theme in British history beyond 1066, for example the Battle of Britain as a significant turning point. The diary is an imagined source and is labelled as such. Approach the subject sensitively: some families have personal connections to the war.