

Evacuee's Suitcase of Belongings (EVCSC)

This collection contains a variety of replica artefacts, ration book, gas mask, identity card and more to support understanding of evacuation and the experiences of the evacuees in the second world War.

Contents: -

1. 1 x Evacuee's Suitcase and Travel Tag
2. 1 x Evacuee's Identity Card
3. 1 x Facsimile WW2 Ration Book
4. 1 x Evacuee's letter home and letter from parents
5. 1 x Gas Mask and Calio Gas Mask Bag
6. 6x Wartime Coins (Pocket money)
7. 1 x Child's Yo-Yo
8. 1 x Bag of Cat's Eyes Marbles
(Contents may vary)



Questions you could ask children about the artefacts

Initial Discussion

- What is this object?
- Does it resemble anything the children have seen?
- What do you think the item was used for and by whom?
- Does anyone know what it is called?

Collect any other questions the children might have about the artefacts and display them as you try to find the answers through your learning sessions.

Other questions to consider:

- What was life like in WW2?
- Why is it important to learn about the war?
- How does this object connect to the people involved in WW2?
- **What do the objects tell us about life in the wartime?** *This last question can be returned to at the end of the investigation.*

By asking these questions, you can encourage pupils to actively engage with the artefacts, explore their significance and develop a deeper understanding of WW2 and experiences.

All About the Artefacts

1. Evacuee's Suitcase

When WW2 broke out many children were evacuated from larger cities and industrial areas to small towns and rural villages for their safety. In the first three days of official evacuation (beginning in 1939) almost 1.5 million people were evacuated. It was known as 'Operation Pied Piper' (read the story of the pied Piper of Hamelin to understand the reference).

A small suitcase would have been packed with essential items including clothing, hygiene items (such as a toothbrush, comb, face cloth, soap and handkerchiefs) and a packed lunch. Children would also carry a gas mask and Identity card to show their name and home address. Some children would have got to pack personal belongings like small toys, photos and stamps for writing letters home.

Billeting officers were placed in charge of finding homes for the children.

Draw a suitcase and get pupils to draw and label what they would take with them. Compare with the list sent out in WW2.

2. Identity Card

Issued to all civilians recorded on the national register from 1939 to 1952. People carried their Identity card with them at all times to show who they were and where they lived. There are many reasons why identity cards were introduced. It was necessary if families got separated from one another or their house was bombed or if people were injured or killed. People carried the identity cards until 1952.

Make your own ID cards. Some people believe identity cards would be useful today. Discuss the pros and cons of this.

3. Ration Book

During the Second World War, there were a lot of shortages of essential foodstuffs as supplies started to become short and sometimes impossible to obtain, particularly imported goods. Towards the end of 1939 everyone was issued with a ration book, which was filled with coupons for different items of food. Everyone was allowed a certain amount of food per week. Evacuees would have carried their ration book along with their ID card in their gas mask case.

You could only use the coupons in your ration book to purchase food, and the shopkeeper would remove the coupons in the ration book before he issued the goods. Clothing Ration Books were also introduced later in the war.

There are many activities that can be used with the ration book. This can include making a food diary of what pupils eat during the week and seeing which foods would have been unavailable during rationing. Another activity could be to investigate which ways people could acquire additional food. For instance, growing food.

4. Evacuee's letters

The letters have been written to set the scene. They are based on real scenarios and the farm mentioned in the letters was a real place where children were evacuated to during World War Two.

Share stories about evacuees such as 'Goodnight Mr Tom' and 'Carries' War' and get the children to write their own letters home to describe the feelings of the characters and what it might have felt like to be evacuated. Research the areas the children were evacuated from and places they were evacuated to and compare the two.

5. Gas mask

The British government feared that some form of poisonous gas would be used during the war and so to protect the population everyone was issued with a gas mask. People had to carry their gas mask with them at all times. Failure to carry gas masks was a punishable offence. They were often carried in cardboard boxes. They were a key part of daily life in WW2 and children were instructed at school on how to use them with daily gas mask drills. The routine for the drill was: 1. Remove mask from box/bag, 2. Put mask on face, 3. Check mask is fitting correctly, 4. Breathe normally.

The BBC has a recording that dates back to 1941 and features a teacher instructing her infant class to put on their gas masks, a drill before getting their knitting out and listening to a story.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/school-radio/articles/zr38cqt>

6. Wartime Coins

A collection of British coins used during the war time. Many children would have been given pocket money. Probably 1d (one penny). A loaf of bread would have cost around 3 and a half d and a Mars Bar 1d. Coins during this period featured the image of king George VI.

Research to find out what could be bought with the coins and compare the value of things today.

7.& 8. Yo-Yo and Marbles

Children were only permitted to take small suitcases with them when they were being evacuated. There would not have been much room for large toys so they would have taken light small toys with them. Also, as soon as the Second World War started in 1939, even the most basic of raw materials were in great demand and soon under strict control by the government of the day. Very quickly toyshops ran out of stock, the metal, wood and paper once used to make toys was instead, being used for military purposes. Toys would have been very simple, and eventually children would learn how to make toys out of whatever materials they could find around the home.

Making toys from found objects could be set up as a homework challenge. Learn to play different games and write the instructions for how to play them.

Reference Websites:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/articles/zjnyscw>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/school-radio/articles/zjc8cqt>