

TOPIC PACKS · GRADES 5–6

World War 2

A cross-curricular themed week

A note for teachers

World War 2 is a sensitive topic. This pack focuses on the HOME FRONT and ordinary lives — evacuation, rationing, the Blitz from the perspective of children, and the role of women. It does NOT cover combat in graphic detail or the Holocaust at primary level (the Holocaust requires its own dedicated, careful unit and is generally taught in Year 8/9 in the UK). Adapt content to your class and school's policy.

Suggested timetable

Day	Subject	Activity
Monday	History	Causes and timeline — the basic facts
Tuesday	History	Evacuation — children sent to safety
Wednesday	DT & Maths	Rationing — design a wartime meal
Thursday	History	The Blitz and the Battle of Britain
Friday	English	Letter writing — evacuated child to home

Day 1 — Basic timeline



Year	Event
1939	Germany invades Poland. Britain and France declare war (3 September)
1940	Battle of Britain — RAF defends UK from German air force
1940–41	The Blitz — German bombing of British cities
1941	USA enters the war (after Pearl Harbor attack in December)
1944	D-Day — Allied forces land in Normandy, France (6 June)
1945	Germany surrenders (May). Japan surrenders (September). War ends.

Day 1 — Setting the scene

World War 2 lasted from 1939 to 1945 — six years. It was the biggest war in human history. Children today have grandparents or great-grandparents who lived through it. Many UK schools, if you're in the UK, were affected directly — perhaps their building has stories. CONNECT: Bring in any local history if you can — bomb sites, war memorials, evacuee records. Many local museums hold these. The Imperial War Museum has free educational packs.

Day 2 — Evacuation

<p>Why children were evacuated</p> <p>Cities were targets for bombing. Sending children to safer places — the countryside, Wales, Scotland — kept them alive. About 1.5 million British children were evacuated.</p>	<p>What it was like</p> <p>Children had a label tied to them with their name and destination. They carried a small case and a gas mask. Many had never been to the countryside before. They were chosen by host families at the station.</p>
<p>The host families</p> <p>Some children went to lovely homes and made lifelong friends. Others were treated badly. The experience was random — luck of the draw.</p>	<p>Going home</p> <p>Some evacuees stayed for the entire war. Some came home during quiet periods. Reuniting families could be hard — younger children sometimes barely remembered their real parents.</p>

Day 3 — Rationing (60 min)



Almost everything was rationed in WW2 because food and supplies were scarce. Each person had a RATION BOOK with stamps. Once your stamps for the week were used, you got nothing more — even with money. WEEKLY RATION FOR ONE PERSON (1942): • Butter: 50g (a small slice) • Sugar: 225g • Bacon: 100g • Cheese: 50g • Tea: 50g (about 20 cups) • Eggs: 1 per week (or 1 packet of dried egg powder per month) • Sweets: 350g per month MATHS CHALLENGE: For a family of 4, work out how much butter, sugar, etc. they get. How does this compare to what your family uses now? DESIGN A MEAL: Children plan a wartime meal using just one day's rations. Discover the LORD WOOLTON PIE — a vegetable pie everyone ate, named after the Minister of Food.

Day 4 — The Blitz

From September 1940 to May 1941, German planes bombed British cities almost every night. London was hit for 57 nights in a row. Other cities — Coventry, Birmingham, Liverpool, Glasgow — also suffered terribly. WHAT CHILDREN DID: • Heard air raid sirens and ran to shelters (Anderson shelter in the garden, or Underground stations) • Carried gas masks everywhere • Slept in shelters night after night • Helped neighbours after raids ADULTS WHO PROTECTED THEM: • ARP wardens — patrolled streets in blackouts • Firefighters — battled fires from incendiary bombs • WVS (Women's Voluntary Service) — fed and cared for bombed-out families • Royal Air Force pilots — fought off German bombers DIARY ACTIVITY: Children write a diary entry from a child's perspective during one Blitz night. Use sensory detail — siren sounds, the smell of brick dust, the rumble of bombs, the feeling of safety in a shelter.

Day 5 — Evacuee letter (60 min)

WRITING TASK: An evacuated child writes home to their parents. SCENARIO: You are 9 years old. You were evacuated from your London home three weeks ago. You're staying with the Williams family on a farm in Devon. You miss home but lots is interesting too. INCLUDE: • How you're really feeling (children try to be brave for parents — what does that look like?) • What you've eaten (different from London!) • What the farm is like • Any animals you've met • Children at your new school • What you miss about home • What you want to ask your parents FORMAT: Real wartime letter — proper letter layout (your address top right, theirs top left, date, 'Dear Mum and Dad', sign-off 'Your loving daughter/son'). EXTENSION: Then write the parents' reply.

Reading suggestions

If your class is reading independently, brilliant WW2 children's novels include: • 'Goodnight Mister Tom' by Michelle Magorian • 'Carrie's War' by Nina Bawden • 'Letters from the Lighthouse' by Emma Carroll • 'The Boy at the Back of the Class' by Onjali Q Raúf (modern, but echoes the refugee experience) • 'Once' by Morris Gleitzman (handles the Holocaust sensitively for older Y6 readers)

