

Evacuee's Suitcase of Belongings

World War Two Evacuee Suitcase Product Code: EVCSC

We have searched far and wide to put together a collection of replica items that may have been found in an evacuee's suitcase. We hope that it can help teachers to set the scene and provide an experiential approach, encouraging children's understanding of evacuation and developing empathy towards the evacuees.

The pack consists of a ration book, identity card and coins from the period. Pupils can play with the marbles and the yo-yo. We have written two letters to try and help set the scene. Whilst researching our evacuee's suitcase we spoke to people who had real life experience of evacuation. Though not from authentic people, the letters in this pack are based on real scenarios, the location of the farm that has been included is a real farm to which children were evacuated during World War Two.

Whilst essentially a collection of historical artefacts, the evacuees suitcase can also lend itself to a wide range of cross curricular settings.

In literacy lessons, the suitcase can be used in conjunction with a variety of evacuee based stories including, 'Goodnight Mr Tom' and 'Carrie's war' Pupils can also be set literacy based exercises, for example, activities can include writing a letter home to their parents to describe how they are feeling and their new experiences. Children can also participate in 'hot seating' by either questioning a classmate or a teacher as to what it would have felt like to be evacuated.

In Geography, children can research which areas children were evacuated from, focusing on why they had to leave such areas and what type of areas they were evacuated to. In terms of looking at local studies, children can question whether they would or would not have been evacuated from their particular area.

Evacuation

When World War Two broke out, many children were evacuated from larger cities and industrial areas to smaller towns and rural villages so that they would be safe. In the first three days of official evacuation (beginning in 1939) almost 1.5 million people were evacuated. Of this number, 800,000 were school aged children evacuated to areas where it was thought they would be safe. School children would assemble at their schools and would travel together with their teachers. Often it was not possible to let all parents know in advance as to where their child was to be sent as there was so many children being transported at any one time.

Suitcase

Each child was permitted to take one small suitcase with them when they were evacuated. The Government issued a recommended list of essential clothing to parents so that they could make sure that their children took the right clothes with them. It is recommended that teachers include a few items of realistic children's clothing (woollen jumper, socks etc.) in the suitcase as well. A packed lunch could also be included for a more realistic approach.

Gas Mask

The British Government feared that some form of poisonous gas would be used on the British population during the war. To protect the population, they issued gas masks for people to wear. People had to carry their gasmask everywhere that they went and by 1940, the government has issued 38 million gas masks. Failure to carry gas masks was a punishable offence.

Identity Card

Identity cards were issued to all civilians recorded on the national register from 1939 to 1952. They were carried by everyone in wallets and handbags at all times. There are many reasons why identity cards were introduced. Firstly, there was a need to know where individual people where, and manpower control could be made increasingly difficult by mobilisation of troops and evacuation.

Secondly the government needed accurate population statistics in order to make vital planning decisions and also the existence of a register would ease the introduction of rationing. An idea for using the identity cards would be to demonstrate the security measures that were necessary in wartime through role-play.

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.

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 (e.g. growing food)

Marbles and Yo-Yo

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 munitions, aircraft, ships and military vehicles plus the equipment and supplies that millions of service personnel would require. Toys would have been very simple, and eventually children would learn how to make more interesting toys out of whatever materials they could find around the home.

Money

This consists of an assortment of genuine British coins used in the Second World War. At this time, most children would have been given 1d (1 penny) as pocket money. A loaf of bread would cost approximately 3 and a half d and a mars bar would cost 1d.

Letters

The letters which are included in this pack are not authentic but they are based on real scenarios, the location of the farm that has been included is a real farm to which children were evacuated during World War Two.