

BELONGING PROJECT: WORLD WAR 2 WORKSHOP

Materials Required

WW2 Archive materials (viewed during visit to Gloucestershire Archives)

Supplementary useful materials (or 'in class' web surfing) might include:

Gloucester Bombing:

<https://gloucestershirepolicearchives.org.uk/content/from-strikes-to-vips/wars/police-and-the-bombing-of-gloucestershire-during-world-war-two>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/60/a4481660.shtml>

Evacuation to Minchinhampton

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/57/a1133957.shtml>

Cardboard and string for making 'Evacuees Name-tags'

Paper and pens

Aims and Objectives: to familiarise children with Gloucestershire Archives collections relating to the second world war in Gloucester city and across the county, with particular reference to issues relating to the experiences of children (ie evacuation), and to create writings responding to the archive material and issues and discussions raised.

1) Play main intro film

2) Archive Study

Participants explore the archive resources; facilitate discussion about life 'on the home front', the differences between then and now, and how it would feel to be displaced by conflict- as evacuee or refugee

3) Play 'Workshop' film (stopping at appropriate points)

The exercises are summarised below

Exercise 1. Evacuees Name-Tag

This is basically for creative warm-up, to get participants playing with language. It also establishes the 'evacuation' theme. Get participants to make a cardboard name-tag on a string, like the evacuees wore around their necks. (Similar to the one Paddington Bear had to wear, saying 'Please Look After This Bear'). They need to be large enough to hold a few lines of handwriting.

Remind participants that the poor evacuated children were lined up in community halls and just chosen, like you get picked for teams in games. But this might be for YEARS. So on these tags, we're going to give more than just our names. We're going to have participants say a bit about

themselves, big themselves up, so that the good, kind evacuee-hosts are going to want to pick THEM!

Our tag is going to be a mini-poem- it only needs to be 5 lines. Each line will begin 'I am...'; this will give the poem a rhythm. And the first and last lines are going to be your name. E.g. 'I am Jonny'. So really, you've just got 3 lines to come up with- though come up with more if you want!

We are the sum of all the things we most love; they are part of what makes us. So think of favourite things- favourite colour, song, transport (Do you love your bike? Scooter? Do you see yourself as a sports car? Etc.), sport, TV programme. If you were weather, what would you be? Food? Item of clothing? What are your favourite places? When do you go there? Don't just give the *name* of the thing- make it more exciting. Add details! DESCRIBE IT. Use similes!

Do all the working out of the poem on paper first!

I am Jonny

I am a fast red road bike flashing by in the sun

I am empty beaches on hot summer days and water as warm as a bath

I am pepperoni pizza as huge and round as a cheesy moon

I am superstrong coffee and a Wagon Wheel as big as a wagon wheel

I am well-worn jeans and a comfy t-shirt

I am sundays skateboarding on the edge of the docks

I am Jonny

Then participants write the lines (or their favourite ones, if they've come up with too many to fit) on their Evacuee's Name Tag.

Exercise 2: GROUP PIECE

For his exercise, participants work in pairs or small groups, discussing the subject in groups, and pooling their ideas to create short 'LIST POEMS'

EITHER EXERCISE A: What If?

Imagine if you were being evacuated. Being sent away from everything and everyone you know, and your life in the city, out to somewhere completely different, and where you don't know anyone. You'll have seen some of the things in the archives- photographs of the sort of places out in the country where city children were sent. Imagine what was going through the minds of these kids- some a lot younger than you- who had to wave goodbye to mums and dads and carers and be packed off on the train to where it might be safer.

What If?

What if?

What if it never stops raining?

What if nobody likes me?

What if I get shot at by the Home Guard?

What if I lose my gas mask in a pond?

What if they make me dig up my own potatoes for tea, then burn the peelings to keep warm?

What if they've never even heard of fried chicken?

What if nobody knows how to cook a curry as good as mums?

What if the cows are spying for the enemy and LIKE THE TASTE OF HUMAN FLESH?

This is a simple LIST POEM- a poem which is just a list of thoughts on the same subject. Starting all the lines with 'What if....?' gives it a rhythm. Instruct participants to write their own, in groups. Think what it must have felt like to those little children. Think of the differences between life in the city- lively and bright and noisy- and what life in the country might be like- at least in the minds of scared little people who'd never been there. Make a list of at least FIVE things. They can be very normal things like 'what if nobody likes me?', or they can be daft or 'out-there' things like 'what if cows like the taste of human flesh?'. Ideally, a mix of both! Emphasise it's THEIR poem and THEIR imagination, and in poems you can bend the rules and bend reality, so they should feel free to throw in some bits from their modern world, not just the second world war. I put in mobile phones and fried chicken!

OR EXERCISE B:

CAN THIS BE USED FOR ANYTHING ELSE?

This is also a group-written list poem, similar to the above, that can build on study of things like the 'Patriotic Housekeeping' tip for re-using old rubbish, and also the photographs illustrating the 'improvised' making-do of the home front war effort- eg anti-invasion barriers made out of tree trunks and old barrow wheels, hay-rick pillboxes, LDF volunteers drilling in their ordinary clothes etc.

Encourage discussion about re-using things, and concepts like 'Make-do and mend', and come up with clever ideas for re-using things of their own. These can be from their own lives, or useful things for the WW2 people, or a mix and match of both. Again, always allow participants free rein with 'daft' ideas alongside 'sensible' ones!

Start each line with 'You can use...', and as always, encourage good use of descriptive words and techniques that play with the music of language, like alliteration, or even rhyme if they want to! If you DO encourage rhyme, remind them to structure sentences with the 'easy to rhyme' word at the end (eg in the example below, 'gnome' not 'pillow'!):

You can use a tree across a road to stop a tank
You can use my pocket for your money instead of a bank
You can use old shoes as plant pots for runner beans
You can use sweets as vegetables instead of greens
You can use a tea bag as a pillow for a garden gnome
You can use torn-up homework for a hamster home

Exercise 3. MAIN EXERCISE (Either individually, or in pairs)

The Evacuee's Suitcase

Hand out print-outs of the poem, which also contain the instructions, for easy reference.

How *would* it feel if you had to be evacuated, or- even worse- if you were a refugee? If you had to leave behind your family, your home, your city, your friends?

The children evacuated from London to Gloucestershire were told to bring-
Gas mask in its case, a change of underclothes, night clothes, plimsolls or slippers, spare socks,
toothbrush, comb, towel, soap, a flannel, hankies and a warm coat.

Not much there to bring any comfort, to make you feel better, or remind you of home. So our evacuation is going to be kinder. We get to take something else.

We're going to write a poem about a suitcase- a very special suitcase, that carries inside it not *just* your pants and socks and toothbrush, but other stuff- things that you can't *really* fold up and pack (well, not most of them anyway), things that are special about home, that would remind you of the best bits of where you come from- the people, the places, the things you get up to. So in this poem you're going to use your five senses- sight, sound, touch, taste and smell- and you're going to include at least one of each- the sight of something, the sound of something, the taste of something, and so on. And I want you to *describe* that thing- use as many DETAILS as you can (street names, names of people, shops, favourite food, etc)- and use juicy language! Similes, alliteration. Really paint a colourful picture, but with words.

So, we're looking for four or five short verses, like the first four I've done in my poem above. Start each one with 'In my suitcase, you will find...'

Then write a verse describing what your special, magical suitcase might be made from! Be as strange or as daft or as 'real' as you like. I've made mine out of a mix of 'solid' things, like the wrapper of my favourite biscuit, and more 'imaginary' things, like the promise of a treat or the comforting passing of a bus. Think about the 'bits' of a suitcase- what might the handle be made of? Or the hinges? What would you lock it with, perhaps?

And finally, a verse about how and where you and your suitcase will travel together, and perhaps where you might end up.

And there you go. A poem!

REMEMBER- there's no right and wrong- if you want to take the poem off in a different direction, that's cool. If there's extra bits you want to put in, or things you want to leave out (maybe you want a suitcase just of tastes?) then that's fine. It's YOUR poem. Your imagination. Just enjoy it!