

The following sources are extracts from a BBC news report, interviewing evacuees and their host families.

Evacuee 1: Hello Mum and Dad. Don't get worried about us, we're all very happy here and I don't think anybody wants to go home yet. We go on the moors nearly every night and watch all the cows and sheep grazing and the river flowing. We're quite near it now. And we go playing football on the football pitch and watch the colliery. Last week the boys and girls had a match of netball and there was fourteen girls and three boys, but the girls won us.

Evacuee 2: It's a lot nicer in the country than it is out in town, especially Manchester.

Interviewer: You don't feel homesick or anything?

Evacuee 2: No, not got a chance for that.

Interviewer: Do you think any of them do, even the young ones?

Evacuee 2: Oh I don't think any of them, not even the young ones, feel homesick.

Interviewer: They all had stories to tell about the journey, that astonishingly orderly and uneventful exodus of September 1st. And here's one small boy's description of his arrival at his billet.

Evacuee 3: I just went in and they said "Look they've sent us a little boy," and I took my coat off and asked if I could go out and they said yes so I went out and started playing in the streets.

Interviewer: During the three days he'd been there, he found other things to do. A whole new world had opened up for him.

Evacuee 3: There's an old castle on the hill, it's a ruin and we went on the moors last week and started playing in it and we looked down on the town and it looked alright.

Interviewer: Looked alright did it?

Evacuee 3: We could see right across the town. And its nice food here, its nice. And there's a lot of country you can play in and have some fun.

Interviewer: But evacuation has its problems, as we soon found out.

Evacuee 4: We'd have a nice holiday I think, if it wasn't for the girls that are with us. They're always interfering and spoiling our games.

Interviewer: Do you find that you've been put with your friends, mostly, in the houses?

Evacuee 4: Yes, as far as it was possible they paired us off with the boys or the girls that we wanted to be with.

***Interviewer:** But in the course of conversation we found out that Willy had other problems to.*

Evacuee 5: Eh Willy, is it true you were kissed by a teacher?

Evacuee called Willy: Yes on the first night we went to the house she said "Boys, I'm going to behave like a mother to you," and she kissed us goodnight and tucked us in (laughing). Oh, it was terrible! I tell you, now we stay out until she's gone to bed.

***Interviewer:** Now I believe you've got two children billeted with you, haven't you?*

Host mother: Yes, and very nice girls too. One thirteen and one ten in September, next month. We've had a grand time together. I've been married sixteen years with no children of my own and I'm very glad to have these two girls for I've always longed for children. And we've been over the hills rambling and running about. We have a girl Frances, their friend with them, she comes and goes out with us. And on Sunday tea we had a party for them with blind man's buff and hide-and-seek and all the games we could think of and I think they had a grand time. They're here with me now and they're thinking of going swinging this afternoon, enjoying themselves.

Suggested activities

Ask the pupils to pack themselves a suitcase, ready for evacuation.

- They could bring in some items from home that they would have taken with them or draw their suitcase and the items they would pack.
- Ask them to think back to the suitcase they were shown on the trip and imagine they only have a small bag they are allowed to take, maybe not even as big as their school bag.
- Remind them that their host families would not have had electricity in their homes, so mobiles and games consoles are out!
- Suggest that they take something special or meaningful, to remind them of their families.

Cut up and distribute the five sources to the pupils. In small groups, they can rotate the sources and use them to discuss the following questions:

- What impression of/ideas about evacuation do you get from these sources?
- How do you think the people being questioned felt about the evacuation scheme?
- Do you think every evacuee/host family shared this positive experience of evacuation? Do we believe this is what evacuation was really like?
- Why did the BBC only put positive experiences in this news report? Why did they choose not to talk about bad parts of evacuation?

Ask your pupils to write an interview telling the other side of the story of evacuation. Use the structure in the sources above (interviewer: evacuee/host family) to explore the bad elements of evacuation. They might want to think about:

- Homesickness
- Clashing cultures/habits/personalities between evacuees and their host families
- Cruelty by host families
- The condition poor evacuees arrived in (no winter clothes, sick, under-fed)
- If evacuees loved their host families, how would they have coped at the end of the war - forced to leave their hosts and return to families they barely remembered?