

Sources for Teenagers lesson 1

Source 1: *A photograph showing children sitting outside what had been their home, destroyed in the blitz. September 1940*



Source 2: *Vera, aged 8 – Taken from a mass observation teaching booklet called ‘Children at War’. Published in 1987 but all the extracts are from interviews with children during the war.*

It [the war] makes a lot of difference to me because we have to carry gas masks with us. And the sirens get on my nerves, but the ration of food is terrible. We are always hungry. I miss sweets. Nearly everything has gone up to an awful lot of money. In one part of the country they have no soap.

Source 3: *Letter from a school girl from Hull, 1943*

Dear Rescue Men,

Just a few lines thanking you for what you did for us on July 14... How you helped to get my mother out, and to get my two brothers which was dead, how you help me to get to shelter when I hadn't any shoes on my feet.

Source 4: *Rene Wingwood, an evacuee from London*

The most difficult part of being evacuated is coming home again. It was the worst day of my whole life. I had completely forgotten my family in London. I was ten years old and suddenly I was to be taken away from all these wonderful people I had grown up with and not only from them but the whole village that I knew and loved. I knew every path, track and lane for miles around, every house and cottage, every man, woman and child, every cat, dog, cow and chicken. It was a beautiful world and I had to leave it all behind

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Source 5: *From 'How we lived then: A history of Everyday life during the Second World War by Norman Longmate, published 1971*

To some unlucky foster-parents it began to seem in those first, disillusioning weeks that life in the back streets of London and other large towns could hardly have changed since Dickensian times (Charles Dickens Victorian England, eg Oliver Twist). It was, perhaps, the beginning of that great movement of opinion that was to gather momentum throughout the war. At the time, however, the predominant emotion was horror... A small boy in Oxford astonished the two respectable elderly ladies who had taken him in by helpfully remarking after supper that he would put himself to bed, 'so you two old geezers can get off to the boozier'.

Source 6: *Mrs Rowley, a school teacher in Chepstow in a report to Mass Observation*

The difficulty seems to be that many of the children have never learned the ordinary decencies in life. What can be down with a child who picks a newspaper and goes into a corner of the drawing room instead of going to the toilet.... [Many] have never been used to sanitation, and foul (toilet) the paths and gardens.

One boy said he never went to sleep lying down, he perched himself by the bedpost and went to bed clinging with his head resting on it. There had never been room in the bed at home for him to lie down.