



Life for British People During World War Two

KS4 HISTORY

BRITISH HISTORY

20TH CENTURY

Ages 11-14 ⌚ 4 min read

When War Came Home

World War Two lasted from **1939 to 1945**, and it changed life in **Britain** completely. Unlike soldiers fighting overseas, ordinary British people at home faced danger too. **German planes** dropped bombs on cities, factories, and ports. This meant that shopkeepers, teachers, children, and grandparents all had to be brave and adapt to a frightening new world.

Air Raids and Anderson Shelters

The scariest part of the war for many British families was the **air raids**. When **German bombers** approached, sirens would wail to warn people. Families would rush to safety — either to **Anderson shelters** (corrugated iron bunkers buried in gardens) or to underground train stations.

Think of it like a fire drill at school, but happening several times a week, and the danger was real. Imagine spending the night underground with your whole neighbourhood.

During the **Blitz** (between **September 1940 and May 1941**), **London** was bombed **57 nights in a row**. Many people lost their homes. Children would draw pictures of bombers and talk about 'Jerry' (slang for the enemy). They had to learn to live with constant fear.

Food Rationing

Britain couldn't grow or import enough food, so the government introduced **rationing**. Each family received a small allowance of butter, sugar, meat, eggs, and milk. People had to use **ration books** — little booklets that shopkeepers stamped when you bought goods.

Think of it like getting pocket money — you had a set amount and had to make it last until next week, or do without.

Families got creative with food. People grew vegetables in gardens and parks called **allotments**. Mothers made meals stretch further with recipes using lard, powdered egg, and strange substitutes. Sweets, chocolate, and bananas became treasures that children barely remembered.

Evacuation and Evacuation

To keep children safe from bombing, the government evacuated **1.5 million children** from cities to the countryside. Many children were sent to live with strangers while their parents stayed behind. Some children loved their new homes and host families; others felt homesick and frightened.

Work and Spirit

British people worked incredibly hard. Men aged **18 to 41** were drafted into the military. Women joined the forces too, or worked in factories making weapons, explosives, and uniforms. Everyone had a job to do for the war effort. People kept saying 'Keep Calm and Carry On' — though the phrase wasn't as famous then as it is now!

Despite the hardship, danger, and sadness of losing loved ones, British people showed remarkable courage and unity. The war united the nation in a way nothing else could.