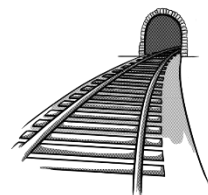


Evacuation – for and against



In the late 1930s, there was a growing realisation that war was coming. Nazi Germany, led by Adolf Hitler, had been acting aggressively and there was fear across the UK that this country would get caught up in the conflict. Along with a threat of invasion came a new danger. Aircraft had been developing rapidly over the first four decades of the twentieth century and there were now bombers capable of reaching cities deep inside enemy territory.

Anxious for the fate of its citizens, the British Government launched Operation Pied Piper on the 1st September 1939 – two days before war broke out. Hundreds of thousands of children were assembled with only a handful of possessions and loaded onto trains and buses and evacuated into the countryside. Within the first few days of this extraordinary undertaking, over one and a half million children had been evacuated. The question is, was it the right thing to do?

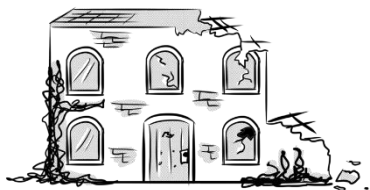


The authorities certainly believed it was necessary. Any Government has a duty to safeguard its people and the first thing you can do for those at risk is to remove them from danger. No one would have claimed that removing children from their parents would be painless, but they had to consider the bigger picture.

Nor could anyone say that the Government was crying wolf. Most of the country's major cities were, indeed, attacked by waves of bombers, night after night. Some areas, such as Coventry and the East End of London, were absolutely devastated with thousands of people losing their lives. No matter what hardships the evacuees might have faced, at least they were spared the main horrors of war. Some even enjoyed it and gained probably their first experience of living in the countryside.

On the other hand, you might wonder whether this ambitious plan was properly thought through. Physical injuries are often obvious but some scars cannot be seen and we are only just beginning to appreciate the damage that can be caused by separation. What's more, it wasn't just the children who suffered: the parents also hated seeing their little ones being taken away.

Furthermore, there wasn't time to assess whether they were being sent to suitable homes with caring, sympathetic people. It is clear that some of those who were told to accept the evacuees really did not want their lives disrupted by the arrival of strange children so we can imagine how awkward it might have been.



We can all be wise in hindsight. In the end, most of the children were safely reunited with their families as the threat of German invasion faded. Some, however, returned to find that their parents had perished and their communities had been destroyed. Was it worth the pain? More importantly, if we ever find ourselves in a similar situation, should we attempt another programme of widespread evacuation?

Questions for *Evacuation – for and against* 13th -15th May 2020

Vocabulary:

1. Look at the first paragraph. **Find** and **copy** a word that means *quickly*.

2. Look at the second paragraph. *Within the first few days of this extraordinary undertaking...* What does *undertaking* mean in this sentence? **Tick one**.

task

☐

journey

☐

theft

☐

question

☐

3. ... *just beginning to appreciate* ... In this sentence, *appreciate* means ...

Retrieval

4. Who was leader of Nazi Germany?

5. When was Operation Pied Piper launched?

6. Which **two** places does the text say were devastated by waves of bombers?

Inference

7. Apart from bombing, what did the British worry that the Germans would do to their country?

8. *Nor could anyone say the Government was crying wolf.* Explain what this means.

9. ... *some scars cannot be seen* ... What do you think the author means by this?

Summarise

10. Below are some summaries of different paragraphs from the text. Number them from **1** to **5** to show the order in which they appear in the text.

Parts of the UK were heavily bombed.	
People were upset by the evacuation.	
The British were worried that a war was coming.	
Children returned to their homes.	
The Government started evacuating children.	

Predict

11. Based on what you have read, name **one** thing you think the Government would improve for any future evacuation.

Compare

12. Look at the fifth and sixth paragraphs. They both give arguments against evacuation but from a different perspective. Explain how.
