

# Activity: Classroom session

History  
Years (3/4)

## ABOUT THE ACTIVITY

*As with all of our activities, this is designed to complement the work done in school – it is not meant to be a complete history unit. Depending on the structure of the visit, this might be broken into several sessions on different days.*

The group visits the simulated wartime classroom, including:

- watching a 1939 propaganda film about evacuees
- looking at the gas masks, posters and other artefacts
- writing with 'dip and push' pens and ink wells at old fashioned desks
- learning how to send and receive genuine 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> World War secret codes and ciphers
- learning semaphore and Morse
- discussing incendiary and H.E. bombs and bombing
- looking at and using (where appropriate) the contemporary radios
- learning about pre-decimal money
- learning about the geography of the war

## WHERE THE ACTIVITY FITS IN

### to a visit to Beaumanor

time in the WW2 classroom is one of the major strands of any wartime visit to Beaumanor (along with rationing, evacuation and air raids), chosen because of its relevance to the experiences of wartime children. The visit also includes an air raid practice, a spy hunt playground games and songs, ethical discussions and, where appropriate, research of primary historical sources (newspapers, oral testimony, etc.).

### to the QCA scheme

**History unit 9**      What was it like for children in the Second World War?

## ADAPTING THE ACTIVITY FOR A DIFFERENT AGE GROUP

Year 5 and 6 children could:

- work done in the classroom is chosen from a wide range of subjects and difficulties, at a level appropriate to the age of the children

## PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if the children have learned:

- about pre-decimal coinage.
- about the major and combatants of the war and some of the personalities involved.

## VOCABULARY

In this activity, children will have opportunities to use:

- words associated with school, *eg. classroom, dip and push pen, blackboard, desk, monitor, timetable*
- words associated with cryptography, *eg. code, cipher, Morse, spy, agent, radio.*

## RESOURCES

- Classroom, worksheets and workbooks, posters, artefacts, radios, pens and inkwells, video and television.

## EXPECTATIONS

### At the end of this activity, due to age or ability

<i>most children will:</i>	understand about the school life of a wartime child, make codes and ciphers, send semaphore and do simple money sums with pre-decimal coinage.
<i>some children will not have made so much progress and will:</i>	learn how to do a simple code and write with an ink pen.
<i>some children will have progressed further and will:</i>	be comfortable with most or all of the lessons learned in the classroom, inc., money sums, geography, reading and writing, codes and ciphers, etc.

## RISK ASSESSMENT

### In addition to the 'Group Visits - General Risk Assessment', the following specific risks have been identified

Hazard	Risk control
Taking care in the room	The room is awkward, so groups are cautioned about being extra careful. Children are controlled as they enter and leave the room, especially by the steps to the outside door.
Use of pens	Children are warned about the hazards of using 'dip and push' pens and ink. They are also warned about leaving the pens in the inkwells when they are not using them.
Use of radios in the set room	Children are not allowed in the set room unless there is an adult present and are warned about electrical safety while they are there.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES CHILDREN LEARN	ACTIVITY	LEARNING OUTCOMES CHILDREN	POINTS TO NOTE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>About evacuation and Government propaganda.</li> </ul>	<p>Children watch the film called "Village School". When the film is finished, we have a group discussion about it. We discuss the factual content of the film and compare it to modern life. We also discuss the use of propaganda and try to get children to understand the point of the film (<i>to encourage evacuation</i>).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children understand what life was like in a small village in 1939 and the impact that evacuation had on host villages.</li> </ul>	<p>We stress that this is actually propaganda and, as such, may not be strictly true. We use the film as a vehicle to introduce or reinforce wartime subjects and concepts.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>About the artefacts in the classroom.</li> </ul>	<p>The group is led to the Armoury and seated at the school desks. Various artefacts are commented upon and explained.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children understand about gas masks and drill, bombs and safety precautions against air raids.</li> </ul>	<p>The Armoury is set up as a replica wartime classroom with desks, sandbags, blackout curtains, etc. It has many genuine artefacts in it.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>About secret codes and ciphers.</li> </ul>	<p>Children learn secret codes and ciphers appropriate to their abilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least one code or cipher is learned and understood.</li> </ul>	<p>Some of the codes and ciphers are genuine WW1 and WW2. Enigma code is mentioned and the role of Beaumanor is explained. Each group learns different ones so that they can send messages back in school which the others can't understand.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>About 'make do and mend' with special reference to the children's role.</li> </ul>	<p>Attention is pointed to two posters depicting "Things children can do to help win the war". We expand on the theme to include the 'Village School' film.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>About the wartime equivalent of recycling and the need to save ships and production for essential supplies.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>About semaphore</li> </ul>	<p>Worksheets are given out and the practicalities of the code are discussed. We then go outside and practice semaphore on the field.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The application of a code is understood and the practical details grasped.</li> </ul>	<p>Each team sends a wartime word, in semaphore, to the other team across the field (or between courtyard archways if it is raining). We can do a similar session using Morse if it is preferred.</p>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITY	LEARNING OUTCOMES	POINTS TO NOTE
CHILDREN LEARN	<p>The group congregates around one of the 1,000 lb bombs on the edge of the field. We talk about it and discuss the level of damage it would cause if it went off, then talk about how it would be dealt with as a UXB. This leads to talk about Bomb Disposal, Conscientious Objectors and Quakers. We also talk about the Dam Busters and bouncing bombs.</p>	<p>CHILDREN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn about the ethics as well as the practicalities of bombs.</li> <li>• Learn about the role of Bomb Disposal.</li> <li>• Learn that there are still plenty of bomb about.</li> </ul>	<p>This can be used as background for the bomb disposal game.</p>