

# Year 10 History London and the Second World War 1939-45

## Key terms

**ARP Warden**-Appointed by the London boroughs to organise air raid precautions.

**Auxiliary**-Volunteers who helped the emergency services

**Incendiaries**-Bombs that started fires, this caused a lot of damage in London

**LCC**-London County Council

**Mass Observation**-This was a social study of people views on life in Britain during the war. Sometimes people's views could influence government policy.

**The Ministry of Information**-The part of the government that dealt with propaganda

**WRVS**-Women's Royal Voluntary Service

## Preparations in 1939 and 1940

On 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939 war was declared and precautions were taken immediately.

Many Londoners feared the worst as many had seen the awful images of German bombing at **Guernica** in Spain where 240 people died in 1937.

Evacuation was organised immediately by the government and the WRVS was heavily involved in organising the children.

At first the organisation was mixed as each of the 28 London boroughs organised their own precautions from ARP wardens to shelters.

The government did not want large shelters as it would lead to more deaths. Anderson shelters were offered to households and communal shelters were used for people in flats.



## The First Blitz- 7<sup>th</sup> September 1940-10<sup>th</sup> May 1941

London was a target for the Luftwaffe because it was the centre of the British government; it was a major port and the main transport hub of England.

The first attacks took place on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> September and lasted 12 hours. 400 people were killed. The British people's fears had been realised. Despite the popular myth of the Blitz spirit, Londoners were not united as the East End was the worst hit. Many accused the government of not protecting its people.

As the Blitz continued the people of London demanded to use underground stations and the government eventually agreed to use this.

Hitler targeted civilians to damage morale and industry to harm the war effort. In the eight months of the First Blitz 28,556 people were killed and many thousands more were made homeless.

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1. Why was London a target for the Luftwaffe?

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2. Why was the response to the Blitz different for each London borough?

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3. Why did Hitler decide to target British civilians?

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4. Watch this video on firefighters during the Blitz: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clKxrDza1d8>

a) How did German bombing of London disrupt daily life?

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b) How does the narrator encourage British people? Listen to the language and tone he uses?

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**Censorship** Morale was a real concern for the government during the war and the myth that everyone was cheerful was not true. Londoners wanted deep shelters like the underground. However, occasionally even the tube stations were hit.

On 14<sup>th</sup> October 1940, 66 people were killed when **Balham** underground station was hit. There were other disasters at Bank, Bounds Green and Sloane Square. All of these tragedies were kept from the public as it could seriously harm morale. The government was also concerned that Germany could find out and exploit the poor morale of the British people.

### **Case study-South Hallsville School**

In the first week of the Blitz 16,000 Londoners lost their homes. In Canning Town, East London some of these Londoners were moved to South Hallsville school. On 9<sup>th</sup> September buses were supposed to arrive to evacuate the Londoners from the school. However the buses never arrived.

On 10<sup>th</sup> September the buses did arrive but there was an air raid in progress so the people could not be evacuated. That night the school was hit by a bomb. The death toll varied from 450 in the immediate aftermath of the bombing to just 73 in the following May. Some newspapers reported on the disaster immediately and were able to publish uncensored reports.

However talk of the disaster was soon cut short as the government banned all talk of the disaster. It was clear the Civil Defence System had not worked. Overall, 600 people were killed in the incident.



### **Propaganda**

The other way in which the government kept morale up was propaganda. The government wanted people to give their all to the war effort and to also tell them how to protect their country by not talking about war sensitive matters.

Londoners received their information from newspapers, poster and newsreels. Cinemas were an extremely important news source and the newsreels shown were censored. The Ministry of Information could make propaganda films to convey the government message.

Films such as *London Can Take It!* Not only showed civilians that Britain was resilient but it also encouraged the USA to support Britain in the war.

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5. Why do you think the British government did not reveal the loss of life in disasters such as South Hallsville school in 1940 and the Bethnal Green disaster in 1943?

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6. How did the government use propaganda to get their message across to the British people?

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### **Case Study-Micky's Shelter**

The basement at Spitalfields Fruit exchange was turned into a shelter after East Enders demanded more spaces for shelter.

Micky Davis (Micky the Midget) organised the shelter to make it more habitable for the East Enders. He collected money from the users of the shelter and provided free healthcare, a M&S canteen and provide toilets and bunks.



To answer question 7 you must watch Andrew Marr's The Making of Modern Britain - 6. Britannia at Bay - Part 3

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3XA5p2rZGg>

7. Why do you think Micky's shelter was chosen by the British government to be shown off to the Americans when they visited London?

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## The Lull May 1941-January 1944

The Lull was the quietest period of the war for Londoners. There were still air raids but they were not every night. In this time bombing of London was mainly due to a revenge attack because there had been a raid on German cities by RAF planes.

Precautions for Londoners improved during the Lull as new shelters were built. These shelters had bunks for sleeping and toilets. Shelters even organised dances, films and libraries. The Morrison shelter was available from 1941 onwards which was a steel cage that often replaced a table.



## Paper 1 Section A-25 Minutes

**1. Describe two features (4 marks)**

**2a. How useful are sources A and B for an enquiry into...(8 marks)**

**2b. How could you follow up Source B to find out more...(4 marks)**

## The Baby Blitz January-April 1944

This attack was the last attack by aeroplanes on London. 3,793 people were killed. At this point in the war allied air forces were a lot stronger but some German planes did manage to get through.

## Case Study-The Bethnal Green Disaster March 1943

Bethnal Green was one of the few underground stations in the East End. Therefore it was very busy during air raids. The night before the disaster Britain had bombed Germany so many were expecting a revenge attack.

At around 8pm an air raid siren went off and 1,500 people safely got into the shelter. However, new anti-aircraft rockets had been installed and people mistook them for bombs. People rushed down the staircase and a woman with a baby fell which led to 173 people dying in the crush.

The incident was kept secret by the government until after the war. The incident did lead to some shelters using a ticketing system, but this would be no use when people panicked. This incident demonstrates just how extreme the level of censorship was during the war.

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## V1 and V2 attacks June 1944-March 1945

The V1 bomb was a pilotless aeroplane that was first used in June 1944. They were not the most accurate weapon but caused a great deal of damage. Over 2,000 hit London. Day time bombing started again and because the V1 did not trigger air raid warnings it led to more deaths. It took 12 seconds or a V1 to crash and explode so people threw themselves on to the floor or in doorways. The government did not inform people about the bombs immediately as they were so destructive. After two weeks 1600 people had died and 10,000 were injured.

The V2 was the world's first ballistic missile and it was impossible to stop. It exploded before people saw it coming. The government was seriously worried and reported V2 attacks as gas explosions. However, as more V2s hit the government had to admit that Britain was under attack from German rockets. This was a difficult fact for the British public to accept as after D-Day and the advances by the allies into France, Belgium and Holland many had thought the Nazis would no longer be able to bomb Britain. Therefore, it was crucial for British troops in those countries to capture V2 sites.

The first V2 attack to be reported was in Deptford South London where 160 people were killed. It hit on a busy Saturday lunch time when the high street was full.

### Effects of V1 and V2 attacks

- Far more factory workers were absent from work through fear of the rockets.
- In July 1944, 560,000 people were evacuated from London
- 30,000 houses were destroyed.
- V1 and V2 attacks killed 29,000 people



8. Why did the V1 and V2 attacks come as such a shock to the British public?

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9. How was the bombing of London with the V1 and V2 attacks different to the Blitz?

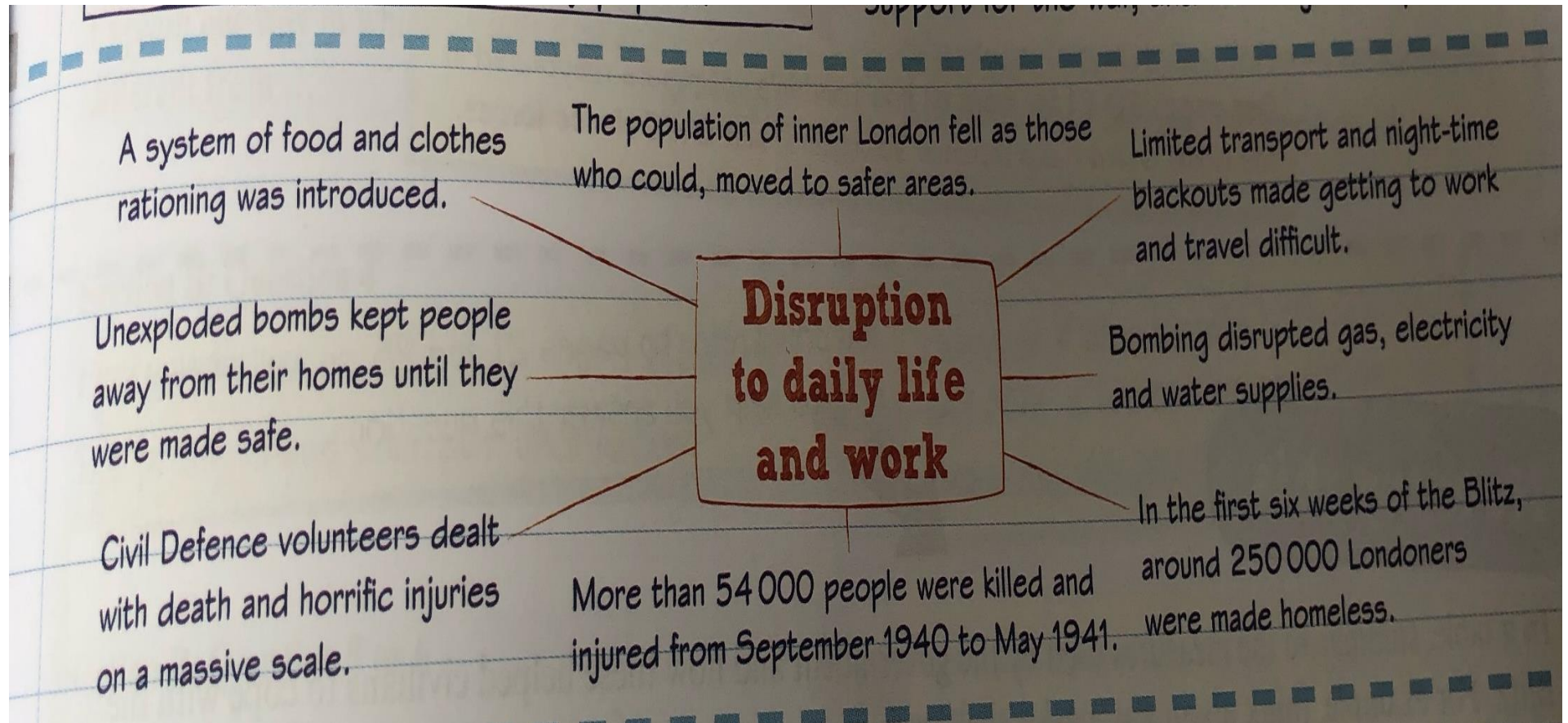
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10. Why do you think the government tried to keep the V2 rockets a secret when they discovered the Nazis were launching them?

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Exam questions 4 mark Describe two features of.

**Example: Describe two features of the government's attempts to maintain morale during the Second World War**

**(4 marks)**

One feature was the government's propaganda campaign including posters such as the Keep Calm and Carry On posters.

Another feature was the censorship that the government put into action every time there was a disaster such as the Bethnal Green disaster in 1943.

1. Describe two features of how London boroughs prepared for war in 1939

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2. Describe two features of how people's lives were disrupted by the Blitz 1940-41

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## Source question-8 marks

8 Mark How Useful Question

Writing a how useful question involves several steps when studying historical sources. The first is NOP. NOP means **nature, origin and purpose**.

For example, if we had the Stewards Academy Newsletter the **nature** of the source would be a newsletter, the **origin** would be Stewards Academy in April 2020 and the **purpose** of the source is to inform pupils, parents and staff about what is happening in the school.

The next part is content. You must quote from the source or if it is a picture describe the picture.

The third part is **own knowledge**. Explain what you know about the event and how that fits together with the source. The information on page 7 will be a huge help in you explaining what you know about the Blitz.

Finally, explain how useful the source is for that specific enquiry. What can you learn about the morale of Londoners from the source?

You do this for each source. YOU DO NOT NEED TO COMPARE THE SOURCES.

This is your plan:

Source A

Source B

NOP

NOP

Content

Content

Own Knowledge

Own Knowledge

How Useful?

How Useful?

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### **Source A- London Air Raid Warden, speaking in January 1941**

It has started! If they keep this up for another week, the war will be over. The East End won't be able to stand much more of this sort of thing. What's more, the Fire Brigade won't be able to stand much more of it either. This is the first leave I've had since Thursday...

Down came the bombs. You could hear the HEs\* going over the top with a low whistling sound. After a moment or two they started in with the incendiaries and dropped a Molotov over the docks. There was fire in every direction. The City was turned into an enormous, loosely-stacked furnace, belching black smoke.

**\*HE=High explosive**

### **Source B- Air Raid Shelter in John Keble Church, Mill Hill, London, England, 1940 From IWM Collection.**







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