

Describe the effects  
of the blitz on  
everyday life



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In the attempt to describe the effects of the Blitz on everyday life, I will explain what people did before the war began and the actions took to get Britain through the Blitz. Before the Blitz there were many precautions people took incase war was declared on Britain. One of these was gas masks. A gas mask was issued to men, women and children incase gas bombs were dropped. Most homed were equipped with either an Anderson shelter, which was a home built shelter in the garden, or a Morrison shelter, a shelter built underneath the kitchen table.

The blackouts began two days before the war began. Under blackout rules, everyone had to cover up their windows at night with black material. This was to make it difficult for German bombers to find their target in the dark. The street lamps were turned off and often people bumped into one another. Traffic accidents were more common because car headlights had to be blacked out, and deaths from drowning increased as people fell off bridges or walked into ponds. The evacuation begun on Friday 1 February, the day German troops invaded Poland.

Most children were evacuated in school groups with their teachers. Children and their teachers would meet in the school grounds, where they would get name tags and told to keep their gas masks in the cardboard boxes. Many children were sometimes sent to farms and made to work. Some were sent to big country houses or stately homes. Many of these children had never been out into the country before. Lots of them from the slums were surprised to find themselves staying in houses with inside toilets and carpets.

For some children, their parents decided to keep them at home in the city instead of being evacuated. Rationing was introduced due to the shortage of food and the fact that no food could come by ship from overseas. You were only allowed a certain amount of clothes, food and other household goods. You also still had to pay for them. Ration books were full of coupons which could be cut out and used to buy a fixed amount of rationed foods each week or month. Every time a housewife bought something she had to give a coupon.

When she had used up a particular coupon for one week she had to wait until the following week before she could buy any more. Food was very hard to get a hold of, so people were encouraged to grow vegetables in order to feed their family. Cartoon characters called Potato Pete and Dr. Carrot appeared on leaflets, telling people to eat plenty of these foods. The slogan "Dig for Victory" appeared on posters and banners to encourage people to grow their own food. Meat was hard to get hold of so the government advised people to eat rabbits.

In total 1.4 million homes - one third of London's housing stock - were damaged or destroyed in the Blitz. Electricity, gas and water supplies were disrupted. The impact on civilian morale in London was severe. Some Londoners later recalled that things were close to breaking point: the daily bombings and sleepless nights took their toll. Looting from bombed shops and empty houses was rife. However, the general mood of perseverance became known as the Blitz Spirit.

In all, 18, 000 tons of high explosives had been dropped on England during eight months of the Blitz. A total of 18, 629 men, 16, 201 women, and 5, 028 children were killed along with 695 unidentified charred bodies. The role of women during the Blitz was very important for helping on the home front. The Women's Voluntary Service provided fire fighters with tea and refreshments when the clear-up took place after a bombing raid during the blitz. They also provided tea and refreshment for the people sheltering in the underground.

At first, only single women aged 20-30 were called up, but by mid-1943, almost 90 per cent of single women and 80 per cent of married women were working in factories, on the land or in the armed forces. In all 640, 000 women were in the armed force, 5, 000 serving with guns and providing essential air defence, 80, 000 thousand in the Land Army plus many more who flew unarmed aircraft, drove ambulances, worked as nurses and worked behind enemy lines in the European resistance. Overall, there were many different effects of the Blitz on everyday life from the evacuation of children to the rationing of food and other household goods.