

How far was british  
society changed by  
the experiences



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The Second World War had an impact not only on British soldiers fighting in Europe, but also on the civilians living back in Great Britain. Between 1939 and 1951 the consequences of the war were felt by women, the elderly and children. Life in Great Britain was very difficult during the Second World War, and one reason for this was that the government needed to control many aspects of people's lives, including how much food they could eat, what clothes they could buy and where they could live. Women were to go into factories and fields to keep Britain running.

Everyone took part in the war effort and some aspects never changed in Britain again. After war was declared in September 1939, the British government had to cut down on the amount of food it brought in from abroad as German submarines started attacking British supply ships. There was a worry that this would lead to shortages of food supplies in the shops so the British government decided to introduce a system of rationing.

Rationing made sure that people got an equal amount of food every week.

People were given books called Ration Books, where every family was given the same amount for the week, some things that were rationed were meat, fish, jam, cheese, tea, cooking fat extra but something like bread wasn't until 1948, beer was watered down and clothes were also rationed . Rationing changed British society as it meant that the poorest of the poor actually got the right amount of food for once and were generally healthier and Rationing continued until 1954 so that families could get afford the food again.

The British society also changed with its health, it was arguably one of the most healthiest decades in British history, it was not only because of the

food rations but it was also the government that improved it as well.

Children were getting free milk and meals from school and when children that were evacuated they got a better standard of living and therefore were healthier. People overall were doing more exercise as people felt like they should look after themselves as there weren't a vast amount of doctors and nurses in the cities because of the war.

The major difference to health because of the war was the NHS. Before the National Health Service was created in 1948, patients were generally required to pay for their health care which meant that people that couldn't afford it would have to either treat themselves or go to a charity hospital or The Royal Free Hospital which were limited. The NHS was postponed as Churchill and other opposition felt it was a waste of money and disagreed with it. So Labour and Bevan had to wait until 1948 when it first opened its doors to the British public.

This is one of the major differences to the British society because health has never been great in Britain as diseases continued to spread easily through the working class, this social reform meant that working class health improved and the British society hugely. Women were also changed due to the war effort in society. Since men were out fighting in the war the women had to take over many of their husbands' jobs. Women were put into factories and fields to make sure Britain kept on running. In the 1930s, social roles were clearly defined.

A woman's place was in the home, a man's place was out at work. It was acceptable for women to work outside the home if they had no family to look

after, but they were paid less than men were even when doing the same jobs. Flexible working hours, nurseries and other arrangements soon became commonplace to accommodate the needs of working women with children. Before long, women made up one third of the total workforce in the metal and chemical industries, as well as in ship-building and vehicle manufacture.

They worked on the railways, canals and on buses. Women built Waterloo Bridge in London. Most women who volunteered before the war went into civil defence or the Women's Land Army. The main civil defence services were Air Raid Precautions (ARP), the fire service and Women's Voluntary Services (WVS). The women's land army were trained in agricultural work, as the prospect of war became increasingly likely, the government wanted to increase the amount of food grown within Britain.

In order to grow more food, more help was needed on the farms and so the government started the Women's Land Army in June 1939, they were vital to Britain as without them the Rationing wouldn't have been possible and therefore most of the country would have left to starve, this is why the WLA was continued until 1950 as Britain continued to ration because the country was still seriously poor after the war with all trade damaged and the large amount of debt that had to be paid to America, which reflected through the working class.

Women were changed dramatically in the second world war and after it as the war promoted a sense of independence to women and enjoyed responsibility for looking after the country.

The final point of society I think wasn't affected as hugely as it should have been by the second world war, this was industry, it was left in a terrible state after the war even though the staple industries had a little revive from it and industries turned to its attention with car manufactures making armoured cars and ship building was at a all time high but the modernization of it all was all done in the 30's and in a matter of fact there wasn't no serious attempt to modernize industry, roads or railways which lead to a disadvantage to European competitors.

I think that overall society did change for the better in Britain as a result of the war, because all the major things like health, food and respect to women had all got increasingly better. With the NHS coming in just after the war because of the Beveridge Report which showed the 5 evils of Britain and the NHS covered two of those evils (disease and ignorance). Women were prouder and they had a sense of huge responsibility in the war effort and food was given out fairly to all of those who needed it making Britain's society fair and different.