

# The evacuation of the children history essay



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This photograph was taken in September 1939; therefore it is a primary source. It shows pictures of excited older working class children being evacuated. This picture would have been used as propaganda by the government to promote evacuation.

Mainly pictures of older working class and middle class boarding school children were used. The older working class children would have been happy to have been evacuated because most working class families could not afford their children a visit to the countryside. They saw it as an adventure. Children of older middle class from boarding schools would also have been happy to be evacuated because they saw it as a mean to get away from the strict rules. Pictures of young children would never have been published because most of them were traumatised after leaving their family. Pictures like these would have discouraged families to evacuate.

This picture was taken around the same time the war was declared, 3rd September 1939. The government knew it was crucial to evacuate as quickly as they could and start preparing for the war. Pictures like these would have been common around this time. Therefore, it used propaganda to manipulate people to think evacuation essential in order to win victory in the war.

These pictures were successful in persuading people to evacuate because in the first weekend, 1.5 million people were evacuated.

### **Source B-**

This source is an interview with a teacher in 1988. Because the teacher had experienced evacuation herself, this is a primary source. She gives an

account on what was happening around her when people were ready to be evacuated.

This would never have been published in the war or used as government propaganda because it shows a negative view on evacuation. She says the children were quiet, scared to leave their family and the mothers were sad to leave their children. This would definitely discourage evacuation.

Because the interview was taken 50 years after the war, she has no reason to be biased so we can say her account is fairly accurate. Even though she might have some memory loss, she would have remembered the key points.

She mentions that she was evacuated using the train. In order to evacuate quickly and efficiently, Britain's entire transport service was used for evacuation.

100, 000 teachers were also evacuated with 830, 000 school children, 525, 000 mothers and young children and 7, 000 blind and disabled people.

Teachers were evacuated because the government did not want to deprive Britain's next generation of an education. The main aim of evacuation was to free the carers of dependent people so they could help out in the factories and war effort.

This source differs from Source A because it shows the downside of evacuation. This source gives a much accurate description on what most people felt like than Source A, plus Source A is very likely to be a government propaganda photograph.

## **Source C-**

This is an extract from a novel based on evacuation so the events would have been exaggerated. In addition, this book is aimed at children so the author would have portrayed evacuation as an adventure to sell more copies.

But you could also argue that because the book was written 34 years after the war, the author had the benefit of hindsight, time to research and she had experienced evacuation herself, the events would have been fairly accurate.

In this extract, Nina Bowden expresses the woman who is taking in the evacuees to be prejudice of city children because she didn't expect the children to have slippers. To some extent, this is true. Most to the city children who were evacuated were working class children from the poorest areas with poor hygiene, dirty clothes, with few belongings and suffered from malnutrition. Evacuation made the government realise how serious this case was and they were forced to act after the war. This was a typical stereotype of children from the Cities.

There were some cases where middle class children ended up staying with working class families and vice versa. They had to get used to the different style of living. This made some people uneasy and during the phoney war and some evacuees started returning back to the cities. This book's attitude makes people think evacuation being positive, light-hearted and as an adventure.

**Source D-**

Source D is an advertisement issued by the Scottish government in 1940, so this is a source of government propaganda.

This was published when the phoney war ended, May 1940. The government wanted to persuade a second wave of evacuation because many people started returning back to the cities seeing as the Germans were not attacking Britain. Because the British and French troops were trapped at the beaches of Dunkirk, and the Germans were already 36 miles across the channel, the government were becoming more desperate. The government knew France would quickly surrender to Germany and it was only a matter of time before they would begin targeting Britain.

The government did not want to panic people so in order to boost people's morale, the government issued these types of propaganda. The evacuation of soldiers in Dunkirk is a prime example. The government used propaganda to increase the number of soldiers evacuated and censored the newspapers to only release stories the 'Dunkirk Sprit'.

This advertisement was issued by the Secretary of State so it is a personal plea by the Scottish government. This advertisement persuades people to think evacuation is a sense of duty to your country, 'Service of the Nation'. It's telling people to be patriotic. It's putting pressure on people and making them feel guilty if they don't take in any evacuees, 'You may be saving a child's life.'

In the foreground it shows a picture of a boy taking a girl away from the dangerous city, which is being attacked by air raids, into the peaceful

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countryside. This is very effective because it shows that if you don't evacuate the children, they will be in grave danger. Also it makes people think that they will definitely be safe in the countryside.

### **Source E-**

This is an extract from a survey interview of a father of a 7 year old. This was taken in May 1940. This would not have been published during the war because the parent is negative towards evacuation and it would discourage it.

The father says that people kept changing their minds about wanting their children to evacuate. This was mainly due to the phoney War. For the first seven months of the War, Germany did not attack Britain so many people thought there was no point in being separated from their families. Some of the evacuees did not feel comfortable in their host family. The parents did not know about the families the children would be taken into so they felt unsure if the children would really be safe there.

He might have heard rumours about negative stories, which may have led to his belief that The Shires in Wales is a bad place to evacuate. It is true that people suffered in many cities due to the great depression, especially making income from mining as raw materials were cheaper in the poorer countries. It caused many people throughout Britain to become unemployed. He is being prejudice because it happened throughout Britain, not just Wales and not everywhere was like this.

He seems to think that people had no food before the War in the Shires so it would be suffering more during the war. This was not the case because

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investigation after the war shows most people were healthier after the war. This was mainly due to compulsory rationing from 1940 and better living conditions in the countryside.

This was just one person's view regarding evacuation amongst 1000s of others. Not everyone thought evacuation was pointless and damaging. It saved approximately 2 million people's lives.

## **Conclusion-**

Overall, all the sources have different opinions on evacuation and serve different purposes. Source A shows the positive side on evacuation and is a mean of government propaganda to persuade people to think likewise.

Source B shows that not everyone was happy about evacuating and tells us how different the reality was compared to the published propagandas.

Source C portrays evacuation as narrative and light-hearted and makes the situation seem like it's believable. Source D is similar to Source A, it is also a government propaganda to persuade people to evacuate. It uses techniques to make people believe evacuation is a must in order to ensure children's safety and making you feel guilty if you don't. While all the other sources showed many people's views, Source E focused on one person's view regarding evacuation. This source tells us people had doubts on whether people should evacuate or if it's really needed.

Evacuation was crucial in order to win the war. It benefitted people and saved many lives which would have been lost if these people were not evacuated. Britain was mostly bombed in cities so by taking them out of the City to the countryside was a very good decision.