**World War 2 Evacuees**

**Integrated Drama Lesson for 5th/6th Class**

**Note**: This lesson takes longer than an average drama lesson as it incorporates several subjects. It may be carried out over the course of a morning/afternoon or it may be done in parts over the course of a couple of days. History, Drama, English and Maths are integrated in the lesson, and the various activities are aligned with learning objectives in each subject. During the drama the children will be encouraged to write bullet pointed notes, create a slogan and write a caption to go with a still image. Skills that are integrated into the drama lesson include: developing empathy and familiarity with aspects of the lives of people in Britain in WW2; following a timeline chronologically; problem solving; entering a drama appropriately; using evidence; sharing insights; developing the ability to communicate both in and out of role.

# Resources

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| * **A -** Evacuation radio clip from 1939 | * **E -** Evacuation posters |
| * **B -** Timeline representing WW2 | * **F -** Photographs of evacuees |
| * **C –** Sheet for taking notes | * **G -** Chamberlain’s speech 1939 |
| * **D -** Maths worksheet | * Appropriate music to accompany the performance carousel |

# Introduction

1. The children are asked to listen to an audio clip (Resource A). The clip will give clues as to what today’s drama is going to be about.
2. After the class have listened to the radio clip a few times they talk about it. The teacher asks: *What words did you recognise? What sounds did you hear in the background? Against what historical background will our drama take place? What do you already know about World War 2? What does ‘evacuate’ mean?*
3. The children observe the timeline (Resource B) as it appears on the interactive whiteboard. The years rewind. It stops in the 1940s. The teacher tells them: *Our drama is going to take place around this time. WW2 lasted from 1939-1945. The first part of our drama will take place in 1938.*

# Development

## **Part 1**

1. The teacher narrates: *I am going to tell you about a special government committee that was set up in Britain in 1938. They worked on the ‘Government Evacuation Scheme’. War had not broken out in Britain yet but the government wanted to be fully prepared in case it did. I want you to pretend to be members of this committee. When I hold this clipboard I will pretend to be the Chairman of this committee.*
2. Teacher enters into role (TiR) as Chairman: *Thank you to everybody for coming to this meeting. Please take down notes as we work* [teacher distributes Resource C and the children are encouraged to ‘take notes’ throughout]*. We have a few things to discuss. The first is ‘evacuation’. We must decide where we need to evacuate from* (refer to map here of Britain here) *Why do you think we should evacuate? Who should we evacuate?* (write up suggestions) *Where will they go? How will we transport these people?*
3. The teacher continues*: We must make a plan for how we transport people during the evacuation. It will be done using trains. Look at this information and answer the questions so that we can begin making these plans.* Teacher distributes the maths worksheet (Resource D) and working in groups of 3 the children work to solve the problems.
4. Time is given over to these maths problems. The solutions are worked out and discussed. Teacher remains in role throughout.

## **Part 2**

1. TiR as Chairman continues: *Thank you for your hard work. Now we must look at another issue- We will have to convince parents that evacuating their children is the best thing to do. Some mothers may not think that it is a good idea to be separated from their children. We have already had posters made up, but they are missing slogans.*
2. Teacher displays various posters (Resource E). These are actual evacuation posters with the original slogans removed. In groups of three, the ‘committee members’ create a slogan to go with one of the posters that is aimed to encourage mothers to evacuate their children to the countryside. The slogans should be catchy, short (no more than one sentence), easy to remember and easy to understand.
3. The children work together to create slogans for their posters.
4. Once completed the teacher collects the posters and places around the room. Out of role the teacher narrates: *Posters appeared all around the cities of Britain - They appeared in shop windows of London, Leeds, Manchester and Glasgow. Mothers, busy hurrying to their new jobs in the factories, or buying dinner for their families, were stopped in their tracks. The striking images and words made a big impact.* Teacher reads the slogans aloud.
5. This concludes the teacher and children in role as committee members.

## **Part 3**

1. Teacher narrates: *On September 1st 1939 the news that morning on the radio was not good – it was said that Hitler was going to, he probably had already, invaded Poland. Even though war had not officially broken out, local authorities began the mass evacuations. In London many were sent by steam train away from London.*
2. Now the children are tasked with creating the photograph and headline that appeared on the front page of the ‘Daily Express’ depicting the evacuation. To get ideas the children examine photos of evacuees (Resource F). In groups of four or five, they work together to create a group still image (tableau) of their front page ‘photograph’. The groups write the headline to go with their photo. Optional – they also write the first three lines of the accompanying ‘article’.
3. The class present their work through ‘performance carousel’. This requires an open space with the groups placed in a circle around the room. The teacher explains that each group in turn will move silently into their still image and hold it still. The teacher will read aloud the headline and the three lines from the article. They then ‘melt’ to the ground and the next group moves seamlessly into re-creating their image and so on until every group has had a turn. The sequence of these images should flow without interruption, like a wave. Appropriate music is played in the background.

# Conclusion

1. Teacher narrates just as performances end: *on Sunday, September 3rd, the people of Britain gathered around their wirelesses for a very important speech from the prime minister, Neville Chamberlain. Imagine you are with your family now. Perhaps you have sent your children away to the countryside, or perhaps you have decided to keep them with you. Decide in your groups who you are in the family. Create a still image of the moment you begin to listen to the speech.*
2. The children work in their groups to create their images and simultaneously they all hold these images still. The speech is played (Resource G).
3. When it is over, the teacher continues narrating: *imagine how the family felt after they heard this news. Create a new still image to show the family at the end of the speech. If I tap you on the shoulder, speak aloud your inner thoughts.*
4. The children come out of role and talk about how they feel and what they learnt from today’s lesson.

# Developing the drama

Now that the context has been set the drama can be developed further. Perhaps the class could meet one of the families and create a character whose story they could explore. Tension is one of the elements of drama so don’t forget to create some! Once the children are engaged in the drama the teacher can ‘weave’ in other curricular areas purposefully, motivating the children throughout.

# Further opportunities for integration

## **Art**

An artist who works with charcoal was present at the train station that day. S/he usually created pictures of trains but on this day s/he created a charcoal drawing of the evacuation scene. Pretend that you are that artist. Create that picture.

## **Music**

Select appropriate music to accompany the performance carousel that will enhance the mood and atmosphere.

## **English**

Read the novel *Safe Harbour* by Marita Conlon McKenna. The characters from this book and the dilemmas they face could be explored using drama strategies.