

## **Describe the effects of the Blitz on everyday life in Britain**

The Blitz was a devastating and horrifying event in history, which began in September 1940 and lasted until November. During the Blitz, everyday life in Britain was radically influenced due to the many restrictions and disruption that were imposed upon it.

Blackouts were a major part of these disruptions, as when lights were out, streetlights off, and car headlights off, nothing could be seen. This caused many accidents and deaths for motorists and pedestrians, and by the end of 1939 more than 1500 people had died due to accidents during the blackouts. After government officials had seen these figures they decided to let motorists have dimmed lights on the front of their vehicles, and civilians could use dimmed torches to find their way during blackouts. In addition, kerbs, roadsides and causeways were painted black and white, so they could be seen more easily with dimmed lights. One very disturbing aspect of blackout was that whilst people were away from their homes and the streets were darkened, opportunistic burglaries took place, and people returned home to find their homes ransacked and valuables stolen. This type of activity widened the gap between the upper and lower classes, as it was the rich that were able to leave the cities for safer areas, whilst the poor had to remain to face the terror of bombing raids in the cramped underground stations that served as air raid shelters.

Between 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1940, 1,500,000 mothers, children and babies were evacuated from the industrial and built-up areas and sent to the countryside, to ensure their safety during the bombing. Small rural towns and villages were put under enormous strain, as local resources were unprepared and unable to cope with the sudden arrival of such vast numbers of people. Many of those who took in children from the cities were horrified at the state of the children, many of whom were dirty, underfed and suffering from scabies. When it was time for their children to be taken away, many parents resisted because they feared that they would never see them again. As a

result of this 68% of women and children refused to be evacuated, this resulted in 53% of children remaining in London by the end of 1940. However, for those that were evacuated, with the men away at war, and the children evacuated, family life as they had known it was completely ripped apart.

The biggest effect that the blitz had on everyday life in Britain was the destruction of property, and more importantly, the loss of human life, with nearly 25,000 people killed during the raids. This, together with the pain and disruption of evacuation had an enormous psychological impact on the British people. One can only imagine the mental anguish of losing your home, your children, and wondering whether or not you would survive another night. It was this psychological warfare that was so effective, and seriously threatened the morale of the British.