

## Explain the differing reactions of people in Britain to the policy of evacuating children during the Second World War.

The reactions to the policy of evacuating children differed between three main groups of people. These groups were the children, the parents of the children and the foster parents.

For some children it was a wonderful experience, but for others, unfortunately it was a living nightmare.

Some of the positive reactions for the children were that most evacuees got on well with their foster parents; they loved the countryside, and made friends for life.

More of the positive reactions of the children were that it was a wonderful experience for them and that they were away from the smelly, dirty city. They were now in the clean countryside.

“It was entirely different to see green hills, cows, sheep instead of the grimy bricks”

Before the war the evacuees would have lived in dirty back-to-back houses, which would have probably been smelly. Now they were living in a clean, fresh environment.

They were now in a nice surrounding with ‘green hills’ animals and the fact that they were away from the same old ‘grimy bricks’ of the cities. Here, in the countryside ‘everything was so clean’. Some of the evacuees were even given ‘flannels’ and even ‘toothbrushes’. The children were shocked when they received these basic hygiene products because they didn’t have them back home, some had ‘never cleaned their teeth before’.

When they saw hot water coming out of the tap they were amazed also when they noticed that they had lavatories upstairs.

‘Hot water came out of the tap: and there was a lavatory upstairs’

The children weren’t used to this clean and hygienic way of life. Now they would not be smelly and dirty. If they got on with their foster parents they would have been friends for life because if they had a positive time with their fostered family it would have felt like you were part of that family.

For other children they had a negative reaction because they were away from their loving families, their pets, their daily routines, school and their friends. They had been forced into an unfamiliar environment where they didn’t know anyone.

The children were terrified after been dragged apart from their family. If that wasn't bad enough when they arrived at their designated destination they were put in a big hall and picked out from the crowd from complete strangers.

'Others were horrified as they were lined up in a village hall whilst the to be foster parents looked them over and choose the one they wanted, like a slave auction'

This would have made the children feel insecure because they didn't want to be the last child picked and also they were petrified of what the foster parents were going to be like. It would have been better if the evacuee had a choice to which they wanted to go with.

Some of the children were forced to do work long, exhausting hours, which they could barely do. In some of the extreme cases some children were even beaten.

'We worked for hours on end, the work was back breaking'-evacuee from London. 'Evacuees were sometimes beaten, beaten to within an inch of their life'-R.Moyles

However, what ever the children went through they had no choice but to be evacuated because if they stayed at home they lived the risk of being bombed.

If the children had a nice time their reactions would be positive but if they hated then obviously their reaction to the policy of evacuation would be very negative.

Most parents had negative reactions to evacuating because most of them were very worried about sending their, very often young children, out into the unknown countryside. They also did not like the idea of their children been away from them, some even didn't let their children go, even though 1.5 million children were evacuated.

When mothers let their children go they deep down knew that they were be safe from the bombing and that their children were going to be alright in their new homes.

'I had to let them go, it was for the best'-J.Johnson

Even though the parents were upset about sending their children away, they knew it was the right thing to do. The mothers would be free to work in the factories without the worry of their children and the fathers were free to fight free from worry. Knowing that their children were in safety there reactions to evacuation was bound to be positive.

It was all right for the British government to make the decision to evacuate children to the countryside but they did not take into consideration how the foster parents would feel when they were lumbered with a child.

If the foster parents didn't want to foster or didn't want children the reaction to the policy of evacuation would be negative. Some of the better

off people refused to take in dirty smelly children. The evacuees often shocked those who didn't co-operate.

Some only fostered the evacuees because of the allowance they got. Also they may use the child for cheap labour. The money they got for fostering was a lot and the cheap labour was a bonus for them.

It was more that a clash of town and country life, it was a sight for the country people because many of the children were so dirty. Some of the evacuees had no decent clothes, shoes, underwear or even socks. Some didn't even know how to take a bath or use a toilet.

'The children were filthy. We have never seen so many disgusting children lacking knowledge of clean habits; they had not had a bath for months'.

It wasn't the children's fault they were this way, it was because they lived in small houses in the city and not many people had baths.

Not everything was bad though, the foster parents would be enthusiastic for evacuation if they lived alone and were looking for companionship, or if they couldn't have children they now were going to have one and that must be a wonderful feeling.

If the children and the foster parents got on it would have been a great experience for them. They had a new friend who they could do things with and to share things with.

'It was great when I fostered a little boy. It was like the son I never had. I loved him to bits. I loved to play with him and be in his company' -John McFadden.

The reactions to the policy of evacuation differed between the effected people. For some they had positive reactions because it was like a home from home and they made friends for life.

People had negative reactions because they might have had a miserable time or they might not of got on well with their foster parent/child.

The reactions about evacuation differed to whom it was affecting and what their experience was like.