

MONDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 1939

# THE TIMES

## EVACUATION BEGINS

Heightened fear that German bombing will cause civilian deaths leads to mass evacuation of women and children.

BY STEVEN SIMPSON

Over the last three days, over 1.5 million evacuees have been sent to rural locations, which are considered to be safer than towns and cities. Increasing fear that German bombing or invasion will cause civilian deaths has prompted the government to evacuate social groups deemed non-necessary to the war effort. The four categories of evacuees are: school-age children, pregnant women, mothers accompanying infants and the infirm.

Evacuation began on Friday 1st September. Although it is voluntary, the fear of bombing, the closure of many urban schools and the organised transportation of school groups helped persuade the first families to send their children away to live with strangers.

The country has been split into three types of areas: evacuation, neutral and reception. The first evacuation areas included Greater London,



*Children assembled at the railway station in Stepney at 5am on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939 with all of their required belongings. Volunteer marshals accompanied them.*

Birmingham and Glasgow. The reception areas (rural areas to which evacuees have been sent) include Kent, East Anglia and Wales. The third category – neutral – will neither send nor receive evacuees. Areas will be monitored closely over the coming weeks and months and adapted as necessary.

Evacuating such large numbers of people required thousands of volunteer helpers, including teachers, local authority officials, railway staff and 170,000 members of the Womens Voluntary Service (WVS). The WVS provided practical assistance, such as looking after tired or scared



evacuees at railway stations and offering refreshments in billeting halls. All of the families currently accommodating evacuees are also volunteers.

Mary Underwood, a member of the WVS in London stated: "We are so proud to be part of such an important British effort. Understandably, many families in the community are apprehensive; however, we must direct the children to areas where they will be safe. Evacuation is vital and already we have sent thousands of children away."

Parents were issued with a concise list detailing what their children should take with them when evacuated. These items include a gas mask (inside a case), a change of underclothes, night clothes, plimsolls or slippers, spare stockings or socks, a toothbrush, a comb, a towel, soap, face cloth, handkerchiefs and a warm coat. In addition, children were asked to take a packed lunch and had to wear an identity label detailing their name, school and evacuation authority. It has been reported that many families struggled to equip their children for the journey and provide them with all of the essential items.

The majority of children said goodbye to their families as they boarded trains at their local stations; some of the busiest stations had trains running every nine minutes. Particular evacuees from London travelled by ship via the River Thames, sailing to ports such as Great Yarmouth,

Felixstowe and Lowestoft.

The last few days have been deeply emotional, and in some cases traumatic for those involved. Despite some children seeming excited to travel into the countryside, many tearful goodbyes were witnessed. The evacuated individuals do not know where they are going or when they will return. The desperate families, who have had members evacuated, now face a nervous wait for a notification postcard to come through the mail, detailing where their children have gone.

The UK Ministry of Health have started to advertise the evacuation programme through posters such as this one, which can be found in the London Underground.



If you are a woman and think you can be of assistance in the evacuation effort, please offer your services to your local council.



# Evacuation Begins

## Mixed questions

1. According to the text, how many members of the Womens Voluntary Service were helping with the evacuation?

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2. Look at the section beginning, '**Children assembled at the railway station**'. Complete the sentence below.

'Volunteer marshals...

- went with them.
- accompanied them.
- made friends with them.
- travelled alongside them.

3. According to the text, the country had been split into three types of area. What were the **three** types?

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4. According to the text, which three areas are given as examples of reception areas?

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5. Look at the paragraph beginning, '**Over the last three days**'.

Find and copy **one word** which shows that one of the categories of people being evacuated was people who '**aren't physically strong**'.

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Marks

1 mark

1 mark

1 mark

1 mark

1 mark

6. Look at the section beginning, 'Over the last three days'.  
Find and copy **one word** which means countryside.

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1 mark

7. 'Although it is **voluntary**, the fear of bombing, the closure of many urban schools and the organised transportation of school groups helped persuade the first families to send their children away to live with strangers.'

What does the word '**voluntary**' mean in this sentence?

- it is free
- you choose whether or not to do it
- it is organized by the government
- you don't have a choice whether or not you do it

1 mark

8. Look at the section beginning, 'Over the last three days'.  
Find and copy a **word** which means 'someone who isn't in the army or police'.

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1 mark

9. 'Areas will be monitored closely over the coming weeks and months and adapted as necessary.'

The word '**adapted**' suggests that...

- changes might need to be made
- children will need to be adopted
- the areas will definitely swap roles
- the areas are likely to be bombed

1 mark

10. Look at the section in which Mary Underwood is quoted.  
Find and copy a **word** which shows Mary thinks the evacuation is essential.

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1 mark

11. Using information from the text, put a tick in the correct box to show whether each statement is true or false.

- The author of the report was Steven Simpson
- Children assembled to depart at 4am
- Teachers helped with the evacuation process
- Children had to take a gas mask with them

True	False
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2 marks

12. 'Parents were issued with a concise list detailing what their children should take with them when evacuated.'

According to the text, which of these items were needed? Tick two.

- a prayer book
- a toothbrush
- a photograph of their family
- a map of the countryside
- a warm coat

1 mark

13. The text tells us that 'some families struggled to equip their children for the journey'. What does this imply?

1 mark

14. Mary Underwood could best be described as...

- a member of the British police
- a member of the German army
- a member of the Womens Voluntary Service
- a member of the UK Ministry of Health

1 mark

15. Look at the section beginning, 'The last few days have been deeply emotional'.

Which emotions are referred to in this paragraph?

Give two examples.

1 mark

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

16. Look at the section beginning, '**Parents were issued with a concise list**'.

What is meant by '**concise list**'.

- a long list
- a set of rules
- a compulsory list
- a short list

1 mark

17. '**Increasing fear that German bombing or invasion will cause civilian deaths has prompted the government to evacuate social groups deemed non-necessary to the war effort.**'

Which of the following words is closest in meaning to '**deemed**'?

- absolutely
- totally
- definitely
- thought to be

1 mark

18. Using information from the text, tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is a **fact** or an **opinion**.

- Children were asked to take a packed lunch on their journey.
- It was best that children leave their families.
- Posters about the evacuation effort were made.

**Fact**      **Opinion**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1 mark