



Seminar Topics

THE PEOPLE'S WAR

Aims- To introduce students to the process of working with primary source documents by setting a selection as required reading for a seminar. To encourage students to interrogate the origins and purpose of primary source documents. To explore how primary sources inform our understanding of historical events.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What is meant by the term, 'the People's War'?
- Which people does that term include? Whom does it exclude?
- What did the war effort require of British men and women? At work? At home?
- How did the war affect children? Immigrants? Refugees? Conscientious objectors?
- In what ways did different people contribute to the war effort?
- Did anyone actively oppose or subvert the war effort? How did they do so and what effect did this activity have?
- Is it accurate to characterize the British experience of World War II as 'the People's War'?

DOCUMENTS:

- 'Man Power', Memorandum by Lord President of the Council, 22nd October 1941. This report discusses current requirements for labour (of men and women) in the forces and for civil defence and suggests how to expand conscription in order to fulfil those requirements.
<http://www.warstateandsociety.com/Content/wtss.cab71/000005/021/001>
- Report for Ministry of Labour on numbers of Conscientious Objectors, compiled by Professor S. Zuckerman in 1942. This report considers changes in the levels of conscientious objection in Birmingham and Hull and assesses whether these have changed as a result of increased bombing in those areas.
<http://www.warstateandsociety.com/Content/wtss.ho192/001192/001/001>
- *Night Shift*, 1942. The Ministry of Information created this script in 1942 for a publicity film about night-shift workers at a gun factory. <http://www.warstateandsociety.com/Content/wtss.inf6/000457/001>
- Food Facts, No. 53: 'Black sheep—black markets'. An advertisement issued by the Ministry of Food on the subject of black market food supplies.
<http://www.warstateandsociety.com/Content/wtss.hatom/000004/079/001>
- Correspondence with the Advisory Council on Aliens regarding exemption from the Aliens (Movement Restrictions) Order for Count W. J. H. van Limburg Stirum, a Dutch citizen, September 1940.
<http://www.warstateandsociety.com/Content/wtss.fo371/025249/001/015> (Pages 15-20.)
- Notes and supporting documents for a Board of Education conference on the evacuation of school-aged children, 1938. <http://www.warstateandsociety.com/Content/wtss.ed136/000121/001/004> (Pages 4-21.)
- 'Hard hitters', a recruitment poster for the R.A.F., April 1941.
<http://www.warstateandsociety.com/Content/wtss.hatom/000005/096/001>
- A summary of the weekly reports from the Women's Voluntary Service, prepared for the Home Office by Lady Reading, May-June 1940. <http://www.warstateandsociety.com/Content/wtss.ho199/000452/001> (Pages 1-31.)



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FURTHER READING:

Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain, 1939-45*, London: Pimlico, 1992.

Jonathan Croall, *Don't You Know There's a War On? The People's Voice, 1939-45*, London: Routledge, 1989.

Sonya O. Rose. *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Britain 1939-1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Henry Irving (2019) "'We want everybody's salvage!': Recycling, Voluntarism, and the People's War," *Cultural and Social History*, 16:2, 165-184, DOI: 10.1080/14780038.2019.1586811

Hilda Kean (2015) 'The Dog and Cat Massacre of September 1939 and the People's War,' *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, 22:5, 741-756, DOI: 10.1080/13507486.2015.1070125

Brendan Maartens (2015) 'To Encourage, Inspire and Guide: National service, the people's war and the promotion of civil defence in interwar Britain, 1938-1939,' *Media History*, 21:3, 328-341, DOI: 10.1080/13688804.2015.1053386



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