

# THE BETHNAL GREEN MEMORIAL PROJECT

## EDUCATION PACK NOTES



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## CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Overview	2
Medium-Term Plan	3
Lesson Plans:	
Lesson 1	4
Lesson 2	6
Lesson 3	8
Lesson 4	10
Lesson 5	11
Lesson 6	13
Lesson 7	14
Detailed Lesson Support	15
Archives and Further Reading	22
Memoryscape	23
Acknowledgements and Thanks	25

## INTRODUCTION

**One dark, wet evening in 1943 in London's East End, 173 people were crushed and asphyxiated to death as they attempted to gain refuge in Bethnal Green's underground from an expected German attack. Most of them were women and children. The tragic number of deaths makes the event one of the worst civilian disasters in modern British history.**

Although censored accounts of the disaster were reported in the press, many of those involved were directly told not to discuss it, and for some the experience was so traumatic that they did not talk about their experience for the rest of their lives, even to their own families. An official enquiry was held days later but controversially the enquiry report was kept secret until the end of the war. In 1945 the report was released but the documentation and witness statements continued to be classified and were only recently made public.

The death toll was greater than the 1966 landslide disaster at Aberfan and the 1989 Hillsborough stadium tragedy. It seems strange to me that the Bethnal Green shelter disaster is not better known. It was not until some 50 years later, in the 1990s, that a small plaque was installed above the tube station steps acknowledging the deaths. In 2006 Harry Paticas, a Bethnal Green-based architect, noticed the plaque and decided to find out more. He strongly felt that a more fitting memorial should be designed to acknowledge the personal tragedy of the lives lost and the impact on those left behind; the survivors, families and people from the emergency services. A charity, Stairway to Heaven Memorial Trust, was established to raise money for the construction of the memorial, which now stands next to the staircase where the tragedy happened.

The Trust approached the University of East London to help volunteers research and interpret the history of the event and to record interviews with survivors. A key aim was to create an audio memorial trail that could give more information about the disaster than could possibly be accommodated on the memorial itself.

Together we established the Bethnal Green Memorial Project, and to date its team of volunteers has collected over 30 oral-history recordings from those involved in the disaster and their families. For some survivors this was the first time that they had spoken publicly about what happened, and for many it has been the first opportunity to discuss the impact of the disaster on their own lives and that of their families. We have also gathered family papers, letters and photographs that have been used to illustrate further the lives that were so tragically cut short on the 3 March, 1943.

The project has created an audio memorial trail, a travelling exhibition, a book, a website with an online oral-history archive ([bgmemorial.org.uk](http://bgmemorial.org.uk)), and this teaching pack. All are free to use, and I hope you feel they adequately complement the new memorial to honour the memory of the 173 men, women and children who died, and go some way in acknowledging the terrible impact the disaster had on their families, rescuers and those who survived.

The project was funded generously by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the University of East London, and we have worked in partnership with the Bishopsgate Institute Library, the Raphael Samuel History Centre, local schools, the memorial architect, the Stairway to Heaven Memorial Trust, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, and a very hard-working and dedicated team of volunteers, to deliver these resources. It has been a great privilege to work on the project with so many dedicated and inspiring people.

I hope this project has gone some way in finally giving a public voice to so many who were directly told not to speak.

Dr Toby Butler, University of East London

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## THE TEACHING PACK - AN OVERVIEW

**This teaching resource is designed to teach children about the Bethnal Green underground shelter disaster of 1943. The lessons have been designed by a professional school teacher (at one of the schools who lost children in the disaster). They are planned to provide learning intentions, teaching material and activities for children between 8 and 12 years old but can be adapted for use at any level.**

The lesson pack begins by providing children with some context of World War II, within which the disaster happened. It then takes the children on a journey of understanding about the Blitz and how people survived during the bombing campaign in London. It then looks more specifically at what happened on the night of 3 March 1943 and its consequences for the people and the community of Bethnal Green. Finally it leads children into thinking about how the disaster is being remembered today.

This pack and the accompanying downloadable materials provide a range of resources that are linked to each lesson. There are PowerPoint presentations, audio clips and images that can be used to deliver the lesson and for the children to study. There are also some worksheets and activities for children to do, based on the teaching. Finally we have included a book for further information about the disaster with a CD containing a 30 minute audio trail designed for children to hear at the memorial site itself (a set of 32 players is available for free at the nearby Bethnal Green Library). You will find some notes from trail designer at the end of this document. These teaching resources, trails and much more information and oral history recordings are also available for download or online listening from the project website [www.bgmemorial.org.uk](http://www.bgmemorial.org.uk)

For teachers the lesson plans are a medium-term plan from which you should be able to develop individual lesson plans with differentiation that is appropriate for your class. Individual lessons/pieces of learning can be used as appropriate, rather than all of the challenges listed for each lesson. They have been written to provide a development of understanding across the unit; however, they can also be used as stand-alone lessons or out of sequence. If you use all of the lessons with the children taking part in all the activities, the unit could take up to 20 hours to teach. So if you have less time, determine which activities suit your children best.

The resources can also be easily adapted for non-school groups who wish to work with children to learn about this event. After-school clubs, drama groups and community centres can all access these resources and are welcome to adapt them for their own use. For those who are less familiar with using lesson plans we have provided more detailed lesson support document that will help you in the delivery of the lessons. Secondary school teachers and university lecturers may also find they can adapt it.

**We intend that these resources will provide children in the East End of London and all around Britain the chance to learn about this little-heard-of but significant disaster. The resources will support teachers in offering well planned and appropriately resourced lessons. Do visit the project website and if you have any comments or further material to share with other teachers, do let us know.**

**MEDIUM-TERM PLAN**

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>Bethnal Green Disaster Memorial for Young People</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>History</b>
<b>YEAR GROUP</b>	<b>5 and 6</b>
<b>OVERVIEW:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children will learn about The Bethnal Green tube disaster which took place in 1943 during WW2.</li> <li>• Children will learn about the context within which the disaster took place in terms of the progress of the war, in particular in London, and measures taken locally to cope with the war.</li> <li>• Children will learn the facts about how the disaster took place, the interpretation of what happened at the time, the consequences of the disaster and the short and longer-term impact on the community of Bethnal Green.</li> <li>• They will learn about what has been done to remember the disaster and develop educational resources so more people can understand what happened.</li> </ul>
<b>PURPOSE OF STUDY:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To inspire children's curiosity by knowing more about the past, equipping them with the ability to ask perceptive questions, think critically, weigh evidence, sift arguments and develop perspectives and judgment.</li> <li>• The teaching of history should help children understand the complexities of life, the process of change, the diversity of societies and relationships between different groups, as well as their own identity and the challenges of their time.</li> <li>• They should develop an understanding of the history of the UK as a coherent and chronological narrative, how Britain has influenced and been influenced by the wider world.</li> <li>• They should know and understand significant aspects of the history of the wider world; the nature of ancient civilisation, the expansion and dissolution of empires; characteristic features of past non-European societies; achievements and follies of humankind.</li> <li>• Children should gain a historically grounded understanding of abstract terms such as empire, civilisation, parliament and peasantry.</li> <li>• Children should understand historical concepts such as continuity and change, cause and consequence, similarity, difference and significance, and use these to make connections, draw contrasts, analyse trends, frame historically valid questions, and create their own structured accounts.</li> <li>• Children should understand the methods of historical enquiry, understanding how evidence is used to make historical claims, and to discern how and why contrasting argument and interpretations of the past have been constructed.</li> <li>• They should gain historical perspective by placing their growing knowledge into different contexts, understanding the connections between local, regional and social history and between short and long-term timescales.</li> </ul>

**LESSON 1**

LEARNING INTENTION	To provide background information about WW2	
KEY QUESTIONS	Which were the main countries involved in WW2? When and where did the war take place?	
SUCCESS CRITERIA	To say which countries were fighting on which side. To be able to use a world map to demonstrate. To understand some things that happened during the war including where they took place.	
LESSON PLAN	TEACHER INPUT	ACTIVITIES
	Tell the children that we will be learning about WW2. What do they want to know?	<b>Challenge 1:</b> <i>Children think of and record questions about what they want to know about WW2 to answer at the end of the lesson.</i>
	Oversee children reading scripted soundbites of key events during the war. For example:  <b>‘Germany invades Poland’</b> <b>‘Britain declares war on Germany two days later’</b> Provide a pro-forma timeline for children to use to mark these events.	Children to take turns reading soundbites to the rest of the class and to reflect briefly on each event.  <b>Challenge 2:</b> <i>Produce a timeline of the major events of WW2. Children are to note the major events on their timeline as the lesson progresses.</i>
	Set challenge for children to work with global map to identify and mark which countries were in the war.  Provide a global map, and markers for different countries involved, main battles, key people. For example:  <b>The Blitz overwhelms London</b> <b>Churchill becomes Prime Minister of the UK</b> <b>Japan attacks Pearl Harbor</b>	Work in groups to identify and mark which countries were involved in the war using the map. To develop this further by marking key fighting zones, including identification of the different types of fighting in mainland Europe vs the UK, in particular London.  <b>Challenge 3:</b> <i>Label a map of the world with the different sides, make a key, and where key events from Challenge 1 took place.</i>

**LESSON 1 (CONTINUED)**

	<p>Using a pictorial slideshow show the major events of the war. For example:</p> <p><b>Show a picture of planes bombing a town (The Blitz), soldiers attacking a beach (D Day) and people hiding in a shelter.</b></p> <p>Ask questions of the class to provoke reflection. For example:</p> <p><b>What is happening in the pictures? What would you like to know about this time? What do the pictures have in common?</b></p>	<p>To consider the pictures alongside what they have already learned about who was involved in the war, where key events took place.</p> <p><b>Challenge 4:</b> <i>Either verbally or written, children attempt to answer at least one of the questions they asked at the start of the lesson.</i></p>
	<p>To surmise key takeaways from the lesson and introduce topic further. For example:</p> <p><b>The war ends with a peace announcement, but was that the end? No, millions of people had died all over the world. Some in the fighting as soldiers, some by bombs and some by other disasters (like the Bethnal Green tube disaster) which devastated communities all over the world.</b></p> <p><b>We are going to do a local history study to learn more about this disaster.</b></p>	<p>To ask questions.</p>

**LESSON 2**

LEARNING INTENTION	<p>To know why bombing took place in civilian areas.</p> <p>To understand the effect of the bombing on the East End of London and how communities coped with it.</p>	
KEY QUESTIONS	<p>What happened when bombs landed on London?</p> <p>Who was affected by the bombs?</p> <p>How did people prepare for, and respond to, bombing threats and in particular to the bombing of civilian targets?</p>	
SUCCESS CRITERIA	<p>Sympathise with the devastation that bombing caused in London.</p> <p>Understand that everybody had to prepare for bombs and the different roles that different agents had before, during and after bombing.</p>	
LESSON PLAN	<p>TEACHER INPUT</p> <p>Provide images of bombs falling and bombsites for children, and talk through, asking key questions. Images should include different locations and targets: airports, factories, cities, ports, munitions factories, civilian areas.</p> <p>Key questions could include:</p> <p><b>Where is this bomb – where would you bomb if you were trying to defeat UK?</b></p> <p><b>What would you do if your house was under these bombs?</b></p> <p><b>How would you feel if a devastated house was yours?</b></p>	<p>ACTIVITIES</p> <p>Look at images of bombs falling and houses on fire/ devastated.</p> <p><b>Challenge 1:</b></p> <p><i>Produce labels for the images detailing what is in the photo and how any people involved would have felt.</i></p> <p>Discuss and feed back answers to key questions asked by teacher.</p>
	<p>Listen to audio clip 1.</p> <p>To label areas in the classroom as ‘places of safety’ and ‘places of increased danger’. Using a mock air-raid siren, children are to react to the sound and go to a place of safety. For example:</p> <p><b>Neighbour’s air-raid shelter</b></p> <p><b>Public cinema</b></p> <p>The teacher should take on the character of a WW2 teacher and highlight the need for patience, safety, sensible behaviour. The teacher should also attempt to model what happens when children panic or rush.</p> <p>Teacher should finish activity by stating why certain places were ‘safer’ and others ‘increased danger’</p>	<p>To take on role of civilians in bombing threat to London.</p> <p><b>Challenge 2:</b></p> <p><i>To identify places of safety and follow teacher instructions.</i></p>



**LESSON 2 (CONTINUED)**

	<p>To provide examples of information and guidance provided to the public. This should include measures to be taken by public, and assistance provided by Government (e.g. public air-raid shelters), defence by the RAF and positioning of anti-aircraft weapons as the war progressed) and morale-boosting campaigns. Teacher should discuss why certain people (particularly in East End of London) relied on public air-raid shelters.</p> <p>To provide resources and materials for reproducing an information poster.</p>	<p><i>To review examples and decide what messages were important to communicate to the public.</i></p> <p><b>Challenge 3:</b></p> <p><i>To make an information poster telling civilians in the war what they should do to keep safe.</i></p>
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**LESSON 3**

LEARNING INTENTION	To understand what happened in the disaster at Bethnal Green Station.	
KEY QUESTIONS	When and where did the disaster take place? How many people were injured, killed and who were they?	
SUCCESS CRITERION	To understand facts about the disaster including causes and consequences.	
LESSON PLAN	TEACHER INPUT	ACTIVITIES
	<p>The teacher should set the scene of the night and read through facts about the disaster based on what we know today, including reference to local schools that lost pupils in the disaster.</p> <p>To provide images and eye-witness accounts as hand-outs to the class.</p> <p>Listen to audio clip 2.</p>	<p>To listen to facts about the event and read through further eye-witness accounts of the disaster.</p> <p><b>Challenge 1:</b> <i>To make notes from teacher’s reading about the disaster</i></p> <p><i>To review images and eye-witness accounts in pairs. Answer questions: How did Peter/others survive? How did people find out if their family members had died? What happened to the dead bodies? What emotions do people reveal in their accounts?</i></p>
	<p>Provide the children with pp.31-35 of the inquest report. Read through each section as to why the disaster happened. Some pupils can read through and record independently. Others might need to read through with teacher.</p>	<p><b>Challenge 2:</b> <i>In a table, record the causes of the disaster under two headings: ‘Psychological Causes’ and ‘Physical Causes’.</i></p>

**LESSON 3 (CONTINUED)**

	<p>The teacher should organise the pairs into larger groups of six and oversee the production of news bulletins by the groups for later presentation to the whole class/school. The news bulletins could also be recorded on film and played back to the groups to provide feedback. Teacher should provide overview of restrictions put on people immediately after the event (i.e. survivors told not to talk, newspapers not permitted to report full details).</p> <p>Suggested structure of the groups is:</p> <p><b>Two newsreaders</b></p> <p><b>An at-the-scene reporter</b></p> <p><b>An eye witness</b></p> <p><b>Someone in the station at the time (a survivor)</b></p> <p><b>Someone who lost a relative</b></p>	<p>Using information they have learned during Challenge 1, to prepare and present a news bulletin about the disaster.</p> <p><b>Challenge 2:</b></p> <p><i>To work in groups of six, using designated roles, to prepare, rehearse and present a news bulletin. Between them they need to tell what happened, why it happened, how the survivor managed to survive, and to demonstrate an understanding of the emotions of the disaster.</i></p>
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**LESSON 4**

LEARNING INTENTION	<p>To understand that there were several different perspectives on the causes of the disaster.</p> <p>To learn about the importance of evidence to support a perspective/ belief. To use secondary sources.</p>	
KEY QUESTIONS	<p>Why did the disaster happen? (recap)</p> <p>What are the different sources of evidence?</p> <p>How did beliefs about what happened evolve over time?</p>	
SUCCESS CRITERION	<p>To understand there was a range of reasons (not all true) why the disaster happened that people believed, and the role of different evidence to support this.</p>	
LESSON PLAN	TEACHER INPUT	ACTIVITIES
	<p>Provide children with overview of the importance of finding and using evidence.</p> <p>Teacher to recap what happened, focusing more on the reasons why. They should present several pieces of evidence, noting the date and source of the evidence. This should include news reports from the time (i.e. evidence used in previous session). Present final report, highlighting any variations/additional evidence presented in the final report.</p> <p>Oversee individual and group work opposite.</p>	<p>To review a range of evidence about the disaster.</p> <p><b>Challenge 1:</b></p> <p><i>Fill in a table with the 'Reported Reasons for Disaster' and 'Evidence to Support Idea' as headings. They should include a note of the date of the production of the evidence and the source.</i></p> <p><b>Challenge 2:</b></p> <p><i>In small groups (2-3 children), identify any contradictory or unreliable evidence and determine which should be refuted/what can be relied upon.</i></p>
	<p>Teacher tells the children that the official inquest report wasn't released for two years.</p>	<p><b>Challenge 3:</b></p> <p><i>Consider: Why wasn't report released? What would have been the propaganda advantages for the Germans? Would the Germans have been encouraged to continue bombing British cities? Do these factors justify not releasing the report? What affect would this have had on people in Bethnal Green?</i></p>

### LESSON 5

LEARNING INTENTION	<p>To explore physical improvements to the shelter that might or might not have prevented the disaster.</p> <p>To understand the different roles of responsibility.</p>	
KEY QUESTIONS	<p>Could the disaster have been prevented?</p> <p>What improvements could have been made to the station?</p> <p>Who had roles of responsibility before and on the night?</p>	
SUCCESS CRITERIA	<p>To understand that whilst it is easy to identify potential physical improvements, these might not have prevented the disaster, and that there were many roles of responsibility before and during the disaster.</p>	
LESSON PLAN	TEACHER INPUT	ACTIVITIES
	<p>To provide the class with a copy of the plan of the station as it was.</p> <p>Listen to audio clip 3.</p> <p>To ask questions and present ideas that will enable children to re-design the station with improvements that might have helped prevent the disaster, but also those that probably would not have made any difference.</p> <p>For example:</p> <p><b><i>Grips on the stairs for rainy times, better lighting, handrails, manned by police or air-raid wardens better.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Read the request for an improvement with the brick wall and roof. If they had improved it before, would that have made any difference?</i></b></p> <p><b><i>What were the problems with the station being used by a large number of people?</i></b></p> <p><b><i>When the Borough Emergency Committee identified possible risk of dangerous situations with large numbers of people, what should have been done to improve the situation?</i></b></p> <p>Teacher should oversee trip to Bethnal Green Station with pupils, and guide them to take notes about improvements they can see that have been made.</p>	<p>To prepare a design solution for the station in terms of its use as an air-raid shelter.</p> <p><b>Challenge 1:</b></p> <p><i>Children are to re-design the station including elements that would have helped the station to be less dangerous for large crowds. They should draw it as a map with labels, using what they have learned in class discussion and from visit to station.</i></p>

**LESSON 5 (CONTINUED)**

	<p>Provide children with information packs detailing the role of individuals who had some relevant responsibilities before and during the disaster. Information packs should include a briefing card and questions they will be asked so they can write the answer beforehand and be ready to answer it.</p> <p>Key roles will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police officer</li> <li>• Shelter warden</li> <li>• Borough Emergency Committee</li> <li>• Building inspector/engineer</li> <li>• Civilians</li> <li>• Magistrate (these characters are to officiate in the role-play, and record answers ready for the children to write up their version of the enquiry)</li> <li>• Scribe (an adult to record the information)</li> </ul>	<p>To prepare and present a mock enquiry into the disaster.</p> <p><b>Challenge 2:</b></p> <p><i>Using the information pack detailing the role of each individual, the children are to answer the relevant questions for their character.</i></p> <p><i>They will give these answers when called to speak at the enquiry.</i></p>
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**LESSON 6**

LEARNING INTENTION	To understand the impact that the disaster had and has had on the local community.	
KEY QUESTIONS	Who was affected, and why, by the disaster? How were they affected?	
SUCCESS CRITERION	To understand that the disaster had immediate, medium and long-term impacts on many people, with a particular focus on those affected locally.	
LESSON PLAN	<p>TEACHER INPUT</p> <p>Teacher to recap what we know about who died and who was injured in the disaster.</p> <p>Listen to audio clip 5.</p> <p>To provide the list of victims to the class and provide categories for the children to use to group victims.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male under 18</li> <li>• Male 18-60</li> <li>• Female under 18</li> <li>• Female 18-60</li> <li>• Male and Female over 60</li> </ul> <p>To oversee children (working in pairs) discussing personal impacts caused by deaths in each category. For example:</p> <p><b>impacts felt by other family members, colleagues, friends at school.</b></p>	<p>ACTIVITIES</p> <p>To categorise victims and identify personal impacts caused by death of different people.</p> <p><b>Challenge 1:</b> <i>To go through the list of victims and categorise them based on age/gender. To discuss who might have been affected by death of people in different categories.</i></p> <p><b>Challenge 2:</b> <i>To write a message to be put in the local newspaper/community notice (obituary) about the death of a victim.</i></p>
	<p>Teacher to lead a class discussion about wider impacts. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• large loss of local lives</li> <li>• possible impact on local business</li> <li>• morale</li> <li>• potential blame</li> </ul>	<p>To recount the wider impacts of the disaster.</p> <p><b>Challenge 3:</b> <i>To write a short speech for a community leader highlighting the wider impact on the community.</i></p>

## LESSON 7

LEARNING INTENTION	To understand why this is still an important issue for the local community and, more broadly, what is being done to help remember.	
KEY QUESTIONS	<p>What is being done to help remember and by whom?</p> <p>What lessons can be learned by remembering?</p>	
SUCCESS CRITERION	To understand why and how this important issue is being remembered.	
LESSON PLAN	TEACHER INPUT	ACTIVITIES
	<p>Teacher to oversee group visit to the memorial site. To provide children with headphone sets from Bethnal Green Library and provide additional key things for the children to look out for and take notes on during visit (to be used in later lesson).</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• who the memorial is for</li> <li>• who made it and funded it</li> <li>• if there were any alternative designs for memorial</li> </ul>	<p>To visit memorial and learn about it.</p> <p><b>Challenge 1:</b> <i>To visit site, listen to headphone accounts of what happened, and to learn about the memorial itself.</i></p>
	<p>Listen to audio clips 6 and 7.</p> <p>Teacher to oversee children working individually to design own memorial for the disaster and to write a short speech to be read at the unveiling of their memorial.</p> <p>The speech should include mention of :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what happened</li> <li>• what the impacts were</li> <li>• why we are remembering it today</li> <li>• what can be learned from this</li> </ul>	<p>Create own designs for a memorial and demonstrate their learning from the whole topic.</p> <p><b>Challenge 2:</b> <i>To use what they have learned throughout the topic to design a suitable memorial and write a speech for the unveiling of the memorial.</i></p> <p>Listen to audio clip 8.</p>



## DETAILED LESSON SUPPORT

### DIRECTION FOR TEACHER/GROUP LEADER

These notes refer to the medium term lesson plans above and the relevant resource documents (please note PowerPoints referred to are available from [www.bgmemorial.org.uk](http://www.bgmemorial.org.uk)) along with other materials). Before you deliver these lessons or adapt them for your purposes choose which parts you wish to focus on or whether you intend to deliver all parts. The timings given here are rough guides and as such may be for different groups of age/ability.

### LESSON 1

Use the main PowerPoint and word documents to support. Teacher should answer questions as lesson progresses and summarise key things learned at lesson close.

#### **Challenge 1: 5-10 minutes**

Ask children to discuss what they know about WWII either in small groups/pairs or as a teacher led exercise.

- ▶ Children are to record what they want to know about WW II in the form of questions.

#### **Challenge 2: 20 minutes**

Using the WWII timeline provided, discuss as a class prompting with and responding to questions such as: When did it take place? Who was involved?

- ▶ Consider the major events of WWII using PowerPoint resource.
- ▶ Children are to add major events of WWII to the timeline provided.

#### **Challenge 3: 30 minutes**

Look at and discuss the World/Europe map in terms of WWII.

- ▶ Consider who were “Allies” and who were “Axis Powers”. Agree who was fighting who.
- ▶ Look at and discuss the location of major battles.
- ▶ Label the World map with allies and axis. Produce a key. Add where the major battles took place.
- ▶ Additionally group could look at and discuss the images provided of WWII.

**LESSON 2**

Use main PowerPoint, audio files and relevant worksheets to support.

**Challenge 1: 20 minutes**

Ask children what they know about the Blitz and bombing campaigns during WWII. Explain that the German war against the British took two phases 1939- Oct 1940 'The Battle of Britain' and from Sep 1940 'The Blitz' took place.

- ▶ Look at the images from PowerPoint of bombing within the UK. While looking at the pictures ask questions: Where is this taking place? Why would the Germans bomb this area? The images relate to key areas the Germans wanted to destroy. Explain to the children that the Germans wanted to destroy things that were key to Britain's war effort: factories, especially munitions factories, ports, airports etc. This was called 'The Battle Of Britain'. After this they swapped to bombing cities and civilian targets because the previous strategy hadn't worked. They did this to lesson morale etc. this was called 'The Blitz.'
- ▶ Use worksheet, Lesson 2 Challenge 1.

**Challenge 2: 20 minutes**

Talk about how people would have felt when the Germans started bombing civilian areas. Scared yet brave in the face of adversity. People stuck together and helped each other out as much as possible. You will then explain to the children how people were expected to behave when an air raid siren went off. This would foretell the arrival of a German bombing raid.

- ▶ Before the lesson have places in the class room/learning area marked out as 'places of safety' and 'places of increased danger'
- ▶ Listen to Audio clip 1 (can be played by clicking on speaker image on the PowerPoint. Shorter and longer air raid sounds have been provided).
- ▶ Show the children the images of what to do and how to react in an air raid.
- ▶ Use the air raid siren and move to place of safety quietly and calmly and take cover if you can. If children don't do it well, repeat until they do. You can also hitherto put on the air raid siren at random moments and see how the children react.
- ▶ Explain that it took more than just taking cover to help people cope during the Blitz.

**Challenge 3: 30-40 minutes**

Explain that the children will produce an information poster to show people how to cope during the Blitz. You may wish to show examples of information posters and support the less able.

Look at the pictures of the shelters and discuss how they worked.

Look at the pictures of the Blackout and discuss the practical and psychological effects of having to turn all the lights off during night time periods.

Look at the morale boosting campaigns run by the Government

- ▶ Children are to use all this material to produce an information poster on the lesson 2, challenge 3 worksheet.

### LESSON 3

Use main PowerPoint, printed first-hand accounts and relevant worksheets to support.

#### **Challenge 1: 25 minutes**

The teacher (or children in turn) read out first-hand accounts about what happened on the night of the Bethnal Green Tube Disaster from.

- ▶ **Having heard and discussed the first hand accounts as a class, the children are to use the information sheet containing the same accounts to read in detail and answer questions on the lesson 3, challenge 1 worksheet (survivors speak).**

#### **Challenge 2: 40 minutes**

Provide the children the Inquest report excerpt (we have provided a verbatim version and an edited, summary version, use whichever you prefer). Read through each section as to why the disaster happened. Some pupils can read through and record independently. Others may need to read through with teacher.

- ▶ **Using the lesson 3, challenge 2 worksheet record the causes of the disaster under two headings 'Psychological Causes' and 'Physical Causes'.**
- ▶ **The official inquest report wasn't released for two years after the incident. This was agreed at Cabinet level by the Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison and Churchill. You might ask the class to consider why they would not want details of the disaster to be released in wartime.**

#### **Challenge 3: 80-100 minutes**

Explain to the children that in groups of 6 they are going to produce a news broadcast for the BBC reporting on what happened during the Bethnal Green Tube Disaster.

- ▶ **Explain the different roles the children will undertake:**
  - 1 Two news readers: they will introduce the programme, link to the news story and then provide the facts about what happened.
  - 2 At scene reporter: they will need to come up with questions to ask the three people who were present at the disaster. They will need to do this as a group so that the other children can work out answers to the exact questions that will be asked.
  - 3 An eye witness: Someone who saw what happened. Using the question that will be asked by the reporter they need to write an appropriate answer. (E.g. what did you see at the scene?)
  - 4 A victim: Again using the questions worked out with the reporter write an appropriate answer (E.g. explain what happened to you as you entered the station? Were you crushed? How did you feel?)
  - 5 Someone who lost a relative in the disaster: Again having worked out a question with the reporter write an appropriate answer (E.g. which member of your family was in the disaster? How do you feel? Why do you think it happened? The reporter can assist the children writing the answers after they have developed the questions.
- ▶ **Having practiced their report children will perform to the rest of the class. Ensure the children know they need to present using loud confident voices, looking towards the audience, standing up straight, not fidgeting and without notes. Children who need it can have prompts or a script to read from. Record the news reports on a video camera. An option is for the audience to respond to the performance by saying what they liked about it and what could have been improved.**

**LESSON 4**

Explain that when studying history we need to study artefacts, documents or evidence from the past that teach us about what happened. We call them secondary sources.

Use relevant information and worksheets to support.

**Challenge 1: 35 minutes**

Read through the evidence provided either as a class or the children can do it in pairs.

- ▶ Using these first hand reports, newspaper articles and letters write down, on work sheet Lesson 4, Challenge 1, the different explanations that were expressed at the time attempting to explain why the Bethnal green tube Disaster happened.
- ▶ Children should be able to infer and find evidence to suggest that the disaster may have been caused by foreign people being too 'excitable', Jewish people, Fascists, criminal gangs and German bombs.
- ▶ Ask the children whether any of these reasons seem correct bearing in mind what they know from the previous lesson. Discuss as a group.

**Challenge 2: 30 minutes**

Provide the children with a paragraph about Lord Haw Haw. Also read the rebuttal of the 'rumours' about the Jews, Fascists or criminals causing the disaster.

- ▶ Children are to write a rebuttal using the phrases. The... (name secondary source) suggested that.... In fact, I know.... because..... using the worksheet Lesson 4 Challenge 2.
- ▶ Remind them that the official inquest report wasn't released for two years after the incident.
- ▶ Home Office Minister, Herbert Morrison argued that "anything bearing on British psychology under strain is of value to the enemy" and at a Cabinet meeting Churchill himself agreed that it should not be published as it would harm morale. Instead Morrison made a short statement to the House of Commons reassuring MPs that action was being taken to prevent similar accidents, and stating that the rumours of involvement of "Jewish or Fascist elements" were untrue.

**Challenge 3: 10 minutes**

With the children lead a discussion helping them to work out some of the reasons why the report was withheld.

- ▶ Why wasn't report released? What would have been the propaganda uses for the Germans? Would the Germans have been encouraged to continue bombing British cities? Do these factors justify not releasing the report? What affect would this have had on people in Bethnal Green?
- ▶ These ideas can be recorded by the children if so desired.

## LESSON 5

Use main PowerPoint, information and worksheets to support.

**Challenge 1: 25 minutes information provision then 30 mins independent work**

### INFORMATION PROVISION

Explain that in this lesson you will be looking at the design and layout of the station and looking at ways it could have been improved. Bear in mind that the station wasn't designed well and was potentially dangerous. Improvements proposed by the General Emergency Committee probably wouldn't have prevented the woman falling and therefore wouldn't have stopped the disaster.

- ▶ Listen to audio clip 3
- ▶ Look at the design of the station. Look at the picture of the staircase. Discuss what the problems with the station were and how they could have been solved.
- ▶ Read lesson 5, Challenge 1 Requests for improvement of Bethnal Green Station
- ▶ What improvements were asked for by Bethnal Green Council's General Emergency Committee?
- ▶ Was the Borough Surveyor correct to not recommend all the improvements?
- ▶ Do you think all the suggested improvements would have prevented the disaster?
- ▶ If you can go and see what Bethnal Green Station looks like now to see how it has been modernised.
- ▶ Independent work
- ▶ Following the discussions children are to re-design the station. They need to label the improvements. Challenge most able to draw in 3D.

### **Challenge 2: 80-100 minutes**

Put children into groups of 6. They need to read the following pages of information provided in the **information for the mock inquest** sheets to help answer the questions:

- ▶ The police
- ▶ Shelter staff
- ▶ The Borough Emergency Committee
- ▶ Building surveyor
- ▶ Civilians: should consider information and sources already used. Listen to audio clip 4.
- ▶ Magistrate (these characters are to officiate in the role play and record answers ready for the children to write up their version of the enquiry)

The children should be asked to write answers to the question sheet of Information for the mock inquest the ready to answer them at the inquest.

Do the role play magistrate enquiry in front of rest of the class/group. Magistrate asks questions. An adult scribe can write down answers from each group to compare ideas and answers.

## LESSON 6

### **Challenge 1: 35 minutes**

Recap how many people died in the disaster, 173. Explain that people all of ages, genders and walks of life died in the disaster. We will be looking at who died and the impact of the deaths on the local community. Start looking at PowerPoint and at pictures of some of the children who died.

- ▶ Provide a list of the people who died including the names, ages and gender.
- ▶ In groups children are to look through the names and find out how many people died from each of 5 categories. Male under 18; Male over 18-60; Female under 18; Female over 18-60; Male and Female over 60.
- ▶ Using PowerPoint give children some questions to discuss while looking at the names.
- ▶ After children have finished the challenge discuss the answers as a class/group.
- ▶ Tell the children they are going to choose one person from their list and are going to write an obituary for that person for the local area. As they don't know lots of details about the person they will need to infer things about their lives and the people they left behind.

### **Challenge 2: 30 minutes**

Using PowerPoint provide the expectations about the content of the obituary.

- ▶ Children are to write the obituary. You may wish to model some of this writing and support the less able.
- ▶ Following the PowerPoint discuss the effect of the disaster on the local community.

### **Challenge 3: 30 minutes**

- ▶ Having discussed the effect of the disaster on the local community the children are to write a speech by the local Member of Parliament about the effect the disaster had on the local community. You may wish to model some of this writing and support the less able.

## LESSON 7

### **Challenge 1: visit (1 hour plus travel)**

If you are located close enough to Bethnal Green go to the memorial and use the pre-recorded audiotrail at the site. These can be collected from Bethnal Green Library which is located on Cambridge Heath Road. These need to be pre-booked and there are enough for 30 children at a time.

While you are there look at the stairs and the memorial too. Explain it was created by the Stairway to Heaven charity and brought about by survivors and their families and was supported by the local community and The Heritage Lottery Fund. At the time of writing it hasn't been finished but the staircase element should be installed 2015/16.

Discuss what the memorial looks like. Why have they chosen this design (images on PowerPoint can be looked at before and after the trip)? What do you think is good about the design? Using what you know of the disaster, what sort of a design would you have made?

### **Challenge 2: 55 minutes**

If you are not close enough to the site to visit use the PowerPoint to explain how the memorial was funded. Look at the proposed final design and what it currently looks like. Why have they chosen this design? What do you think is good about the design? Using what you know of the disaster, what sort of a design would you have made?

- ▶ **Look at some images of other memorials for major disasters in Britain.**
- ▶ **Using what they have learnt about the Bethnal Green Tube Disaster, children are to design their own memorial. Let them be as creative as possible. Some possibilities are to make 3D models, 2D pictures and written memorials.**
- ▶ **Children will then need to write a short presentation to say, or write, to present their design. This design can be the centrepiece of a display showing what the children have learnt about the disaster.**
- ▶

## ARCHIVES AND FURTHER READING

The oral history interviews and documentation collected for the Bethnal Green Memorial Project are archived at Bishopsgate Institute Library. The collection comprises an extensive range of materials including interview recordings, photographs, digitalised artefacts, written accounts, newspaper cuttings and letters, as well as the materials gathered by the Stairway to Heaven Trust over the past years. Volunteers are in the process of making as much as possible available at [bgmemorial.org.uk](http://bgmemorial.org.uk)

### OTHER ORGANISATIONS THAT ALSO HAVE MATERIAL RELATING TO THE BETHNAL GREEN SHELTER DISASTER:

- ▶ The British Library, <http://www.bl.uk/>
- ▶ The National Archives (formerly known as the Public Records Office), <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>
- ▶ Stairway to Heaven Memorial Trust, <http://www.stairwaytoheavenmemorial.org/>
- ▶ Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives, <https://www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history>

### FURTHER READING:

- ▶ Bourke, J. (2005) *Fear: a Cultural History*. London: Virago Press
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- ▶ Fountain, R. (2012P) *Mr Morrison's conjuring trick, or, The people of Bethnal Green (deceased) v. the Crown*. London: RTF Media.
- ▶ Hook, J., 1996. 'Weep Not, Ye Mourners': *The Air Raids on the London Borough of Tower Hamlets 1940-1945; A Chronological Listing of the Fatal Casualties*. London: John Hook.
- ▶ Hyde, A.F., 1986. 'The Bethnal Green Tube Shelter Disaster', in W.G. Ramsey, ed. *The Blitz Then and Now, Vol. 3*. London: Battle of Britain Prints International, pp.220-9.
- ▶ Kendall, D., 1992. *The Bethnal Green Tube Disaster*, in: *London Record*, No. 15, pp.27-35.
- ▶ Vale, G.F., 1946. *Bethnal Green's Ordeal 1939-45, and the Part Played by the Civil Defence Services*. London: The Council of the Metropolitan Borough of Bethnal Green.



## THE BETHNAL GREEN DISASTER MEMORYSCAPE AUDIO MEMORIAL TRAILS

This teaching pack includes a CD with two 30-minute audio trails (one designed for adults, another for children). You can listen at home, but ideally they should be heard using headphones at the memorial itself, just outside Bethnal Green Underground Station. A set of 32 players is available from nearby Bethnal Green Library (be sure to call first to book). You can also transfer the sound files to an audio player by downloading them directly to your device from [www.bgmemorial.org.uk](http://www.bgmemorial.org.uk)

The hardest part of any artistic process is knowing what to leave out. For this project, a huge number of interviews have been made with a wide range of individuals. Some of them were witnesses of the event itself, some were relatives of those who were there that night, and others have been involved with creating the memorial. I listened to over 30 hours of interviews, and all of them contained remarkable stories and fascinating details told by an incredibly rich array of voices. On top of this, there are many written documents that have fed into the project, from books to letters to newspaper articles. With lots of pieces like this, unused material is discarded. Fortunately, the audio trail is just one part of the project, so all of the interviews are being archived and can be heard in their entirety online at [bgmemorial.org.uk](http://bgmemorial.org.uk). If you get a chance, do have a listen to them as they are wonderful windows into the recent past.

I decided to only include direct memories of witnesses to the disaster, and, for the adult version, to only use those memories that dealt with the events of the night of Wednesday the 3 March, 1943. This helped to reduce the choice of what could be used, but it does mean that we hear nothing of the aftermath, the rather murky blame game, the official disaster enquiry, nor the sterling efforts of many who have brought this tragic story to the public's attention and culminated in the building of the memorial itself.

There are two versions of the audio trail. One is aimed at younger listeners, the other for more general consumption. There is a lot of material that appears in both of the trails and nothing in the adult version that should confuse or upset anyone over the age of around 10. The main differences are that the children's version contains some more general memories of what it was like to be a child around Bethnal Green during the war, and some description of life down in the shelter. Each trail also has its own narrator, with Tommy Walsh speaking on the adult edition and Emma Morris narrating for the children's edition.

My first challenge with this project was finding a way to allow the listener to move around the space. Having a piece that is focused on one very specific spot does not lend itself to becoming a walk or a trail. My solution to this was to ask listeners to take specific numbers of steps away from the memorial, to listen to some memories and then to return to the memorial. In total, the listener takes 173 steps away, one for each of the victims that died in the disaster.

As the memories that you hear come from those who were involved in the event, the speakers are all of a mature age. Their voices are in themselves fascinating articles, as they document the variety of accents that were spoken in the area. I was interested in how these accents have shifted over time, due to immigration, gentrification and other influences. With this in mind, I recorded local children from Morpeth School and Globe Primary School reading the words

of the interviewees. These and several other local schools lost children in the disaster. I have, where possible, tried to match the age of the children with how old the witnesses were in 1943.

Do try and listen to the trails at the memorial, as I believe it makes the experience far richer. For me, what makes the experience particularly interesting is that we are standing in the spot where a momentous event occurred, listening to the memories of those that stood here before us and witnessed that event. There is something strangely charged in that encounter. The space around us is being conjured through memory, and we can begin to superimpose details from the past onto what we can see right now. It is both a private and public experience, a bespoke 30 minutes for right here, right now.

I hope you enjoy them.

Lewis Gibson

Sound artist and audio-trail designer

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