

World War II

Museum of Brands Worksheet

Move through the Time Tunnel to the section on Britain in the 1940s. The following questions relate to items found in this section of the collection (up to 1945).

War-time spirit

As the war progressed Germany started to bomb British civilians with the intention of damaging morale (the British army also bombed German civilians for similar reasons). The hope was that through the suffering caused by bomb attacks the British people would be led to pressurise the government into surrendering, thus ending the war. The War-time spirit is considered to be a defiant reaction against this, a collective decision to stay positive in the face of adversity by continuing with ordinary life as much as was possible.

1. In the display case there are a number of air-raid themed books, board games and jigsaws which seem to make light of the threat of air attack. Pick two books, games or jigsaws from the collection. From looking at these objects how far can we know what ordinary British people thought about the air raids?

Object 1.)

Object 2.)

2. In the collection there is a dart board showing Hitler bending over as the target, and there is also a party game called Decorate Goering. Why do you think these games were created?

Food production and rationing

Food shortages were experienced in Britain as a result of the war and food rationing was introduced in 1940 by the Ministry of Food with the intention of making food distribution as fair as possible. This rationing extended beyond the food itself to its packaging, meaning that companies were required to take measures to reduce the amount of materials they use.

1. Due to the strain on raw materials many of the resources needed for food packaging were in short supply. Find the notice from the Ministry of Food. It calls for people to bring back their empty cod liver oil and orange juice bottles.

A) Why do you think this was important?

B) Find another item in the collection that shares a similar message.

2. The Emergency Powers (Defence) Act passed in 1939 allowed the government to issue whatever regulations and controls were considered necessary to pursue the war effort on the Home Front. This power extended to packaging, as businesses were forced to rethink the design of their brands due to rationing on raw materials.

Find the Silka Bath wartime pack information sheet. What does this tell us about attitudes to the government's austerity measures?

3. The WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Air Force) was formed in 1939 under the administration of the RAF to replace the men serving in administrative roles who were going up to the front to fight. Initially, women were recruited into the WAAF only in posts such as clerks, kitchen orderlies and drivers. However, further opportunities opened up as the war progressed with women of the WAAF becoming involved in telephony, engineering, and the radar control system. If you look at the Kolynos Dental Cream poster you can see an image of a member of the WAAF.

A) Why do you think Kolynos wanted to use this image?

B) What does it tell us about popular attitudes to the WAAF?

4. Look at the magazine front covers displayed in the WWII section. Using the images of women on the magazines as well as the text, what can we discover about women's roles during WWII from the following magazines?

A) What can the Wife and Home magazine with the soldier and wife sitting at a table tell us about men and women's roles?

B) What can the issue of Illustrated, with the black and white photograph of a woman standing in a field, tell us about attitudes to women in agricultural roles?

C) What can the Woman's Own issue with a munitions worker holding a shell tell us about attitudes to women working in factories?

5. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the items within the collection as sources to inform us about the civilian impact of the war? Pick two different items from the WWII section and list three of their strengths and three weaknesses as historical sources.

Item one:

Strengths as a historical source

1.

2.

3.

Weaknesses as a historical source

1.

2.

3.

Item two:

Strengths as a historical source

1.

2.

3.

Weaknesses as a historical source

1.

2.

3.

