

# THE LIFESTYLE FOR CHILDREN DURING WWII

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# EFFECTS FOR AMERICAN CHILDREN

- GOVERNMENT CHILD CARE PROGRAMS
- ENDURED RATIONING, LIVING WITH STRANGERS, AIR RAID TESTS, ETC.
- LOSS OF LOVED ONES
- FOCUS ON THE WAR
  - WAR BONDS, VICTORY GARDENS, COLLECTING MATERIALS (SCRAPPING), ENLISTMENT



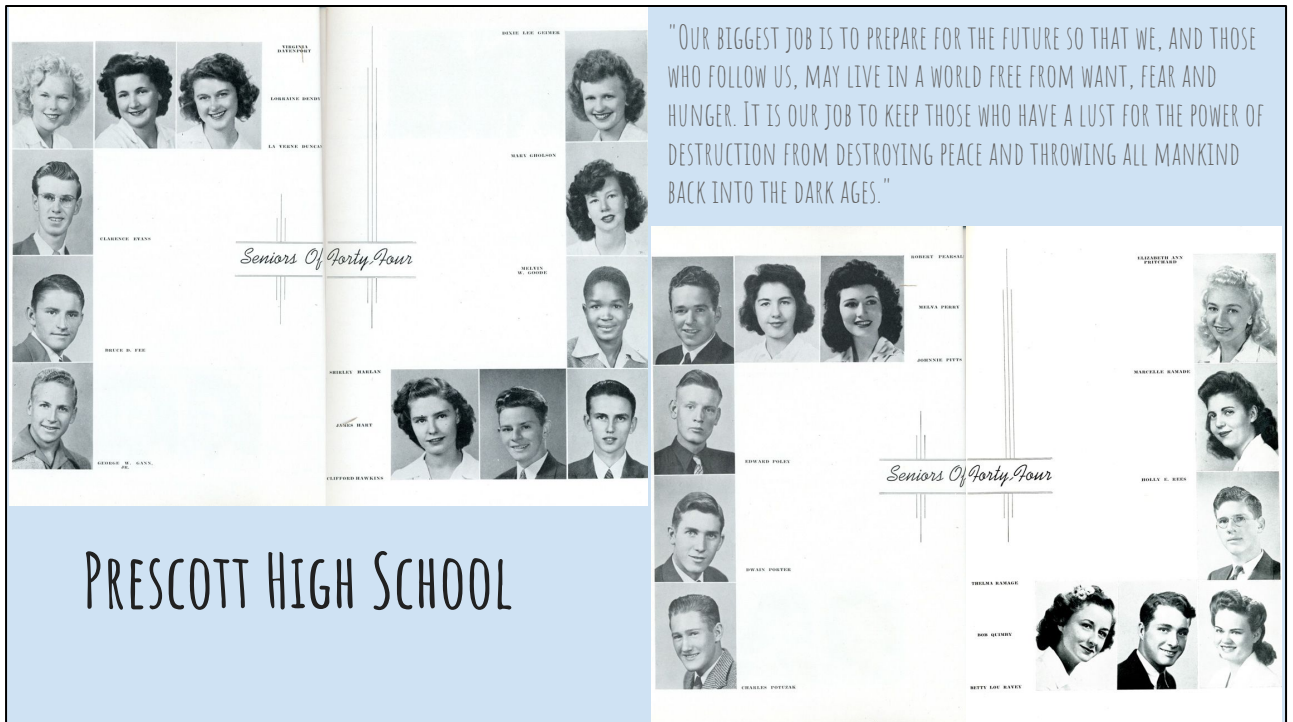
The second world war not only affected adult men and women in America, but it highly affected children. With fathers and older brothers leaving for war, and mothers going to work to either support the family economically or help with the war effort, most children were left without an adult to watch them (Cohen). Mothers of young children were at first discouraged from taking up a job in the workforce, as the War Manpower Commission stated, “The first responsibility of women with young children, in war as in peace, is to give suitable care in their own homes to their children.” (Cohen). Nevertheless, tens of thousands of women took up much-needed jobs, leaving the children behind. Thus, the Government decided to step in to not only help these kids, but to motivate more women to work. In 1942, emergency nursery schools were provided for the working mother and were funded federally and locally (Cohen). The “project” was enormous and day-cares were established in several communities in every state except New Mexico (Cohen). This is also where the term “day-care” originated/took off. From 1943-1946, the program exceeded **the equivalent of \$1 billion dollars today**, and each year, about 3,000 childcare centers served 130,000 children (Cohen). When the war was over, 550,000-600,000 children were estimated to have received some care from these programs. The Department of Labor estimated that each year, the funds made it to only about 10 percent of the children in need (Cohen).

Children in America also endured rationing, which wasn't pleasant for anyone. To know there is a limited amount of food is not only unsettling for children old enough to comprehend, but for very young children, it was a sudden and “unlogical” change (How Kids...) Plus, with children coming to live in America from other countries, to

invite complete strangers to live in their homes was probably uncomfortable, as it was “their home.” Air raid tests were also frightening and was a constant reminder of the ongoing war and the loved ones overseas, causing anxiety.

Telegrams delivered by soldiers were probably also highly frightening, as one never knew if it was fatal news. Being informed of a loved one’s injury or death was not only mind boggling and shocking for older kids, but nothing made sense to the littlest ones.

Children’s focus was always on the war (How Kids...). To relieve fear and to feel apart of the war effort, children took it upon themselves to assist in saving their money to collect war bonds, planting victory gardens with their family, and collecting materials (or scrapping, in other words), like blankets, to provide for the soldiers (How Kids...). For teenage boys nearing the enlistment age, it was most likely either a drudgery to not be able to fight or, it was something to be utterly anxious about.



A Website filled with yearbook archives from 1944 provided a PDF of Prescott High School's yearbook. Prescott High is closed today, but it is now being used as a middle school (See you...). This class of 1944 had 90 students in total; 53 girls and 37 boys, so it was relatively small and there were less boys because of the enlistment (See you...). A dedication page at the beginning of the yearbook honored the soldiers fighting for America, specifically the 140 (former) students from Prescott High (See you...). On the next page, they address their desires for the future; the student body wishes for the future generations to not know the kind of ant, rations, and horrors they know and they gladly accept the task of preventing the pain for future generations (SEE QUOTE) (See you...). On the last page, the yearbook honors the specific names of soldiers from the school. They report that 64 boys and one school administrator have joined the war since 1943 and of those boys, 6 died and were honored in a special box on the page (See you...). The 6 boys were placed on their gold star service flag, which had 9 stars in 1944 (See you...).

# EFFECTS FOR ENGLISH CHILDREN

- ENDURE RATIONING, GAS MASK LESSONS, LIVING WITH STRANGERS, ETC.
- EVACUATED FROM THEIR HOMES
- BLITZ OF LONDON (1940-1941)
  - 1 IN 10 DEATHS
- EFFECTS ON EDUCATION
- CLASH OF CULTURES
- "DEAD-END-KIDS"
- LOSS OF LOVED ONES
- HOMES DESTROYED



Children in Britain overcame even more obstacles than those in America. Not only did these children have to deal with rationing as well, but countless other horrible consequences of war (Trueman). English children also had to practice putting on gas masks in school (SEE PICTURE) (Trueman). An english woman shared her memories of these gas-mask lessons and how frightening they were. "I was eight years old at the beginning of the war, and my first memory is of being taken to the local school hall, where the gas masks were being issued. The man gave me a Mickey Mouse one to try which nearly asphyxiated me! These masks were made with two separate eyeholes and a funny red nose to try and make them appeal to young children. It was decided my head was too big for that, and I was issued with a standard black one. I remember feeling horrified that adults could consider killing other people, and I felt so helpless. We had always been told fighting was bad behaviour. Strange how adults could change their minds." (WW2 People's...)

British children were sent away from their homes and were forced to live with complete strangers across the country, which was undoubtedly scary and stressful (Trueman). More and more children were dying everyday, 1 in 10 during the Blitz of London , which was from 1940-1941 (Trueman). Evacuation was essential and highly encouraged by the government for children.

Evacuation impact depended mostly on the child's family social status (Trueman). But nevertheless, it was the biggest disruption on their lives (How Children...). If parents had access to money, personal arrangements would be made for the child. If a child's family was rich and the kid attended a private school, that kid would usually be sent

off to a manor in the country and siblings would stick together (Trueman). However, if the parents did not have easy access to money, they would gather their children at the railroad station and see their child off with no guarantee if siblings could stick together. 1.9 million children gathered at the railroad station September 1st of 1939 and were evacuated (Trueman). In some cases, certain places denied evacuees...but children were sent there and left not knowing what to do, which was stressful to say the least (Trueman).

Children's education suffered drastically in the war as well (How Children's...). 1 in 5 schools were bombed, children were crammed into tiny rooms with little to no supplies or books, and male teachers were called to serve, elders replacing them (How Children's...). Some children tried to continue their education anywhere they could find: churches, pubs, open fields, etc. (Trueman). However, most children after the war failed literacy and numeracy tests (How Children's...).

Evacuation caused a major clash of cultures (Trueman). Some children from rural England expected children from other countries to be riddled with disease and parasites as well as anti-social (Trueman). R Baker, an evacuee from Bethnal Green relayed that, "I noticed a woman looking at evacuees' hair and opening their mouths, but one of the helpers said, "They might come from the East End, but they're children, not animals."

Some children were just left completely unsupervised, as their fathers were either serving or their mothers working in factories (Trueman). They were called "Dead-End Kids."

Of course, these children also experienced the great loss of many loved ones in bombing and in combat.

Homes were destroyed by bombing, leaving some with nowhere to go.

## EFFECTS FOR CHILDREN IN OTHER COUNTRIES

- HOLOCAUST
- USED AS EXPERIMENTS
- GAS CHAMBER TESTS
- ATOMIC BOMB
- LOSS OF LOVED ONES
- HOMES DESTROYED



For children in other countries, the results were not much better. Thousands of children, mostly Jewish, were involved and killed tragically during the Holocaust (Trueman).

German children who were mentally incapacitated were used in the first experiments of gas chambers (Trueman). Children were always specifically targeted by “doctors” to do experiments on in Auschwitz (Trueman). There are countless tragic stories of children being abused in a way like this.

The atomic bomb killed thousands of Japanese children in Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Trueman).

Every child was affected by loss and grief of some sort, especially with loved ones dying in war, bombing, etc.

Homes were destroyed globally.



## END OF THE WAR...

- PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENTS?
  - PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER
- PTSD?
- SOLDIERS RETURN VS. COPING WITH LOSS OF LOVED ONES
- COMPREHENDING SOLDIER'S PHYSICAL INJURIES?
- NOTHING IS THE SAME



By the end of the war, everyone was left with joy, of course, but they also had a permanent scar. Psychological assessments were not super advanced at the time and basically everyone was told to “pull themselves together” (Trueman). PTSD undoubtedly affected everyone, including children. From evacuation, to air-raids, witnessing bombing, experiencing the loss of a loved one, etc, it was completely understandable that children should be extremely scared. They had seen outrageous horrors at such a young age and there wasn't ever a real healing recovery process for every individual.

The returning of soldiers probably contributed to this as well. It was an emotional event, as some loved ones did not come home...and some did, but with severe disabilities and injuries. This most likely contributed to young child's PTSD, as seeing your father come home without a leg has got to be traumatic. It is the same with the absence of a father coming home.

However, the worst part of it all was that things would never go back to normal for these children. Lives were permanently affected by the war...especially for children, who from a very young age, would have to adapt to the tragic post war consequences.



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