

DUNKESWELL WAR STORIES



Session Two Rationing and Wartime Food

MAIN OBJECTIVE

To give children an overview of what wartime rationing was, how it worked, the kind of foods that were rationed, and some of the dishes people ate during WWII.

LESSON PLAN

Section	Summary of Activities	Resources/ Materials	Time
Introduction	<i>Activity 1</i> Recap of what we learnt in Session One and introducing rationing	Paper Pencils or pens Whiteboard and markers OR interactive whiteboard	10
Memories of Rationing	<i>Activity 2</i> Show the children the short films about people's memories and experiences of rationing	FILMS: Undeclared Rations (2.1) Farmers' Perspective (2.2) Ice Cream (2.3)	5
Cookery Class	<i>Activity 3</i> Talk the children through a selection of the foods that were rationed during WWII, allowing them to try samples	Foodstuffs listed in Resource 2.4 Plates or napkins Plastic cups	35
Conclusion	<i>Activity 4</i> Recap activities 2 and 3 to see how much the children have learned about rationing	Paper Pencils or pens	10

ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 – Introduction

- Quickly discuss the previous lesson with the class to see how much they remember

- Introduce the idea of rationing by saying that food in Britain was in short supply during the war: Britain had to import a lot of its food, and with German U-boats sinking its ships Britain had to make what little food it had last longer
- Hand out paper and pens/ pencils to the class, and ask them to write down in 2-3 minutes what foods they think might have been rationed during WWII
- Ask the class to share their knowledge, and write the answers on a whiteboard.

Activity 2 – Memories of Rationing

- Show the children the short films with Dunkeswell residents and pilots remembering rationing
 - **2.1 [Undeclared Rations](#)**
 - **2.2 [Farmers' Perspective](#)**
 - **2.3 [Ice Cream](#)**
- After each film ask the class to note down the foods mentioned and discuss how they might have been used.

Activity 3 – Cookery Class

- Gather the children around a table with a tray on, containing the following items:
 - 1 small loaf of bread
 - 1 glass of milk
 - 2 oz (50g) butter (or just provide a 250g pack for illustration)
 - 1 tin of sardines or pilchards
 - 1 tin of spam
 - 1 potato
 - 1 egg
 - 1 plate of salad
 - 1 Mars bar, thinly sliced
 - Carrots in the form of carrolade (see **Resource 2.4**)
- Go through each ingredient, explaining its significance with regards to rationing and how people in the war might have cooked and eaten it. A detailed description can be found in Resource 2.4
- Give out samples of each foodstuff either in plastic cups or served on paper plates/ napkins.

Activity 4 – Conclusion

- EITHER recap with the children about rationing
- OR hold a quick quiz along these lines.

WORKSHEETS

None required for this session

RESOURCES

2.1 FILM: [Undeclared Rations](#)

2.2 FILM: [Farmers' Perspective](#)

2.3 FILM: [Ice Cream](#)

2.4 List and Details of Rationed Foodstuffs

Resource 2.4: List and Details of Rationed Foodstuffs

Gather the children around a tray with the items listed and explained below. At a number of opportunities samples can be given out; these moments will be highlighted in the guide below.

Bread

Bread was in very short supply. Britain had to import a lot of its wheat flour, one of the main ingredients of bread. So in the early part of the Battle of the Atlantic it was very scarce.

Wasting bread was taken very seriously. One woman was caught by the Ministry of Food (who organised rationing) throwing out stale bread for the birds. She was fined £10 (about £45-50 in today's money). The Ministry told her in future to turn her stale bread into crumbs to create gratin for the tops of pies.

During the war there weren't breakfast cereals as we know them today. Many children ate either milksop or teasop – a slice or two of bread with either milk or tea poured on them.

TEACHER pours some of the milk onto the bread. Share with class.

MILK and BUTTER

Butter was rationed very heavily; you could only have a very small amount each week. To get around this many households made their own butter by taking milk and shaking it up until it churned.

TEACHER uses the remaining milk – places it in a flask or Tupperware and begins to shake it. Passes it around the class, who shake it and pass it on. See if you can get butter by the end of the class!

MEAT AND FISH

Fresh meat or fish were heavily rationed; people in the war couldn't eat meat every day, as most of us do. Instead they either substituted meat or fish for vegetables, or they ate tinned products like pilchards, sardines and spam. These were non-perishable and much easier to transport.

TEACHER opens a can of spam and cuts it into slices for the class to try.

POTATOES

Potatoes were not rationed at all – so in theory you could have chips! In practice however this was difficult since cooking oil was rationed – so much so that the Ministry of Food encouraged people to save up their cooking oil for the winter.

Potatoes, along with other root vegetables like turnip, swede and beetroot, were used as a substitute for meat or fish in a variety of dishes, such as pies, pasties, soup and stews. They even had their own mascot – called Potato Pete!

EGGS

If you lived in the countryside, you might be lucky enough to have fresh eggs. While it was illegal to sell eggs, many families kept chicken who provided them with eggs all year round.

Mostly, however, people had to put up with powdered eggs, which would come in metal tins similar to Bird's instant custard. Each tin held the equivalent of 12 real eggs.

SALAD

Vegetables were not rationed during the war, and people were encouraged to grow their own to put food on the table. In addition to root vegetables, salad vegetables were grown in people's gardens – vegetable like lettuce, cucumber, tomato and radishes. People ate a lot of salad in the summer because it didn't require cooking, allowing them to save oil for the winter.

TEACHER passes round plate of salad for class to share.

SWEETS

As a child in the war, you had a weekly sweet ration of 2 ounces or 50 grams – a very small amount indeed. The sweets available ranged from boiled sweet like gobstoppers to chocolate bars. Later in the war American chocolate was brought over, such as Hershey bars.

Children devised all kinds of ingenious ways to make their ration last longer. One boy spent his weekly ration on a Mars bar, took it home, borrowed one of his dad's razor blade and sliced it into very thin slices; he would then take a couple of these slices with him to school each day.

TEACHER passes around thinly sliced Mars bar.

CARROTS

Carrots were one food that was in great supply. In fact, by 1942 there was a surplus of 10,000 tonnes – all of which was going to waste.

This abundance of carrots coincided with the development of radar, which allowed British pilots to pick up German aircraft and submarine. So that the Germans would not find out we had radar, the British government started a rumour that their pilots could see brilliantly in the dark as a result of eating lots of carrots. The ruse worked and people started eating carrots in all kinds of foods.

People made carrot jam, carrot fudge and even Christmas puddings with carrot in them. But today you're going to try carrolade – a drink like a fruit smoothie, traditionally made from pressed carrot and swede, but sometime (like today) make with blended carrots and pineapple juice. See what you think!

TEACHER produces carrolade: essentially chopped, pre-cooked carrots mixed with a dash of pineapple juice and blended together. Depending on time, this can either be prepared beforehand or can be blended on-site in front of the children. This is shared via the paper cups.

This teachers' pack was created as part of the *Dunkeswell War Stories* project in conjunction with staff and pupils at Broadhembury Primary School. *Dunkeswell War Stories* is an interactive online resource featuring first hand memories of the American airbase and village life during the Second World War. It was developed by the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership and produced by Dream Machine Media Ltd.

Find *Dunkeswell War Stories* at www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk

Funded by: Heritage Lottery Fund; Devon County Council; the discretionary fund of Cllr Paul Diviani; Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership; Dunkeswell Parish Council.