

A newspaper report about the evacuation of children in WWII, by Hilde Marchant, 1st September 1939.

It was not until Friday morning, September 1, that I really took the sharp, agonized breath of war. That day it began, in a **slum** in London.

The office had told me to cover the **evacuation** of some of London's schoolchildren. There had been great preparations for the scheme – preparations that raised strong criticism. Evacuation would split the British home, divide child and parent, break that domestic background that was our strength. I went to a block of working-class flats at the back of Gray's Inn Road and in the early morning saw a tiny, frail, Cockney child walking across to school. The child had a big, brown-paper parcel in her hand and was dragging it along. But as she turned, I saw a brown box banging against her thin legs. It bumped up and down at every step, slung by a thin string over her shoulder. It was Florence Morecambe, an English schoolchild, with a gas mask instead of a satchel over her shoulder.

I went along with Florence to her school. It was a big Council school and the classrooms were filled with children, parcels, **gas masks**. The desks and blackboards were piled up in a heap in one corridor. They were not going to school for lessons. They were going on holiday. The children were excited and happy because their parents had told them they were going away to the country. Many of them, like my little Florence, had never seen green fields. Their playground was the tarmac or a sandpit in the concrete square at the back.

I watched the schoolteachers calling out their names and tying luggage labels in their coats, checking their parcels to see there were warm and clean clothes. On the gates of the school were two fat policemen. They were letting the children through but gently asking the parents not to come further. They might disturb the children. So, mothers and fathers were saying goodbye, straightening the girl's hair, getting the boys to blow their noses, and lightly and quickly kissing them. The parents stood outside while the children went to be registered in their classrooms. It was disturbing, for through the high grille their mothers pressed their faces trying to see the one child that resembled them. Every now and then the policeman would call out a child's name, and a mother who had forgotten a bar of chocolate or a toothbrush would have a last chance to tell a child to be good, to write and to straighten her hat.

Labelled and lined up, the children began to move out of the school. I followed Florence, her tiny face bobbing about, white among so many navy-blue school caps. She was chattering away to an older schoolgirl, wanting to know what the country was like, where they were going, what games they would play on the grass.

On one side of Gray's Inn Road this ragged crocodile moved towards the tube station. On the other, were the mothers who were who were waving and running along to see the last of their children. The police had asked them not to follow, but they could not resist.

The children scrambled down into the tube.

Glossary

slum – a very overcrowded and run down urban street or district inhabited by very poor people.

evacuation – a mass removal of people from a place to keep them out of danger – during WW2 huge numbers of London schoolchildren were sent to the countryside for safety

gas mask – during WW2, people were advised to carry special masks that would protect them in case of a chemical attack

Answer**A: Comprehension - 2 questions (10 marks) AND****B: Personal Writing (10 marks)**
-----**A: Comprehension****1. How does the writer use language to present the children being evacuated?**

Write a detailed paragraph and support your ideas with evidence from the text (quotations.) **(5 marks)**

2. How does the writer use language to present the parents of the children being evacuated?

Write a detailed paragraph and support your ideas with evidence from the text (quotations.) **(5 marks)**

For each answer make 2-3 points. Remember to include quotations and analysis.

You could look at

- Words and phrases
- Language features and techniques
- Sentence forms

B: Personal Writing

In this extract, we see children and parents preparing for a journey which is both exciting and frightening.

Write a **piece of personal writing** in which you describe a time when you had to go on a journey, either for good or bad reasons.

*Aim to write **one side**.*

- Use paragraphs
- Include a range of sentence types / lengths
- Use ambitious vocabulary
- Structure your work
- Remember accurate punctuation and spelling

(10 marks)