

**THE WWII CLASSROOM  
AT SCOTLAND STREET SCHOOL MUSEUM  
- A TEACHER'S GUIDE**



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**Please read through this booklet before bringing your class for a self-led lesson in the World War II classroom at Scotland Street School Museum.**

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

**Thank you for booking a visit to the World War Two classroom at Scotland Street School Museum. Please remember all enquiries relating to your booking should be directed to the Glasgow Life Bookings Hub Tel: 0141 276 9505/6.**

The lay-by in front of the museum may be used to allow pupils to alight from the bus. Please ensure you arrive at the museum for the time arranged with the Bookings Hub. This is particularly important if your visit starts at 10am, as the museum does not open until 10am, and you will therefore not be able to get access prior to this time.

A packed-lunch room is available on most occasions in the museum. If you intend to stay on for lunch, and did not ask when booking, please inform the museum on arrival.

**The maximum class size for the WWII room is 60 including adults.**

Following the lesson, you may wish to spend some time visiting the other exhibition areas within the museum. Please divide your class into smaller groups to do so, with one adult per group. We suggest you leave approximately 30 minutes to visit the other exhibition areas, and 20-30 minutes for lunch.

## GETTING READY

On arrival the boys and girls will be taken to separate cloakrooms where the girls dress in a navy gym slips and the boys in collared jumpers and striped ties. The teacher taking the lesson will also be shown to a small staffroom to allow them to change. The museum has a limited selection of clothing garments which can be used by teachers including an academic gown for the males and a tweed skirt and blouse for the women (size: 10-12). If these are not suitable we suggest you bring your own costume. Information relating to "Fashion in the thirties" is included on page 8.

Once you are in the classroom the museum staff will line up your class outside the door, separating the boys and girls, and they will wait quietly until you are ready for them to enter the class.

## CLASSROOM EQUIPMENT

Standard equipment in the classroom includes:

- ❖ gas mask boxes on the desks
- ❖ nibbed pens, ink wells, lined paper & blotting paper
- ❖ cloth wipes(for wiping pens *and* cleaning slates), slates and slate pencils
- ❖ ID labels
- ❖ wooden rattle and hand bell

There is also a world map, two blackboards, and a pointer. The date and the spelling words will be on one blackboard along with an evacuation list on the other.

**Please remember to bring a camera if you wish to record your visit. There will be an opportunity to take photos when the lesson is finished.**

## **LESSON PLAN**

The class will be quietly lined up outside your room to wait until you appear with your pointer. You immediately 'set the scene' by stating a variety of commands, "*stop talking, stand up straight, arms by your side, shoulders back*" etc. To get the pupils into straight lines, tell them to 'take their distance'. This involves each child putting their right hand on the shoulder of the person in front and then carefully moving backwards until their arm is straight. The class should be warned of the tiered floor (to allow the teacher to see all the pupils to see the pupils to see the teacher) and instructed to remain standing until told to sit. Children enter the class in single file, girls first, and stand behind their desks without talking, turning around or fidgeting.

### **1. A PRAYER**

References should be made to the difficulties of the time; and a special plea made for the safety of the armed forces.

After you say good morning/afternoon to the class, they reply, referring to you as Miss, Mrs or Sir, the boys smartly saluting. Tell the class to sit quietly, girls first, and put their gas masks carefully under their seats, out of the way of their feet. If chairs bang then repeat the exercise. Anyone who has forgotten their gas mask should be reprimanded. Check posture, pupils must sit up straight, with arms folded.

If you are a married lady then this would be a suitable time to explain that it was very unusual for such a person to teach, but since many men had joined the armed forces there was a shortage of teachers and that was why you had been asked back.

*"I am an old-fashioned teacher with old-fashioned methods. I expect children to do as they are told to have good manners and be well behaved. Britain is now at war with Germany, it is a very worrying time, both for the staff at this school and your parents at home. They have enough to worry about without having to concern themselves with your behaviour here at school, so I will deal severely with anyone who disrupts this class. Now that I have made myself clear we will get on with our work".*

### **2. CHANTING TABLES**

This allows the pupils to experience rote learning. The whole class will repeat several times the chosen table before proceeding to the next one. Emphasise posture. Tables are usually followed by quick, random questioning of individual pupils who must respond accurately and quickly.

### 3. SPELLING/CHANTING

The following words will be written on the blackboard in cursive handwriting:

*ration – siren – coupon – evacuate – government*

You can state to the children that these are very important words that they must learn. Get the children to chant each word, letter by letter, and say the whole word at the end. Repeat this with each word at least three times, or until they chant it correctly. Individual children can then be selected to stand and chant one of the words without looking at the blackboard. If this cannot be done without there being an error then a suitable punishment is issued (writing out the word 50 times at home) and another child is chosen. When finished, you can use the same words in a handwriting exercise. In preparation for your visit you may wish to practise handwriting as part of your topic- see page 7.

### 4. WRITING

On the small table next to the classroom door there are four sets of items.

1. Writing paper    2. Blotting paper    3. Cloth (also used as slate wipe) 4. Nibbed pen.

Use monitors to hand out these items to the class then tell the class to sit up and fold their arms. The blotting paper is to prevent smudging as well as to keep the writing paper clean (from 'mucky paws'). It should always be underneath the hand when writing. The small piece of cloth is for wiping the nib of the pen after writing. Emphasis should be placed on the rationing of the cloth – *“we cannot be wasteful of cloth, and even small scraps like this can be put to good use. Pick the pen up carefully and look at the nib. It is made of metal”*. This is a good opportunity to emphasise the importance of metal, for making guns, ammunition and aircraft, and that the nibs will not be replaced, so great care must be taken. *“Do not lean heavily when writing, do not hit the bottom of the ink well, and do not drop the pen”*. Inspect the way the children are holding the pen, the thumb should be where the wood and the metal part meet and the first finger on top. Left-handedness was still frowned upon and usually met with great disapproval. However some teachers did allow it, providing that the work was excellent with no blots.

The children begin the exercise by writing the date in between the two dark lines at the top left hand side of the page, then the word “Spelling” in exactly the way that it is written on the board. Pens should then be wiped, put down and the work blotted. The class then continues to complete the rest of the words, using the blotting paper as necessary, within a time limit of 3 – 4 minutes. When finished the children should wipe their pens, blot their work and sit up with their hands on their heads.

While the class is working the teacher can prepare an identification label, for each pupil by writing the name of the school on one side of the label and placing one on each pupil's desk. One child at the back of each column will stand up, collect in the writing exercises and bring them to the teacher.

## 5. NOTIFICATION OF EVACUATION

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> September Britain declared war on Germany, and because of the dangers to people living in cities, the Government decided to launch an Evacuation Scheme, where children could be removed to safer areas of the country. Some suitable questions at this time would be: - *“What are the dangers to people in the cities? Why should the Germans want to bomb the city of Glasgow?”*

Every child was issued with a letter outlining this scheme to take home to parents. (A copy of this letter is in the ‘Home Front’ supplement). The following extracts would be suitable to read within the lesson:

- ◆ *The Government has decided that parents or guardians of children living in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee should be given a chance to send their children to places where they will be safer from air raids.*
- ◆ *Arrangements have been made to send the children from the school with their teachers (“So for my sins I have to go with you”. Would be a suitable retort!)*
- ◆ *If you are sending more than one child, tell the eldest to take their younger brothers and sisters with them and keep them close all day.*

Emphasis can then be placed on the responsibility of older children to familiarize their younger brothers and sisters with all the various air raid warning sounds:

*“What is the warning sound of a gas attack?”* – demonstrate the sound of the rattle.

*“What is the all clear sound after a gas attack?”* – demonstrate the sound of the hand bell.

Additional Info:

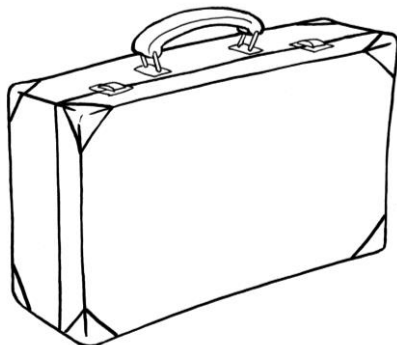
The Drill Hall at Scotland Street School was used as an air raid shelter

Some past pupils from the school remember being evacuated to Mauchline in South Ayrshire

## 6. EVACUATION LIST

Now discuss with your class what they will require to take with them if they are evacuated. Remind them that only a small suitcase, with essential items, would be allowed.

Discuss the items written on the blackboard:



A warm, sensible coat  
Underwear  
Nightclothes  
Tin cup  
Food for the day  
Gas mask  
Toilet bag (flannel, comb or hairbrush, toothbrush & soap)

## 7. IDENTIFICATION LABELS

Tell the children to look at their label and check that the name of the school is written clearly on one side, and then turn it over to the blank side. *“If your parents choose to have you evacuated, then this will be your identification label. What information is necessary to go on to the label? Name, address and date of birth. These labels will be read by people who do not know you. You may be sleeping on your journey when someone has to read the information, so you must make sure that it is written in your best handwriting, not too small and no blots”.* About three minutes is given for this activity, and when finished the usual procedure of wiping the pen, blotting the work and sitting up with hands on the head is carried out. The pupil at the back of each column will once again collect the work.

During any of the writing exercises it would be quite appropriate to walk up and down the columns carrying the tawse and issuing threats of punishment, i.e. the belt, lines being kept in etc. to anyone who talks, turns around or makes a blot/error.

To round off the lesson get monitors to put the writing implements away then ask the class to stand up behind their desks and put their gas mask boxes on. Say good morning/afternoon, making sure that the boys remember to salute as they reply. A suitable light hearted comment would now be desirable to bring yourself and the class out of character and back to the present.



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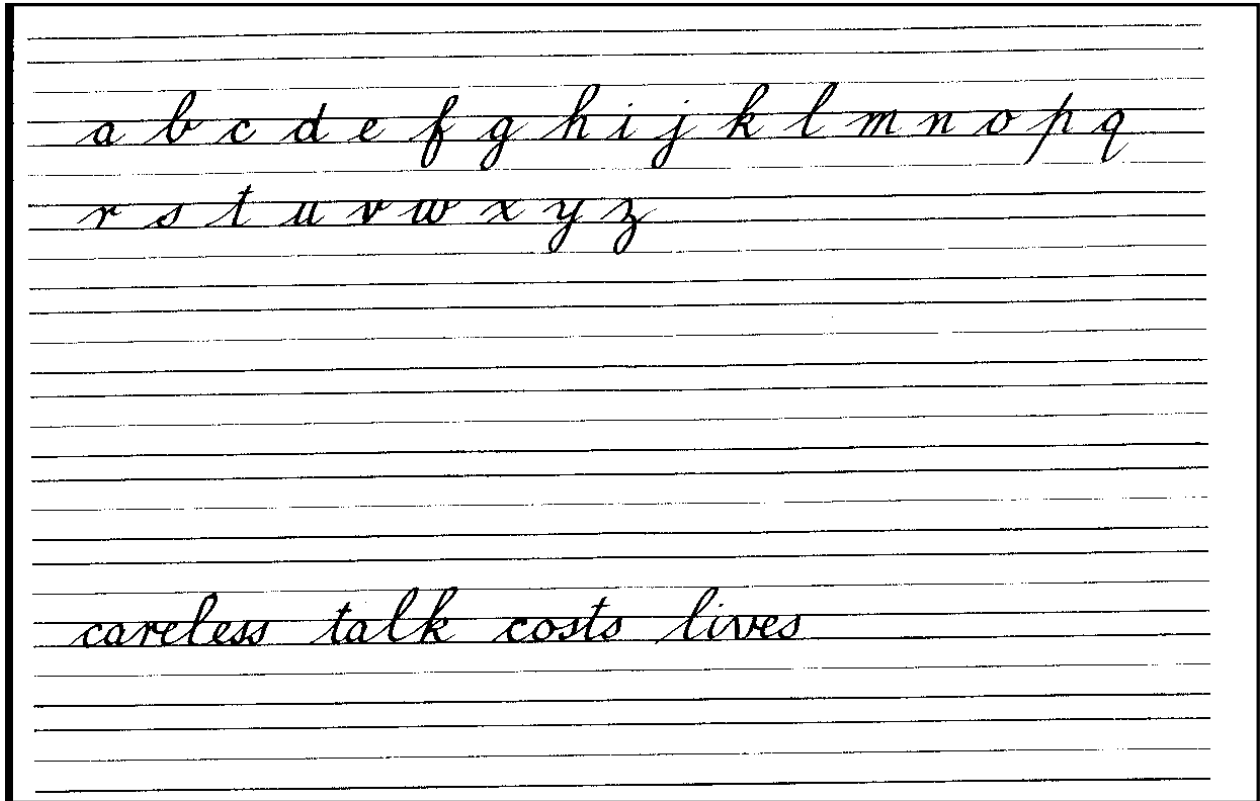
### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

#### WRITING

As in Victorian times, handwriting was considered important and a Cursive script was taught in most schools, at least to the older pupils. Slates and sand trays were used in the younger classes, but the older pupils had to master the skill of using the ‘tramline’ or ‘double small hand’ paper and nibbed pens. Handwriting was practiced most days – 15 minutes was considered a suitable time – and poor writing and smudges would have brought at least a reprimand from the teacher. A blot may well have warranted the belt! Posture while writing was considered important. Pupils were expected to sit up straight without leaning to either side.

Writing lessons were often used to reinforce ‘noble ideals’, with phrases like *‘A willing heart makes light work’* being copied out by the pupils. During the war, propaganda phrases were often used.

*The exercise below can be photocopied and used for practice before your visit.*



### FASHION IN THE THIRTIES

The main innovation of the 1930s was the bias cut – a technique of cutting patterns on the cross of the fabric to give a sleek, streamlined look following the line of the figure.

The main influence on fashion was Hollywood. Stars such as Joan Crawford and Greta Garbo had their clothes, hairstyles and make-up copied all over Europe and America.

The soft crepe de chine look of the mid 30s gave way towards the end of the decade to a more severe silhouette. Hair was tightly curled; hats had small crowns and were worn tilted sharply. Shoulders were very square, skirts were of medium length and of a comfortable walking width with pleating taking over from the bias cut skirt. This would have been the type of fashion that was common at the outbreak of war in 1939, before rationing came into force.

Teachers should attempt to recreate the appearance of the period by wearing appropriate clothing

For ladies: - A tweed skirt, perhaps with box pleats  
A blouse with shoulder pads  
A plain woolen cardigan  
Seamed stockings (or tights)  
Shoes with block heels

Make-up should consist of red lipstick and perhaps a little rouge, but should not be excessive. Hair could be curled or waved, with long hair worn in a French roll.

Male teachers would all have been graduates, and should wear an academic gown (provided at the Museum) over a dark suit and white shirt.

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***Girls taking part in drill***