



WWII TOPIC: MUSIC



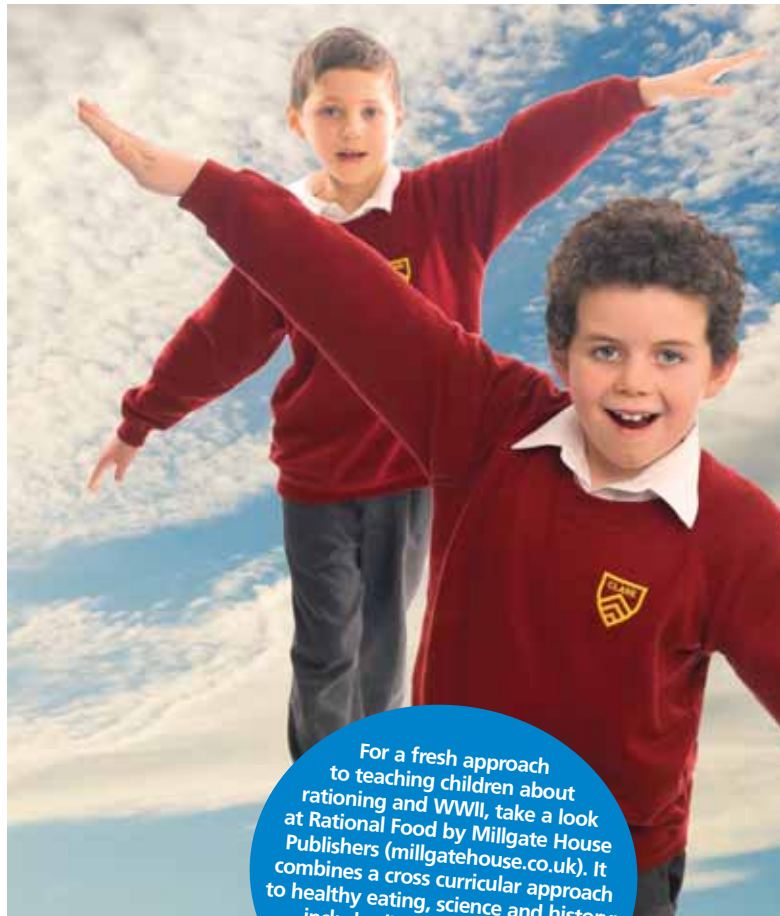
Sound the attack



Sue Nicholls uses music composition to make the events of WWII resonate within the classroom...

The Second World War is a favourite history theme for KS2 teachers, bringing an array of diverse resources that span and link many areas of the primary curriculum. Using music to support teaching and learning centred on this historical period can offer an extra dimension, making a strong connection with the people who lived through the privations and exacting demands of this period and providing a wealth of creative outcomes.

These five activities include raps and songs set to familiar tunes with a straightforward template for composition. The materials are accessible, practical and eminently suited to the generalist practitioner.



For a fresh approach to teaching children about rationing and WWII, take a look at *Rational Food* by Millgate House Publishers (millgatehouse.co.uk). It combines a cross curricular approach to healthy eating, science and history; includes lively video clips and benefits from a number of active assessment strategies.

ACTIVITY ONE

Echo Rap

(EVERY LINE IS ECHOED)

Hello to you!	(Point round the circle)
It's World War 2!	(Hand like a megaphone round mouth)
[Boys] We're learning how to fly	(Arms out like plane wings)
Fighting Hitler in the sky!	(Point arms up like search lights)
[Girls] We're knitting socks!	(Fingers knit)
But no new frocks!	(Shrugs)
[All] We're going to dig, dig, dig!	(Digging)
Hope the spuds are big?	(Hands hold a giant spud)
We're going to win this war!	(Triumphal fist)
And that's for sure	(Thumbs up)

Introduce the rap by reminding the children that men's and women's wartime roles were more sharply defined than those in today's more egalitarian society. The rap demonstrates this by apportioning some lines for boys and others for girls.

Explain that each line of the rap is echoed and encourage the class to copy the words and actions as closely as possible. Deliver the leader's lines rhythmically and with energy, and make sure that the children recognise the couplet rhyming patterns.

Once the rap is familiar, ask one of the children to take on the leader's role and suggest that the 'echoers' try to co-ordinate and refine their movements to work towards a performance.

EXTENSION

Invite the children to create their own rhyming raps on a war theme and perform them with actions and props.

ACTIVITY TWO

Rat-a-tat

COMPOSE A WARTIME SOUNDSCAPE

Discuss the sounds that would be heard during an air-raid: gunfire, sirens, explosions, falling masonry, people calling out, soldiers marching etc. and ask the children to collect instruments and other resources to represent these sounds.

Claves (machine gun fire)	
Cymbals, agogo bells (explosions)	
Tambours & drum (marching feet)	

Show the children a model graphic score, explaining that the music is interpreted by the performers who improvise sounds on instruments as indicated by the symbol, and that all interpretations are valid! The score is played from left to right, conducted with a long 'pointer' held vertically across all three lines and moved steadily across the music, observing that white spaces are 'rests' or silences.

Now invite groups of children to play through the score until everyone has had a turn and then discuss the different performances, sharing ideas about why players interpreted symbols in certain ways and which ideas worked best musically.

Ask the children to work in groups to create their own soundscapes. The music could be based any sounds associated with wartime: ammunition factory machinery, trains taking evacuees away from bombing raids, or countryside noises so unfamiliar to London children.



ACTIVITY THREE

Cheap Veg Soup

(SING TO THE TUNE OF THE HOKEY COKEY)

You take a big brown spud	(Hands apart to show a large spud)
You put it in the pot	(Hands mime dropping it into a pot)
You add a lot of water	(Mime turning on a tap)
And you make it nice and hot!	(Fingers flicker like flames)
You serve it in a basin	(One hand becomes a basin)
With a ladle or a scoop	(The other hand holds a spoon)
That's how you eat veg soup	(Mime eating)
Oh, missus it's delicious! **	(Dip finger into imaginary soup and lick)
Oh, missus it's nutritious! **	(Dip finger into imaginary soup and lick)
Stop looking so suspicious! **	(Hands on hips!)
Wait 'til you try my cheap veg soup!	(Wag finger at audience)

This is an adaptation of *Stone Soup*, a song from *Three Rapping Rats* and reproduced here by kind permission of the publishers, A & C Black*.

Discuss the wartime practice of digging up gardens and converting lawns to vegetable beds in order to provide essential foods for those at home. Show the children some replica ration books and wartime recipes where vegetables were substituted for unavailable ingredients.

Display the words on a whiteboard and sing through the song to the familiar tune. Give the melody plenty of 'swing', especially in the lines beginning 'Oh, missus...'

Create new verses by asking the children to substitute different ingredients for the third line, e.g. You add a bit of carrot...You add a slice of bacon...You add a pinch of pepper...

Invent a simple accompaniment played on saucepans, ladles, spoons and other utensils, or simply play these soundmakers on the two empty beats [rests] indicated by the asterisks. Once the piece is fully rehearsed, sing it to another class or perform in an assembly. Encourage the girls to wear headscarves fastened at the front in true forties style and borrow some overalls to give the performance an authentic 'flavour'!

* *Stone Soup* is from the book *Three Rapping Rats* by Kaye Umansky, Stephen Chadwick and Kate Buchanan (A&C Black, 1998). All rights reserved. Adapted by permission of the copyright holders.

ACTIVITY FOUR

We're Winning

(SING TO THE TUNE OF JOHN BROWN'S BODY – GLORY, GLORY HALLELUIAH)

VERSE:

We're fighting in the trenches
And we're fighting on the shore x3
To win this war for you!

CHORUS:

Here's to every British Tommie x3
They're heroes brave and true!

VERSE:

We're making lots of armaments
In every factory store x3
To win this war for you!

CHORUS:

Here's to every factory worker x3
They're heroes brave and true!

VERSE:

We're digging up our gardens
Growing veg to keep us fit x3
To win this war for you!

CHORUS:

Here's to every British housewife x3
They're heroines brave and true!

This robust and rousing tune is the perfect vehicle for lyrics that celebrate the different roles of soldier, factory worker and housewife.

Divide the class into three, asking each group to sing their verse and choreograph some appropriate actions or movements to enhance the meaning of the words.

Add one or both of the following drum parts, using the syllables to provide the rhythm.

War! War! We're going to win the war!

Join up! Join up! England needs you now!

Repeat these rhythmic phrases as many times as you like - play them as an introduction, an interlude between the different verses or as an accompaniment to the singing. Some children could march round to add a dance element.

EXTENSION

Encourage children to invent more drum parts using war vocabulary or make up more verses about other key personnel: land girls, pilots etc.

