History

BELFAST DURING WORLD WAR II:

helping students to assess historical significance

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Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)

Cultural and Environmental Education

History

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Note: Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the historical data contained herein. Any inadvertent errors are regretted.
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**Belfast during World War II: helping students to assess historical significance**

Exploring the case study *Belfast during World War II* involves consideration of how Belfast was affected by the ‘blitz’ of 1941. Beyond this, however, it requires an examination of the context in which the attacks occurred as well as the wide range of ways in which life in Belfast was affected by the arrival of war. Students are concerned, therefore, not merely with what happened but also with why it happened, and what its historical significance is. In exploring issues of causation and significance with students, we have a great opportunity to develop their ability to think critically, which is one of the stated objectives of the syllabus, and an increasingly cherished aim of senior cycle education.

At previous history in-service sessions, it has been argued that some of the best ways in which students’ critical thinking can be developed include:

- the use of the enquiry-focused approach
- the use of ‘critical skills’ exercises that involve group discussion and judgement-forming

Both approaches are drawn on in the following exploration of the case study.

**The enquiry-focused approach**

The enquiry-focused approach involves organising a set of lessons around an enquiry question on which the teaching and learning activities are focused. It aims to give a clear focus to a series of lessons, to clarify for all concerned what the learning purposes are and to ensure that the sequence of lessons is leading to improved understanding on the part of the students.

In her book, *The Twentieth Century World* (The Historical Association, 1997), Christine Counsell outlines the rationale behind the approach. The following is an edited extract:

Choosing a sequence of interesting historical enquiries gives a clear focus to any scheme of work. This approach has a number of advantages:

(i) It prevents a superficial run through the content and leads pupils into deeper levels of historical understanding.
(ii) It allows students to engage in real historical debate. Historians usually begin with a question.
(iii) It motivates students by giving a clear focus to their work. Identifying key questions is a powerful way of ‘sharing clarity with learners’. Teachers are thus reinforcing that the whole point of a sequence of lessons or activities is to build towards some attempt at answering the question. Some teachers who use this approach will refer to such a question in every single lesson. Pupils are constantly reminded of what they are trying to do and why.
(iv) Key questions can shape and limit an otherwise sprawling content.
(v) It encourages pupils to produce more substantial and significant outcomes at the end of a section of work.

(pp.30-31)
Considering the concept of historical significance

An important attribute of the historian is the capacity to assess the historical significance of events and issues in the past. Such assessments are provisional rather than absolute and historians may disagree about the significance of particular events, but thinking about and weighing up significance is an important part of what historians do. Getting students to think about historical significance is an excellent way of helping to develop students’ critical thinking skills in history.

To assist students in considering the historical significance of particular events and developments, the following criteria may be useful:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Five Rs for thinking about historical significance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Historians tend to judge historical phenomena as significant when these phenomena are one or more of the following:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revealing</strong> – of some aspect of the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remarked upon</strong> – the event/development was remarked upon by people at the time and/or since</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remembered</strong> – the event/development was important at some stage in history within the collective memory of a group or groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resonant</strong> – people like to make analogies with it; it is possible to connect with experiences, beliefs or situations across time and space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resulting in change</strong> – it had consequences for the future</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Christine Counsell, *History and Literacy in Y7: building the lesson around the text*. John Murray, 2004, p.80

When interrogating the events, issues and personalities associated with Belfast during World War II, the approach of an enquiry based on a determination of its significance may be considered a useful approach.

A two-pronged enquiry such as the following can help to bring key issues and developments to the fore:

**In what significant ways did World War II affect Belfast?**  
**In what significant ways did Belfast affect the conduct of World War II?**

It will be helpful in the course of the enquiry – or at its conclusion – to consider which of the factors in the box above seem most applicable to the experience of Belfast in World War II.
**Belfast during World War II: an overview**

Due to its position within the United Kingdom, Belfast was involved in World War II from the outset. On 4th September, James Craig, the Northern Ireland premier, stated in the Commons that there would be “no slackening in [Northern Ireland’s] loyalty” and he promised to place all of its resources at Britain’s command. Belfast had a number of important industries (e.g. munitions, aircraft, shipbuilding) which had the potential to contribute significantly to the British war effort. As was the case elsewhere in the U.K., the outbreak of war saw the introduction of wartime measures such as rationing, the use of identity cards, censorship and travel restrictions.

However, in contrast with other major cities of the U.K., life continued much as before in the early stages of the war. There was no conscription, no substantial shortages of food, no significant rise in employment and no bombing. A degree of apathy was evident in the low army recruitment figures and lack of commitment to civil defence measures. Under the leadership of James Craig, the Stormont leadership came to be seen as complacent and ineffective - even by senior civil servants such as Wilfred Spender. Relations with the London government were somewhat strained.

One positive move towards a more proactive approach was the creation of a new Ministry of Public Security in June 1940, with John MacDermott as minister. However, when Craig died in November, he was succeeded by his most experienced minister, John Andrews, who retained his predecessor’s cabinet and showed little appreciation of the need for change. Consequently, Belfast was ill-prepared for the German air-rafts that took place in April-May 1941, causing large-scale damage, disruption to everyday living and loss of life. The raids – often referred to as the Belfast ‘Blitz’ – caused the deaths of 1,100 people, over 56,000 houses were damaged (53% of the housing stock) and £20 million damage was caused to property. The raids increased the unpopularity of Andrews’ government and he was eventually forced to resign in April 1943.

When Basil Brooke succeeded Andrews in April 1943, Stormont’s relations with the British government were already improving. The strategic importance of Northern Ireland had increased following the fall of France in 1940 and Belfast became an increasingly significant base for naval vessels engaged in the Battle of the Atlantic. On the trade and industry fronts, Belfast port was used for the import of war materials especially from the US and, despite a slow beginning, production in its industries steadily increased, with the shipyards and aircraft factories winning significant war contracts. Other industries also contributed significantly: one third of the ropes required by the War Office were made at Belfast rope works and 90% of British servicemen’s shirts were made in Northern Ireland. From 1942 onwards, employment was further boosted by the arrival of US troops in Northern Ireland in the build-up to the Normandy invasions of June 1944.

The active participation of Northern Ireland in the war effort contrasted with the Irish Free State / Éire which adopted a policy of neutrality. Despite its neutral stance, when Belfast was fire-bombed in May 1941, de Valera’s government sent firemen and appliances to help in fire-fighting and rescue work. Despite this, their different wartime experiences widened the divide between the two parts of Ireland, while the shared experience of wartime raids and the acknowledgement of Northern Ireland’s strategic importance to the war effort created new bonds of friendship between the Belfast and London governments.
**Belfast during World War II: a glossary of terms**

**Develop your historical literacy**

**ARP (Air Raid Precautions) warden**
Air raid precautions are steps taken to protect a place from attack by aircraft. During World War II, Air Raid Precautions (ARP) wardens had responsibility for ensuring that the government-determined regulations and procedures for protecting against air attack were obeyed. Their duties included ensuring that ‘blackout’ orders were obeyed and distributing gas masks.

**Balloon barrage**
Large balloons, tied fast to the ground with metal cables, used as a defence against aircraft attack, especially low-lying aircraft, by damaging the aircraft on collision with the cables; some carried light explosives to assist in destroying the aircraft.

**Battle of the Atlantic**
The conflict arising out of German attacks on shipping in the Atlantic during World War II. The Germans tried to cut off Britain’s supplies of food and munitions using U-boats (submarines) and warships. Allied shipping travelled together in convoys for protection, sometimes accompanied by warships and using aircraft as defensive cover where possible.

**Belfast Blitz**
The term ‘blitz’ is used to describe the dropping of bombs from the air on civilian populations in ways that are sudden, terrifying and destructive of lives and property. In the course of four attacks by the Luftwaffe on the nights of 7-8 April, 15-16 April, 4-5 May and 5-6 May, 1941, lasting ten hours in total. 1,110 people died, over 56,000 houses in the city were damaged (representing 53% of the entire housing stock), approximately 100,000 people were made temporarily homeless and £20 million damage was caused to property. (Source: Brian Barton, *Northern Ireland in the Second World War*. Ulster Historical Foundation, 1995)

**Blackout regulations**
These were rules that required that people turn off their lights, so as to make it more difficult for enemy aircraft to pick out targets. Blackout regulations were brought in on 1 September, 1939.

**Bombs – incendiary bombs, high explosives**
Bombs are usually dropped from aircraft on enemy targets to destroy life and property. Sometimes this is done because a target is strategically important, in that it is helping the enemy’s war effort (e.g. munitions factories, shipyards); sometimes it is done to terrorise civilian populations and provoke a demand for peace terms. Bombs are hollow cases filled with some sort of explosive material that will cause damage on impact. ‘Incendiary’ bombs contain a substance that is highly flammable (i.e catches fire easily) and are designed to burst into flames on hitting their target. ‘High explosive’ bombs are bombs of great power and exceedingly rapid action, usually containing a highly explosive substance such as dynamite or TNT.
Censorship
When a country is at war, its government usually takes steps to control the news that is printed or broadcast. News items that might assist the enemy in gathering intelligence (information for military purposes) are ‘censored’ i.e. not allowed to be printed or broadcast. From the start of World War II, newspapers and the BBC were heavily censored in Northern Ireland. Weather reports that might assist the enemy were not permitted.

Civil defence
The term is used to describe a civilian (non-military) service for the wartime protection of a civilian population against enemy attack. Such services included the Air Raid Precautions service, the auxiliary fire service and the Home Guard.

‘Ditchers’
The term is used to describe the many thousands of people who left Belfast (and other cities) in the hours of darkness and walked to the outskirts of the city, where they sheltered in parks, ditches and hedgerows until first light when they felt it safe to return home.

Evacuees
These are people persuaded to or required to leave their homes in areas under attack or expected to be under attack. During World War II, many Belfast children were evacuated to the countryside for their own protection.

Identity cards
These were cards that people had to carry as proof of identity. National registration was introduced in October, 1939, as part of the preparations for a widespread system of rationing. This included people travelling from across the border to take up employment in Northern Ireland.

Luftwaffe offensive
The ‘Luftwaffe’ was the name given to the German air force, re-established in 1936 under Hermann Goering in contravention of the terms of the Versailles Treaty, 1919. A ‘Luftwaffe offensive’ was an attack on enemy targets by the German air force.

Munitions firms
These are companies, such as Short and Harland in Belfast, that manufactured war materials such as weapons and ammunition.

Rationing
This involves limiting the amount of food and provisions that people are allowed to purchase in times of shortage. In Northern Ireland, petrol was rationed from late September, 1939. Food rationing began in 1940 and became increasingly severe and extensive.

Reconnaissance aircraft
These were aircraft that flew over enemy positions and potential targets to gather information and assess defence preparedness.
Belfast during World War II: timeline

1939

4 September: Sir James Craig, NI premier, told the House of Commons that all of Northern Ireland’s resources would be placed at Britain’s command.

1940

25 June: John MacDermott was appointed Minister of Public Security.

September: Belfast and Londonderry were provided with a light balloon barrage, in case of possible attack from the air.

24 November: Craig died; succeeded by John Miller Andrews, his most experienced minister.

1941

By Spring, strength of anti-aircraft barrage had increased to 24 heavy guns and 14 light guns. 22 of these were located in Belfast (16 heavy and 6 light). Until 10 April, there were no searchlights.

29 March: John McDermott wrote to the prime minister, highlighting in the “strongest possible terms” the inadequacy of local defences.

7-8 April (night): Light Luftwaffe raid (probably 8 aircraft) on Belfast, concentrating on docks area. 13 deaths.

15-16 April (Easter Tuesday night, 11.30pm-4.55 am): Belfast was attacked by an estimated 180 aircraft, an average of two bombs dropped per minute. 35,000 houses damaged. Death toll c. 900, with 600 seriously injured. Practice of ‘ditching’ began. By late April, it was estimated that 100,000 people had fled from the city.

4-5 May: Belfast again attacked in raid known as the ‘fire raid’. Over 3 hours, approximately 100,000 incendiary bombs were dropped, followed by high explosives, from an estimated 200 aircraft. By time of ‘all clear’, over 200 buildings were ablaze and almost 200 people had been killed. Strategic industries – including Harland and Wolff – were seriously damaged. By end of month, government estimated 220,000 had evacuated from Belfast. (10,000 approx. crossed the border.)

1942

23 January: first American officers arrived in Belfast, followed by 3,900 troops on 26 January. By May, 37,000 American troops were billeted in Northern Ireland.

10 November: Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, began two-day visit to Red Cross Centre in Belfast.

1943

28 April: Growth in unpopularity caused resignation of Andrews as prime minister; succeeded by Sir Basil Brooke, who was to hold the position for twenty years.

1944

After D-Day, 6 June, numbers of US troops in Northern Ireland rapidly decreased.

1945

Churchill’s victory speech acknowledged the “loyalty and friendship” of Northern Ireland in helping to secure victory.

Numeracy opportunity: Look at the information above for the night of 15-16 April. Based on the number of hours the air raid lasted and the estimate that an average of two bombs was dropped per minute, see if you can work out the likely number of bombs dropped on Belfast that night.
Belfast during World War II: biographical notes

John Miller Andrews, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, 1940-1943

(1871-1956) Appointed Minister of Labour in 1921 in Sir James Craig’s first cabinet, a position he held for sixteen years. In 1937, he was appointed Minister of Finance, effectively becoming Craig’s deputy and frequently presiding at cabinet meetings. He was appointed prime minister in succession to Craig. More concerned with political than military matters, he came under increasing pressure on a range of issues e.g. the inefficiencies exposed by the Belfast ‘Blitz’, the failure to introduce conscription, failure to prevent strikes in the aircraft industry (the latter earning him a personal rebuke from the British prime minister, Winston Churchill). Matters came to a head in 1943 when a group of backbenchers and junior ministers challenged his leadership. His fate was sealed when these critics were joined in April by Sir Basil Brooke, Minister of Commerce, whose resignation from the cabinet prompted Andrews’ subsequent resignation from office. He served as a backbench MP until 1954 and died in 1956, the last surviving member of the 1921 cabinet.

Richard Dawson Bates, Minister of Home Affairs, 1921-1943

Key personality

(1876-1949) Solicitor and Northern Ireland cabinet minister. During the 1912-1914 opposition to home rule, he helped to organize the Ulster Covenant and the Ulster Volunteers. Appointed Minister of Home Affairs by Sir James Craig in June 1921, a post he held for almost twenty-two years. Bates was made a knight in 1921 and a baronet in 1937. He was a member of parliament (MP) in Northern Ireland from 1921 to 1945. As Minister of Home Affairs, he had wide powers over security and local government; in the eyes of many unionists, his working of the 1922 Special Powers Act ensured the survival of the state. His distrust of the nationalist minority influenced the development of policies which minimized their role in local government.

The outbreak of World War II saw increasing criticism of his department’s inefficiency and he was blamed by many for the civil defence weaknesses which the Belfast Blitz of 1941 exposed. When Basil Brooke became premier in 1943, Bates was dropped from the cabinet. He did not stand for re-election when the war ended, moved to England in 1947 and died there in 1949.

Basil Brooke, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, 1943-1963

(1888-1972) Brooke became a Unionist MP at Stormont in 1929 and, in May, was appointed parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Finance. In 1933, he was appointed Minister of Agriculture. In the same year he made a speech urging employers ‘to employ good Protestant lads and lassies’ only. When war broke out, he was persuaded by Craig not to serve in the military but to remain involved in politics. Partly due to his leadership, the farmers of Northern Ireland exceeded the tillage quota set by Westminster in 1939-40. They were the only farmers in the UK to do so. His achievements stood in contrast to the perceived incompetence of most of the rest of the cabinet. The government’s record did not improve with the death of Craig. The new prime minister, John Andrews, moved Brooke to the Ministry of Commerce, where he made a name for himself in pursuing contracts for Northern Ireland manufacturers and working to improve productivity levels. When Andrews was forced to resign in April 1943, Brooke was the only candidate who could secure a majority in the Stormont parliament. From May 1943, Brooke’s government was largely successful in fulfilling its initial priorities: greater dynamism in the war effort, planning for the post-war years and defending the constitution.
James Craig, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, 1921-1940

(1871-1940) As head of government for nineteen years, Craig’s main objectives were to consolidate the Unionist-dominated state and to keep it secure from internal and external challenges. The security apparatus laid down during the crisis of 1920-1922 – when the IRA threatened the emergence and survival of the new state – survived into the 1930s and beyond with only some amendments. The Special Powers Acts of 1922, ostensibly a temporary measure, was given permanence. A strong supporter and advocate of local industry, he used the occasion of the negotiations for the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1938 to bargain for armaments contracts for Belfast industries. By the time war came in 1939, his health was poor. Civil service head, Sir Wilfred Spender, in a private memorandum of August 1938, reported that due to his poor health Craig was unable to do more than one hour’s work daily. He stayed in office at his wife’s urging, but his decision-making became more erratic. A number of junior ministers resigned from his government in the summer of 1940. By the time of his death in November 1940, the perceived incompetence of his wartime government had caused considerable strain between London and Belfast.

John MacDermott, Minister of Public Security, 1940-1941

(1896-1979) Born in Belfast, MacDermott was called to the bar in Dublin in 1921, and commenced practice at the newly founded bar of Northern Ireland. In 1938, he won a seat in parliament representing Queen’s University, Belfast (1938-1944). When war broke out in 1939, he was commissioned as a major in the Royal Artillery. He was released from the army at the request of the government to undertake the new post of Minister of Public Security, a post to which, according to his entry in the DIB, “he brought conspicuous organizing ability, energy, and resolve at a time of crisis”.

He was appointed Attorney General for Northern Ireland in 1941 and a judge of the Northern Ireland High Court in 1944. Appointed to the House of Lords in 1947, his appointment as Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland in 1951 made him the dominant legal figure in the North for the next twenty years.
William Joyce, known as ‘Lord Haw Haw’, 1906-1946
Fascist and propagandist, Joyce was born in New York but his family returned to Ireland in 1909 settling at first in Mayo, his father’s native county, and then in Galway. At the age of fourteen, he left the Catholic Church for the Church of Ireland. Unionist in outlook, Joyce acted as a lookout for ‘Black and Tans’ during the War of Independence. In December, 1921, he fled to England and joined the armed forces, lying about his age, but was discharged in March 1922 when his age was discovered.
In 1923 he joined the British Fascisti – an organization with many Irish loyalist members - and in 1924 became a member of a militant splinter group, the National Fascists. Joyce joined the Conservative Party in 1928 but, in 1933, began working for Sir Oswald Mosley’s British Union of Fascists (BUF), of which he became publicity director in 1934. In February 1937 he was BUF candidate for London county council in Shoreditch, where his party won 14% of the vote. In April 1937 he founded the National Socialist League (which never had more than 50 members). Active in various anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi groups, by the time of the Munich Crisis in 1938, he had decided that if war came he could move to Germany.
On 26 August 1939, he left London for Berlin and soon became a radio announcer with the English-language service of the Reichsrundfunk (the State Broadcasting Company). He made his first broadcast on 6 September 1939 and quickly gained a reputation for his exuberance in recounting Nazi victories. On 26 September 1940 he acquired German citizenship. In the Spring of 1941, before the air raids on Belfast, he announced in a broadcast from Hamburg that there would be “Easter eggs for Belfast”. The name ‘Lord Haw-Haw’, invented by the Daily Express radio critic in September 1939, initially applied to several English language broadcasters but in time became associated with Joyce.
Later in the war, as Axis powers began to fail, Joyce’s broadcasts became more defensive, focusing on the Soviet threat. In 1944, he was awarded the German War Merit Cross, first class. His last, defiant broadcast was made on the day of Hitler’s death (30 April, 1945). He was captured near the Danish border on 28 May and brought back to Britain on 16 June. Following a trial in September, he was hanged at Wandsworth prison on 3 January, 1946.

Wilfred Spender, Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, 1925-1944
(1876-1960) Following a military career which included service in India, Spender served on the staff of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) before returning to the army at the outbreak of World War I where he received the Military Cross. Joining the Ministry of Pensions in London after the war, in the summer of 1920 he returned to Ulster to organise the reconstituted UVF, being formally appointed its head in July. He played a key role in the recruitment of UVF members into the new Ulster Special Constabulary (USC). When the new Northern government was set up in 1921, Spender was appointed as cabinet secretary, a role that gave him considerable influence as chief advisor to James Craig. In 1925, he was appointed permanent secretary to the Ministry of Finance and head of the Northern Ireland civil service. From 1931 until his retirement in 1944, he kept a journal of his activities at the Ministry of Finance. During the war, Spender favoured the extension of wartime conscription to Northern Ireland.
Useful websites

http://multitext.ucc.ie/d/The_BlitzBelfast_during_the_second_World_War
This Multitext web page has a detailed summary and analysis of the case study by Dr. Brian Barton, with a particular focus on the ‘Belfast Blitz’ of April-May, 1941. There is also access to an extensive gallery of images. The Multitext website covers the wider aspects of the topic, including key personalities, as well as the other two case studies. Multitext is an initiative of the History Department, UCC.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/1269206.stm
A useful short introduction to the Belfast Blitz from the BBC News website.

http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/blitz_belfast_1941.htm
Another useful introduction to the Belfast Blitz.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/categories/c1103/index.shtml
This is part of a wider BBC initiative, WW2 People’s War, described as “An archive of World War Two memories – written by the public, gathered by the BBC”. This section focuses on Northern Ireland and has numerous eye-witness accounts as well as a photo gallery.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/09/a3955809.shtml
This is one of the eye-witness accounts from the WW2 People’s War website.

This website is an initiative of the Northern Ireland Museums Council and brings together a wide range of materials – including film clips and visual material – from a number of repositories, including the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) and the Imperial War Museum.

http://www.csn.ul.ie/~dan/war/eire.htm (Dennis Burke, Dublin)
This privately curated site on “Ireland in World War Two” has many useful links to relevant websites.

http://ww2ni.webs.com/greaterbelfastpart2.htm
This web page has many interesting images relating to Belfast’s and Northern Ireland’s involvement in the war.

http://www.u.tv/blitz/
This UTV film clip, UTV Live Tonight remembers the Belfast Blitz, has good images and helpful eye-witness accounts.

http://photosales.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/assignment/Belfast-Blitz/QbeTTh4K7vITh4zezHrTPQ_.a
Photographs from the Belfast Telegraph collection: these are very well labelled, making it possible to link specific photographs with written records of the Belfast Blitz.
Belfast during World War II: an enquiry

If students are to understand the issues and events of the case study, they will need to explore both the ways in which Belfast was affected by the war and the various contributions it made to the war effort. A two-pronged enquiry such as the following can help to bring key issues and developments to the fore:

**In what significant ways did World War II affect Belfast?**
**In what significant ways did Belfast affect the conduct of World War II?**

In the pages that follow, for each enquiry a number of “Points to note” are identified: these are followed by a selection of relevant sources and questions on the sources.

**A possible ‘hook’ to begin the enquiry**

One way to begin the enquiry would be to show the students an excerpt from a UTV documentary commemorating the Belfast Blitz at http://www.u.tv/blitz/

The Blitz is the best-known aspect of Belfast during World War II and the personal stories used in the documentary are a good way of drawing students into an exploration of the suffering endured by Belfast during the Blitz and a wider focus on how Belfast was both influenced by and influenced the course of World War II. The documentary, which is just over 19 minutes long, is divided into segments of just over 6 minutes each. The first of these segments would serve as a useful ‘hook’ on which to ‘hang’ the two-pronged enquiry.

Among the issues and questions that could be raised at this point are:

- Why is a list of names displayed at the beginning of the documentary?
- John Toner explains why he felt safe in the early stages of the war. Why was this?
- For what reason(s) did the situation in the early stages of the war feel unreal to Sir John MacDermott (whose father was appointed Minister of Public Security in 1940)?
- In the event of an attack, what are identified as likely targets?
- What warning did John MacDermott, the Minister of Public Security, give to the War Office in London in March 1941?
- In the initial attack on 7 April, what were the targets that were hit?
- Sam Moore talks about his role at the time. What was that role and what did it involve?
- What strategic damage was done on that night?
- In a subsequent propaganda broadcast for Nazi Germany, what did ‘Lord Haw Haw’ (William Joyce) promise Belfast for Easter? Explain your answer.

It would be helpful to re-visit this excerpt later when the Blitz and other aspects of the case study have been explored and to watch and discuss the remainder of the documentary.
Enquiry 1: In what significant ways did World War II affect Belfast?

Points to note

- As part of the U.K, Northern Ireland was actively involved in World War II, supplying munitions, aircraft, ships and other goods for use in the war effort. Many of these goods were produced in Belfast.
- War prompted the passing of emergency laws giving the government extra powers to protect Northern Ireland. These laws led to rationing, tighter censorship, ‘black out’ regulations, compulsory registration and issuing of identity cards and other measures which affected the lives of ordinary people.
- The most dramatic and damaging way in which the war affected Belfast was the German bombing of the city in April-May, 1941, usually referred to as the ‘Belfast Blitz’.
- The entry into the war of the USA in 1941 led to large numbers of American troops being stationed in Belfast (and other parts of Northern Ireland) for the first time in its history.
- The war is generally seen as a turning point in Northern Ireland’s history, leading to improved relations between the governments in Belfast and London and a further widening of the rift with the Irish Free State which had declared its neutrality when war broke out in 1939.

IF THE INVADER COMES

ADVICE TO CIVILIANS:
KEEP CALM and STAY PUT

Don’t leave your own area.
Stay in your own home unless you are officially ordered to move.
Take orders only from the Military, the Police or other authorised persons you know.
Disregard any Instructions you may receive by telephone until you have checked them.

IGNORE RUMOURS. They are probably spread by the enemy.

Issued by the Ministry of Public Security, Northern Ireland, 27th July, 1940.

MPS1/2/4

Questions

(i) What were three of the kinds of ships built in Belfast during World War II according to this source?

(ii) Discuss or research in pairs the use to which each type of ship was put.

(iii) Research: Find out 3-4 points of interest about the role of *HMS Formidable* in World War II.
Source 1b: Advertisement for black-out material

Civil Defence

For: BLACK-OUT MATERIALS
MADE-UP CURTAINS
and WINDOW BLINDS

Be sure to visit—
ANDERSON & MCAULEY’S
BELFAST


Source 1c: June Martin’s memories of a Belfast childhood during World War II

To get to my grandparents’ house we had to travel by bus and when we would return home at night after “tea”, the bus would be lit up inside but the windows were all covered with black blinds. This was because of the “black out”. How the driver knew when to stop to let his passengers off is a mystery to me, but I suppose there was some kind of occasional street lighting. During those war years every house had to be “blacked out” and my father used to make my brother and me play a game, “going to bed in the dark”, in which we had to go upstairs to our rooms without any light on at all. It was a bit scary if my brother went first and grasped my arm, shouting “Boo” at me as I passed the bathroom. It was one of my father’s duties as an air raid warden to ensure that not the merest chink of light escaped through anybody’s window.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/21/a3921121.shtml

Questions

(i) As set out in Source 1b, what type of black-out materials did Anderson & McAuley’s deal in?

(ii) Name three ways in which black-out material could be faulty according to the public information notes that accompany the advertisement in Source 1b.

(iii) According to Source 1c, why did the houses of Belfast families such as June Martin’s have to be ‘blacked out’?

(iv) Name one way in which buses and houses were ‘blacked out’ during the war, according to Source 1c.

(v) Why do you think June’s father got the children to play a game called “going to bed in the dark” as described in Source 1c?

(vi) Explain one duty of an air raid warden as mentioned in Source 1c.
Source 1d: Irish Times report on air raid

Belfast is mourning deeply its hundreds of dead in last Wednesday’s air raid. A most pitiable sight to-day was the efforts of many of the bereaved to identify their loved ones amid the bodies collected in St. George’s Market.

The Speaker of the Northern House of Commons (the Right Hon. H.G.H. Mulholland) was one of the casualties of the air raid. He was on fire-watching duty at a large industrial concern when a splinter of glass injured one of his eyes. He is making good progress and hopes to be about as usual in a few days.

A local newspaper last evening contained over four columns of death notices of persons killed during the raid. The death of Mr. Henry Simon, Belfast, announced in the Irish Times on Friday is now confirmed. He was a former President of the United Commercial Travellers’ Association, Belfast Branch. He and his wife and younger son, Geoffrey, aged 20 were killed when their home received a direct hit from a bomb. The elder son, Mr. Desmond Simon, arrived home with his bride from their honeymoon to find that other members of the family were dead.

The Irish Times, 21 April, 1941

Questions

(i) Explain what the writer found to be a “most pitiable sight”.

(ii) Mr. H.G.H. Mulholland was not badly injured: why did the newspaper report his injury?

(iii) Explain what is meant by “fire-watching duty”.

(iv) A local newspaper contained “over four columns of death notices of persons killed during the raid”, which had happened some days previously. What is the likely reason for the delay in publishing the names?

(v) Suggest two reasons why the writer picks out the death of Mr. Henry Simon and members of his family for particular mention.

Air raid damage to Harland and Wolff, April 1941
http://www.secondworldwarni.org/details.aspx?id=0&pagerecordid=376
Source 1e: Cecil Kennedy remembers Belfast during the Blitz

I can recall the two Blitzes in the spring of 1941. The first destroyed a large area of the city centre and areas in north and east Belfast. At the time we had no air raid shelter in the house so we sheltered under the stairs as we were told it was the safest place. The noise of the bombs exploding and the anti-aircraft gun fire from the batteries at the end of Sunningdale Park was horrendous. The sky across the city was lit up in a red glow by the furious fires started by the many incendiary bombs.

We left Belfast after the first Blitz to stay with friends in Ballymoney only to return in time for the second. That night a landmine exploded in Sunningdale Park off the Cavehill road killing a number of residents. It also blew out the windows in the rear of our house.

In the morning I cycled to school. At the top of Duncairn Gardens the road was covered in thick mud thrown up by a landmine which had exploded demolishing many houses in the area. I remember the parachute from the landmine hanging from the tram wires. Many people were killed in the area including those sheltering in an air raid shelter at Cliftonville circus. On reaching school I think there were only about eighty pupils in attendance. The only damage to the school luckily was broken windows. St James church adjoining the school was completely destroyed with the exception of the spire.

My friends and I would take our bicycles up to the Belfast Castle grounds where we made a race track and spent many happy hours in these lovely surroundings. On many occasions we would be able to see war ships coming and going from the Belfast harbour including aircraft carriers. We also enjoyed the lovely sight of the Sunderland flying boats landing on the Lough or taking off from the aircraft factory Short Brothers after their construction.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/08/a3502108.shtml

Questions

(i) Explain what the writer means by “the two Blitzes in the Spring of 1941”.
(ii) What did the writer find to be “horrendous” during the first Blitz?
(iii) Explain the following terms from the first paragraph: batteries, incendiary bombs.
(iv) Suggest a likely reason why the writer and his family “left Belfast after the first Blitz to stay with friends in Ballymoney”.
(v) What landmine damage during the second Blitz does the writer describe?
(vi) The writer reports that people sheltering in an air-raid shelter were killed. Suggest a likely reason for this.
(vii) What sights did the writer and his friends enjoy as they played in the grounds of Belfast Castle?

Damage to Bridge Street, Belfast, May 1941
http://www.secondworldwarni.org/associatedImage.aspx?pageRecordId=159
Source 1f

A great pall of smoke hid Belfast from the Spring sunshine to-day. Outside the city the sun was shining on a sylvan scene; inside it was hell. Belfast’s second night of terror was even worse than its precursor of three weeks ago, although it is hoped that the casualty roll will not be so heavy as it was on that occasion. The smoke was merciful. The discomfort of it mattered little when it hid so much that was not good to look upon. Large areas of the city were cordoned off and guarded by military. No one passed those cordons; for, with falling masonry, the danger of unexploded bombs and recurring outbreaks of fire, it was as much as life was worth. Whole streets were thus cut off, and hundreds of people who had no work to go to walked miles through the smarting smoke and the grime to see the ruin left by the morning’s bombardment.

Irish Times, 6 May, 1941

Questions
(i) Explain why “a great pall of smoke hid Belfast”.
(ii) Background knowledge: In what way(s) was “Belfast’s second night of terror ... even worse than its precursor”?
(iii) Was the casualty toll as heavy as on the previous occasion (15-16 April)?
(iv) Why does the writer state that “The smoke was merciful”?
(v) For what specific reasons were large areas of the city cordoned off?
(vi) Why were hundreds of people walking for miles through the smoke-covered city?

Auxiliary firemen fighting fire at York Street, Belfast, 1941
http://www.secondworldwarni.org/print.aspx?pagerecordid=84
Source 1g: Evelyn Magee remembers the American troops in Belfast

My mother did housework for a lady [who] had a very pretty daughter who was a dancer and this girl worked in a nightclub in the centre of Belfast which was very popular with the Americans. This girl was only about 16 and was chaperoned everywhere by her mother and soon they both were making friends with the Americans and they would invite them to their home. They always brought lots of things which were very difficult to get, sweets, chocolate, cakes, stockings, groceries, everything you could think of. This lady's house was like an Aladdin's cave for me. She was very generous to my mother and to me. I remember how upset they were when the Americans moved out.

The arrival of the Americans in Belfast caused a lot of bad feeling amongst the men. The Americans were so glamorous compared to the locals who had suffered four years of shortages. Girls who fraternised with the Americans were considered very fast and not 'nice' girls. I know my mother agonised a lot when she was given all the good things, whether she should accept them. I, however, had no hesitation and I think that that carried the day.

Questions

(i) How did the woman for whom the writer’s mother worked, and her daughter, become friends with American soldiers in Belfast?

(ii) The 16 year old girl “was chaperoned everywhere by her mother”. What does this mean?

(iii) Why were the American soldiers popular with the Belfast women mentioned?

(iv) The writer states that “The arrival of the Americans in Belfast caused a lot of bad feeling among the men.” Why was this?

(v) What different attitudes did Evelyn and her mother have with regard to accepting gifts which had come from the American soldiers?
Source 1h

Douglas Harkness recalled a conversation with a Labour MP, Tom Johnston, after the 1945 Westminster election. Johnston stated ‘that the attitude in his party was that Northern Ireland had stood by the United Kingdom during the war in sharp contrast to Eire which had denied the UK the use of ..., the ports, ... and that whatever views the Labour Party might have had with regard to the Irish Free State in pre-war years ... the Labour movement would never forget what Northern Ireland had contributed to the United Kingdom war effort and ... would solidly support [it]. Harkness added, ‘later I learned that the same attitude prevailed with both Attlee and Morrison, who both became firm friends of Ulster’.


Notes on Source 1g:

(a) Douglas Harkness was a senior Stormont civil servant in the Ministry of Agriculture. He was interviewed by Brian Barton on 4 and 11 June, 1979.
(b) Clement Attlee was Deputy Prime Minister in Winston Churchill’s war cabinet. He was Prime Minister in the post-war Labour government, 1945-1951.
(c) Herbert Morrison was Deputy Prime Minister in the Labour government, 1945-1951.

Questions

(i) Which party came to power in Britain after the 1945 Westminster election?
(ii) What did Tom Johnston mean by ‘Éire’? When had the use of this name been introduced at an official level?
(iii) According to Tom Johnston – as reported by Douglas Harkness – how did the British Labour Party view the different roles played during World War II by Éire and by Northern Ireland?
(iv) Harkness reports that “both Attlee and Morrison ... became firm friends of Ulster.” What significant roles did these men hold after World War II?

Source 1i: J.M. Andrews in the Northern Ireland House of Commons, October, 1946

No one, in my opinion, has done so much to divide Ireland, both in years of peace and war as Mr de Valera ... ‘Let well enough alone’. I hope that the rulers of Éire will be willing, and if they are willing there is no reason why, under our two Parliaments, we should not live side by side as friends and neighbours, each governing its own people in accordance with their views, as democratically expressed at election times. Surely this is freedom and justice which no one can deny.


Questions

(i) To what is Andrews referring when he states: “No one ... has done so much to divide Ireland ... in years of ... war as Mr de Valera”?
(iii) Find out: What two developments of 1949 further deepened the divisions between the two parts of Ireland?
Enquiry 2: In what significant ways did Belfast affect the conduct of World War II?

Points to note

- Northern Ireland proved to be strategically important in a military sense to the Allied war effort. After the fall of France in June 1940, it became the most important strategic bridgehead for the protection of Allied shipping in the Atlantic Ocean. Belfast Harbour played a key role in this regard.
- Airplanes constructed in and deployed from Belfast helped to protect Allied shipping in the Atlantic.
- Northern Ireland had two listening stations (called ‘Y’ stations) – part of a wider UK network – which listened in to communications being transmitted by the Germans in code and sent them on to Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) at Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire. The stations were located at Gilnahirk in east Belfast and at Ramore Head, Portrush. The data gathered at these stations helped the team working at Bletchley Park to break the code.
- The stationing of American troops in Belfast and other parts of Northern Ireland enabled British troops to take part in campaigns elsewhere and allowed the American troops to complete their military training and preparations for the opening of a ‘second front’ against Germany, a strategy which came to fruition with the ‘D-Day’ landings of June, 1944.

Aircraft carrier GH Smith, with a deckload of planes, probably at Belfast docks
I used to think of Belfast just for its fame in building good ships. But this war has shown its importance and usefulness as a Naval Base.

In war time it is no less important to keep existing ships afloat and capable of service than to build new ones and during the war the excellent repair facilities of this port have completed repair jobs on Merchant vessels amounting to nearly 5 million gross tons, ranging from the humblest repair of Coasting Vessels to enormous feats of repair work on great Liners. The outstanding achievement of this kind was the almost complete rebuilding in 18 months of the White Star Liner “GEORGIC” which has recently been carrying Troops home from liberated areas in the Far East. Of some of the Warships you have built here there is the “FORMIDABLE” which has had a gallant and splendid record and has been operating in Far Eastern waters, taking part in the attacks on the Tokyo region which were made by the British Task Force, and also participated in attacks with the U.S. 3rd Fleet ...

... The corollary of fighting ships is bases from which they can operate. Without available bases, sea power cannot function. This is particularly evident when convoys have to be assembled and escorted and in this too Northern Ireland has played a conspicuous part. Located right on the flank of the immediate exit to the Atlantic, Belfast and Londonderry played a very important part in the vital defence of convoys. How necessary was that task we may see by the following figures: no less than 85,493 ships were escorted in ocean convoys during the war, of which only 649 were lost ... By having this fine Harbour [Belfast] so well equipped and available as an important War base, the Harbour Commissioners should be proud of their foresight and work.

Questions

(i) According to the Governor, for what had Belfast been famous prior to the outbreak of war?
(ii) What new, important role of Belfast had the war demonstrated?
(iii) Besides building ships, what other important role did the shipbuilders of Belfast play during the war?
(iv) Why does the Governor consider the work done on the White Star Liner, GEORGIC”, to be of particular significance?
(v) What does the Governor say about the warship “FORMIDABLE” which was built in Belfast?
(vi) According to the Governor, why were bases such as Belfast and Londonderry of such importance to the war effort?
(vii) Do the figures given by the Governor support his view that Belfast and Londonderry played key roles as bases? Give reasons for your answer.
(viii) Why does the Governor think that the Belfast Harbour Commissioners have reason to feel proud?

Note: The Governor of Northern Ireland was the British monarch’s representative in Northern Ireland. The Governor in November 1945 was Earl Granville.
I used to think of Belfast as just another city. But this war has shown its importance and usefulness as a naval base.

In war time it is no less important to keep existing ships afloat and capable of service than to build new ones and during the war the excellent repair facilities of this part have completed repair jobs on merchant vessels amounting to nearly 3 million gross tons, ranging from the humblest repair of coasting vessels to enormous feats of repair work on great liners. The outstanding achievement of this kind was the almost complete rebuilding in 18 months of the White Star liner "ORION", which has recently been carrying troops home from liberated areas in the Far East. Of some of the warships you have built here there is the "PORTSMOUTH" which has had a galling and splendid record and has been operating in Far Eastern waters, taking part in the attacks on the Tokyo region which were made by the British Task Force, and also participated in attacks with the U.S. 3rd Fleet. Another Belfast built ship is the Light Fleet Carrier "EAGLE". She too was operating in the Pacific and appropriately took the surrender of the Japanese Forces in New Ireland, besides New Guinea, New Britain and Solomon I. Another Belfast built ship which was completed during the war is the "BLACK PRINCE". She is the fourth warship of this name to serve in the Royal Navy. The first was launched in 1816; the second was one of our original ironclads; the third, a 14,000 ton Cruiser, was sunk at Jutland. The latest first came into the news in April 1944 when, with a small force of destroyers, she came into contact with four enemy destroyers off the N.W. Coast of France, of which she sank one and damaged the remainder. During the invasion of Normandy she supported the American landings. After one of her bombardments, the American Army sent "BLACK PRINCE" the following signal: "I wish you could see what your fire has done. It has smashed terrific emplacements." The "BLACK PRINCE" also lent the weight of her guns to the landings in the South of France and the operations in the Aegean, during which over 100,000 tons of enemy shipping was destroyed and she served as Admiral Mansfield's flagship during the liberation of Greece. More recently she took part in a combined air and sea strike against Heligoland and later joined in the bombardments in the Tokyo area. The "ONTARIO" commissioned in April this year and is a gift from Britain to Canada. She belongs to the Swiftest Class which has been stated to be the most up to date Cruiser in the navies of the United Nations. In addition to these, Belfast also built one Supply and Repair Carrier, one Submarine Depot Ship, 3 Landing Ships, 9 Frigates, 38 Corvettes, 77 Minelayers and 6 Transport Ferries. They have all been worthy inheritors of the great tradition of Belfast built ships, which has included some famous names as H.M.S. "PORTSMOUTH" and H.M.S. "BELFAST". The corollary of fighting ships is bases from which they can operate. Without available bases, sea power cannot function. This is particularly evident when convoys have to be assembled and escorted and in this too Northern Ireland has played a conspicuous part. Located right on the flank of the immediate exit to the Atlantic, Belfast and Londonderry played a very important part in the vital defence of convoys. How necessary was that task may be seen by the following figures: no less than 86,493 ships were escorted in ocean convoys during the war, of which only 649 were lost; so a small proportion of the number of ships escorted, and less than of the total of 2 thousand seven hundred merchant ships sunk by U-boats. But the enemy did not go untaunted, by sea and by air, we sank or probably sank 731 German subs. By having this fine Harbour so well equipped and available as an important war base, the Harbour Commissioners should be proud of their foresight and work.

Secondary source 1

[The Short and Harland aircraft factory’s] reorganisation – it was taken over by the government in March 1943 – contributed to a marked improvement in performance. ... the number of aircraft delivered by the firm had shown an increase of 69% during its first twelve months under new management ... Cumulatively [over the course of the war] it had completed 1,200 Stirling bombers and 125 Sunderland flying boats, sufficient for over 100 squadrons, and carried out repairs to roughly 3,000 heavy, medium and light aircraft. [P.81]

These circumstances [the fall of France and the diversion of the Atlantic convoys around the north coast of Ireland] enormously enhanced Northern Ireland’s role in keeping the sea lanes open during the Battle of the Atlantic. Her ports, anchorages and airfields became bases for anti-submarine escorts, maritime reconnaissance and coastal command. ... In 1943, the record year, 18 (21%) of the 84 submarines destroyed by RAF C[oastal] C[ommand] were by aircraft based in Northern Ireland. [P.88]

In 1943, Herbert Morrison, the Home Secretary, accurately reviewed Northern Ireland’s recent role. He observed “her strategical position alone ensures that her contribution is a crucial one. The unprotected gap in mid-Atlantic, the stretch of ocean which could not be covered by shore-based aircraft from either side would have been far wider were it not for the coastal command bases in Northern Ireland ...” [p.89]


Questions

(i) Suggest a likely reason for the government taking over the aircraft factory.

(ii) Besides building aircraft, what other important type of work did the aircraft factories carry out during the war?

(iii) Name two types of aircraft built in Belfast during the war.

(iv) Explain why Northern Ireland airfields of the RAF Coastal Command were important to the war effort.

(v) Explain Herbert Morrison’s reference to “The unprotected gap in mid-Atlantic”. What is the relevance of this to Northern Ireland’s crucial role in World War II?
Secondary source 2

During the Second World War the British developed a network of listening stations (called Y Stations) throughout the United Kingdom. Two such stations existed in Northern Ireland – one at Ramore Head, Portrush and the other at Gilnahirk in east Belfast. The purpose of these stations was to listen in to the communications being transmitted by the Germans, record the messages and then send them to a special team of experts as quickly as possible.

... The task of breaking the German code was given to an organisation called the Government Code and Cipher School, now known as GCHQ - Government Communications Headquarters. The original school was set up in 1939 at Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire and the work carried out at Bletchley Park was one of the most guarded secrets of the war.

Today, historians believe that the work of the code breakers at Bletchley Park shortened the war by two years. ...

However the raw data needed to allow the brilliant minds at Bletchley Park crack the German codes was provided by the men and women who spent hours and hours listening in on the Germans and accurately recording those messages. Those who worked at the Y Stations at Ramore Head and Gilnahirk played their part ...

The Y Station at Gilnahirk was situated near the junction of Manns Road and the Braniel Road. A local Second World War veteran worked at the site just after the war after spending some time as a trainer at Bletchley Park. He recalls that about 120 people worked on the site. The Station consisted of one main building, an administration building and a hut. He remembers that the DF (Directional Finding) equipment was ‘the only thing visible.’ He refuses to say anything about the secret work undertaken because all who worked in such establishments had signed the Official Secrets Act.


Questions

(i) For what purpose was the ‘listening station’ (or ‘Y station’) at Gilnahirk in east Belfast established?
(ii) What was the role of the team of experts based at Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire?
(iii) Explain what the writer means by the “raw data” that was needed to enable the experts to break the German code.
(iv) According to the anonymous Second World War veteran who is quoted, how many people worked at the Gilnahirk station? Why do you think this veteran wished to remain anonymous?
(v) Why did the anonymous veteran quoted refuse to say anything about the secret work in which he was involved?
Source 2b: James Hunter remembers Belfast Lough prior to D-Day

Just before the Invasion of Normandy, as it turned out, I turned 16, and cycled out of Belfast and up the North Coast with my friend Barton McKee for a week’s Youth Hostelling, which came and went too soon.

Cycling back towards Belfast, we rounded the Blagh-hole on the coast road, and were completely astounded by the sight of our Belfast Lough, totally crammed with ships.

There were heavily camouflaged naval escorts and a big number of cargo ships, presumably all carrying equipment and armour for the invasion, and all so tightly packed in, that it looked to us as if you could have walked straight across them and into Bangor without getting your shoes wet.

We later learned that ships from all over the UK were collected in various locations for sending on to Normandy when the time came.

Later that week, I woke to the news that the invasion had started and saw that Belfast Lough had quietly emptied of ships in the night.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/21/a4565621.shtml

Questions
(i) Background information: What was the purpose of the Allied invasion of Normandy in 1944?
(ii) Why were the writer and her friend “completely astounded” when they “rounded the Blagh-hole on the coast road”?
(iii) Explain the writer’s comment that “it looked to us as if you could have walked straight across them and into Bangor without getting your shoes wet.

Fifty-two German U-boats at an unidentified location in Northern Ireland, June 1945
Card-sorting and critical skills

Documents-based study

Development of critical skills

Documents-based question

The documents-based study is “the primary means of developing [students’] skills in working with evidence”. (Syllabus, page 5)

The documents-based question “will test candidates’ ability to interrogate, correlate and evaluate a particular body of evidence”. (Syllabus, page 15)

Rationale for card sorts

In a card sort, cards with text (single words, phrases, sentences) are grouped or ranked according to particular criteria. Card sorts are good in helping students to make connections and form judgements. By having the text on cards, students can move them around, group them and, when necessary, change their minds. This approach promotes discussion and collaborative learning.

The intention of the critical skills exercise on the pages that follow is to illustrate in a practical and active manner the type of critical skills that the documents-based study is designed to develop. Essentially, the purpose of the exercise is to encourage students to THINK by discussing snippets of evidence and making judgements on their import by deciding whether they support or oppose the given proposition. The PLAY element is important and the exercise should be an engaging one for students. The intention is not to come up with answers that are either ‘right’ or ‘wrong’: much of the value of the exercise is in the process itself. That said, it should be possible to reach consensus in most cases and to clarify misunderstandings – where these arise – in the process.

In literacy development, such approaches can play a pivotal role as students engage together in purposeful reading and discussion of text and are active participants in the learning process.

What is involved in the critical skills exercise

Each group of 4-5 students is given an A4 sheet with the proposition at the top of the page and two columns headed: Agrees and Disagrees. Each group is also given an envelope containing 8 short documentary extracts – each on its own small strip of paper or cardboard – and the task is to discuss with each other the appropriate column in which to place each extract. When each group has reached its conclusions, the outcome of the exercise is discussed in a whole group setting.
Proposition: World War II was a bad experience for the people of Belfast

Place each of the documentary extracts in the appropriate column, depending on whether you think it agrees or disagrees with the above proposition. If the group cannot agree on whether a particular extract agrees or disagrees with the proposition, place it along the dividing line in the middle and wait to hear what other groups have to say about the extract.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agrees</th>
<th>Disagrees</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
Source A

Heavy casualties were caused during the raid on Northern Ireland, the main weight of which was directed against Belfast, on Tuesday night and early yesterday morning. …Working class houses, mills, and a cinema were among the places destroyed in Belfast.

Source E

I was about 15 when VE day came and I remember going down to the City Hall in Belfast. That’s where everyone met up. I remember being at the City Hall and standing on a wall and looking down Royal Avenue. There were so many people there, you could have walked on people’s heads they were standing so close together.

Source B

A further way to supplement a family’s rations was to grow your own vegetables. My father grew beans and peas, onions and lettuce and brussel sprouts. … Other families, with smaller or no gardens, could apply for “plots” to grow their own produce. Many of these were allocated at Stormont, in the grounds of the Parliament Buildings …

Source F

During the war I worked in the shipyard and therefore didn't go to war. My brother served in the Navy and came back safely. We lived in Greenmount Street near the railway and weren't too bothered by the air-raids. I remember once being out in a rowing boat when a bomb was dropped - we were only affected by the wash caused by the bomb.

Source C

I remember during the war years being unable to buy stockings as they were considered luxuries. To overcome this we used to go to Busby's Chemist … where the owner would mix his own fake tans … The only drawback was if you got into bed without taking it off it would stain the sheets … My mother used to be furious with us but we still went and bought it, after all a girl has to make the best of herself even in war time.

Source G

During the first years of the war “the phoney war” life continued much as normal, other than having to cope with the blackout, petrol rationing and a few other shortages … It was a time when many friendships were made as people did not move far from their own area.

Source D

I was 8 years old when the war broke out. My first memory of the war was when the 1941 Blitz occurred. Everybody ran for the hills. The only thing that was left behind was the budgie. When we came back, the budgie was still whistling.

Source H

The blitz in and around Carlisle Circus where I lived caused an awful lot of devastation. Trinity Church was bombed one night and at the back of us Eglinton and Carlisle Street was practically wiped out … I remember standing watching them digging people out of the rubble.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Source Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source E</td>
<td>Hazel Collins</td>
<td>remembers VE celebrations at City Hall <a href="www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories">link</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source F</td>
<td>Henry Workman</td>
<td>(through the aegis of Shankill Library) <a href="www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories">link</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source G</td>
<td>Cecil Kennedy</td>
<td>remembers Belfast during the war years <a href="www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories">link</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source H</td>
<td>Joshua Mulholland</td>
<td>remembers a war childhood in Belfast <a href="www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories">link</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source A</td>
<td>News report, <em>Weekly Irish Times</em></td>
<td>19 April, 1941 <a href="www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories">link</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source B</td>
<td>June Martin</td>
<td>remembers a Belfast childhood during World War II <a href="www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories">link</a></td>
</tr>
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<td>Source C</td>
<td>Marian Hunter</td>
<td>remembers 'making do' <a href="www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories">link</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source D</td>
<td>Francis Leo Cummins</td>
<td>remembers the ‘Blitz budgie’ <a href="www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories">link</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Historians’ views about Belfast during World War II

Secondary Source A
To the north the war brought a variety of new experiences. Although the British government turned down Craigavon’s request that conscription should be applied to Northern Ireland, the people of the north shared the other wartime experiences of the British – high taxation, restrictions, rationing, and in Belfast severe air raids. Many Ulstermen joined the British forces. Thousands of British troops were trained in the province, new airfields were constructed, and Londonderry became an important naval base. In 1942 American troops began to arrive in the north. ... With the development of wartime industries an unwonted prosperity reigned. People from Éire came to work in the north but they had to register and obtain permits and the prime minister made it clear that they would not be allowed to remain and become voters ... There was movement in the other direction too: many people, among them unionist working men who had never before had the means or the inclination to do so, went south on holiday to escape from the rigours of wartime conditions.


Secondary Source B
With Mr de Valera’s resolute adoption of a policy of neutrality for the south, the geographical situation of Northern Ireland in relation to the sea-lanes connecting Britain with North America at once became exceedingly important. This importance was immeasurably heightened after the fall of France in 1940, when German submarines and aircraft were in a position to range far out into the Atlantic in pursuit of Allied shipping. To combat them naval bases were necessary and Belfast, Londonderry and Larne supplied this vital need. From these ports went out many of the escort vessels used in the early stages of the war to bring in the convoys heading for the Mersey and the Clyde by the only avenue open to them – the northwest approaches where Ulster, as Churchill later wrote, ‘stood a faithful sentinel’.


Secondary Source C
In the Belfast area, munitions producers manufactured 75 million shells, 180 million incendiary bullets, 50,000 bayonets, and a variety of other military material.

... Northern Ireland’s only Victoria Cross was won by James Megennis, a Belfast Catholic in the Royal Navy, in July 1945 ...

... Belfast came twelfth in a league table of urban areas attacked in the United Kingdom in terms of weight of bombs dropped. It was estimated that no city apart from Liverpool had more people killed in one night of bombing than Belfast. The strategic position of Northern Ireland was perhaps the most significant contribution by the province to the British war effort, and it earned Westminster’s gratitude.


Secondary Source D
In many respects, Belfast was the city most unprepared for the devastation wreaked by German air raids in 1941, and it paid a massive price. ... That it was bombed, however, retrospectively became an ideological gain as well as a material loss ...

The conflict had huge political and social implications, including a much closer relationship between Stormont and Westminster. ... The arrival of 300,000 troops altered the complexion of many communities ...

Diarmaid Ferriter, The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000. Profile Books Ltd., 2004
Interrogating the historians

Our enquiry has focused on the questions:

“In what significant ways did World War II affect Belfast?” AND
“In what significant ways did Belfast affect the conduct of World War II?”

1. Which of the historians deal with the significance of the 1941 air attacks on Belfast? Explain the ways in which they see the attacks as significant.
2. Which of the historians comment on the development of wartime industries? Identify one way in which this development was significant, according to one of the historians.
3. Which of the historians set the developments discussed in a wider United Kingdom context? Give reasons for your answer.
4. Which of the historians make reference to the significant strategic position of Northern Ireland? Which historian explains the reasons why its position was strategic? What were those reasons?
5. Which of the historians make reference to the arrival of large numbers of troops? What nationality or nationalities were the troops in question?
6. What does the historian in Secondary Source D mean when he writes of the bombing of Belfast: “That it was bombed, however, retrospectively became an ideological gain as well as a material loss”? (You may need help from your teacher with this.)

Your conclusions on the enquiry

Based on the evidence you have encountered in the course of the enquiry - and bearing in mind any relevant points made by the historians quoted on the previous page - draw up a list of

- THREE significant ways in which Belfast was affected by World War II AND
- THREE significant ways in which Belfast affected the conduct of World War II.

Make your case in a written report, devoting one paragraph (or more) to each of the six significant ways identified.

OR

Now that we have looked at a wide range of evidence on the ways in which World War II was significant for Belfast

- What do you think are the TWO main ways in which Belfast was affected by World War II?
- What do you think are the TWO main ways in which Belfast helped in the war against Nazi Germany?

For each of the ways that you mention, you must back up your reason with evidence from the sources that we have studied.