# Refugees and WWII evacuees

A young princess talks to the children of the nation. She sympathises with those separated from friends and relations. She praises the kindness of strangers. Use this primary resource to explore what pupils know and think about refugees, triggered by a speech from a teenage royal.

## Learning objectives

Learners will:

* Consider what they already know and think about refugees
* Develop an understanding of how child evacuees might have felt during the Second World War
* Discuss why people have to leave their homes and the kindness they might hope to receive

Suggested age range: 5–11

## Separation from family

When the Queen was 14, and still known as Princess Elizabeth, she appeared live talking to children in the UK and overseas.

Begin by asking pupils how this might have happened. What were the options for communicating with children over 70 years ago?

The answer is Children's Hour, a long-lasting radio programme broadcast between 5pm and 6pm every day and aimed at 5 to 15-year-olds.

Let pupils know that they are going to listen to a piece of that broadcast. It is only just over a minute long, and in it there is a bit of a puzzle. The princess talks about a big change in the lives of many thousands of children. Listen for it, and be ready to think about it. The year was 1940.

Play the [clip](https://youtu.be/VJI9LPFQth4), **stopping at 2:05**as per the transcript below.

## Transcript

In wishing you all good evening, I feel that I am speaking to friends and companions who have shared with my sister and myself many a happy Children's Hour. Thousands of you in this country have had to leave your homes and be separated from your fathers and mothers.

My sister, Margaret Rose, and I feel so much for you as we know from experience what it means to be away from those we love most of all. To you living in new surroundings we send a message of true sympathy and at the same time we would like to thank the kind people who have welcomed you to their homes in the country.

All of us children who are still at home think continually of our friends and relations who have gone overseas, who have travelled thousands of miles to find a wartime home and a kindly welcome in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the United States of America.

Draw out from pupils that the big change in children's lives was leaving their homes and family. Introduce the concept of war-time evacuees, and link it to any other work the group has done on World War II and evacuees. Relate it to books or stories featuring evacuees that pupils might know.

Ask groups to **choose some words that describe how children might have felt**about leaving their home in towns and cities to move to the countryside, or to another country. If appropriate, use a list such as this to select from or stimulate ideas:

* scared, excited, lonely, upset, grateful, bored, happy, sad, strange, adventurous, unsure, grown up, empty, lucky, worried

Is there agreement among groups? Do pupils think all evacuees felt the same?

Discuss the word **sympathy**. Princess Elizabeth uses the phrase "true sympathy" to show that she knows from her own experience what being separated from loved ones is like. Hands up if you think you understand someone else better if you have experienced what is happening to them. Give two examples.

Now play the extract again, this time saying that you will ask questions at the end. If you wish, forewarn pupils of the questions (answers in italics):

* What is the name of the princess's sister? *Margaret Rose.*
* Who does the princess thank? *The kind people who have welcomed children into their homes in the country.*
* What countries does the princess refer to? *Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the United States of America*. Find them on a map and look at the size of them compared with Britain.

Explore the word **evacuee**. What other words sound the same? Discuss evacuate and vacuum cleaner. People talk of evacuating a building during a fire or other emergency. The word means emptying or removing, in this case from a place of danger. Nowadays there is a different word for people who have to move from their homes because it is too dangerous. Discuss the word **refugee**. Write on a board:

* Leaving a place of danger = evacuating it = the people are called **evacuees**
* Arriving at a place of safety = finding refuge = the people are called **refugees**

Create a drawing or painting that shows the two scenes: leaving danger and finding refuge. What was it like in the UK in 1940? What is it like today in other parts of the world?

Think again about the princess's broadcast. She talks of the kind people giving homes to evacuees and the kindly welcome they receive. Focus on this word **kindness**and ask pupils to say what it would mean in practice. What does kindness look like in actual behaviour? Some ways of exploring it:

* Create a collage of words, phrases and pictures that illustrate the kindness a refugee would hope for.
* Devise a song or rap that speaks about kindness for refugees.
* Find examples of kindness that evacuees or refugees received - from real-life news reports or from books, stories and films - and prepare them to explain to a class or assembly.

### Credits

This resource was written by PJ White and produced in May 2012. The audio clip is from [The Royal Channel](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=VJI9LPFQth4#!).