

Notes for teachers and librarians on **BOMBS & BLACKBERRIES**

by Julia Donaldson

OVERVIEW

A short illustrated play set in World War Two, perfect for class reading as well as performance, written by Julia Donaldson, author of the modern classic *The Gruffalo*. Perfect for the 75th Anniversary of D-Day in 2019.

World War Two has been declared and the Chivers children are sent to the safety of the countryside. They are delighted to be brought back home when it looks like the Germans aren't going to invade after all. But the air-raid siren goes off and this time it's frighteningly real.

This dramatic and touching play brings Manchester during the Second World War and its people to life, and provides a variety of opportunities for school classes to explore both historical and literacy topics in an involving and creative setting. Also includes helpful tips on staging and costume.

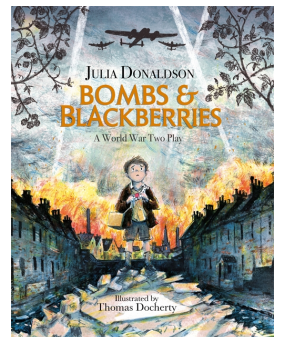
HOOK FOR THE BOOK (BEFORE READING)

- Complete a geographical study of Manchester: Where is Manchester? What is Manchester like? What was it like in Manchester in 1939?
- Look at artefacts from the period and create a museum in the classroom. Become the curator and write a short description for each artefact so visitors can find out more information.

WHILE READING

Reading Journals

- Note down your thoughts, ideas and viewpoints about the play in a reading journal.
- Use these notes to aid discussion in reading groups/literature circles/book clubs.



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Making Predictions

- At different points of the play encourage the pupils to make predictions about what might happen next, e.g. what event might happen, what a character might do next, how a character might be feeling.
- Pupils can give reasons for their predictions using evidence from the text. Different strategies could be used such as group discussion, post-it notes, silent debate, thought corridor, think pair share, freeze frames, hot-seating etc.

Asking Questions

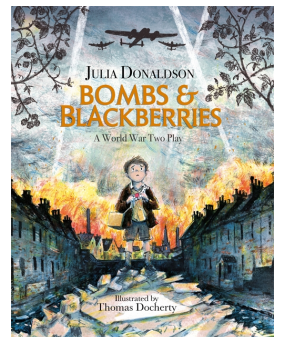
- Ask questions and explore answers through further reading, research and discussion.
- Compose questions to ask the different characters. Hot-seat the characters, thinking about the response they would give to each question.

Visualisation

- What extra information can be gathered from the illustrations? Which is your favourite illustration? Why?
- What other illustrations would you include?
- Create your own image for a selected scene in the play.

Author Study

- Find out about Julia Donaldson and create a biography.
- Finish the statement: 'I like the way the author . . .'
- Explore author techniques: language, imagery, themes, viewpoint, style, plot development, use of punctuation, use of questions.
- Why does the author use italics?
- How does the author signal a change in the setting?
- How does the author show that the play is set in the past? Share at least ten examples with the reading group. Discuss why this is important to the play.
- Collect unfamiliar words and explore their meanings through the use of a dictionary. Create a glossary to explain the meaning of these unfamiliar words and phrases for other readers.
- How does the author add humour to the play? Pupils can find examples in the text to support their answers.



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ENGLISH

Playscripts/Drama

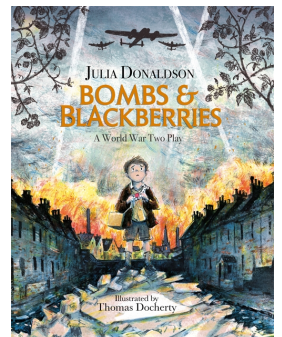
- Explore the features of a playscript: the action is split into scenes, settings are described, speech starts on a new line and with the name of the character speaking, no inverted commas, stage directions written in italics and/or in brackets to show the actions of a character or how a character should say the words, dialogue used to advance the action...etc
- Drama: Divide the class into groups to perform various scripted scenes from the play. Share performances and evaluate through peer assessment. Alternatively, the entire play could be performed on stage by the whole class, thinking about expression, volume and tone of their voices.
- Freeze frame: Divide the class into groups to perform scenes from the play. Freeze the action and select a member of the class to walk round the living scene asking questions to each pupil, who will respond as the character they are portraying.
- Improvise dialogue between key characters and use this as a starting point to create a new scene for the play. Once performed, write the scene using the key features of a playscript.
- Use ICT to record performances.

Sequencing the Story

- Discuss the sequence of events and how they link together, paying particular attention to how events can prompt a character's behaviour. Pupils can sequence the story through storyboards, comic strips and drama.

Illustrations

- Select some of the illustrations from the book and write a caption for each.
- Consider what the characters might be thinking and saying, using the illustrations. Ideas could be placed in a thought or speech bubble and arranged around the selected illustrations.



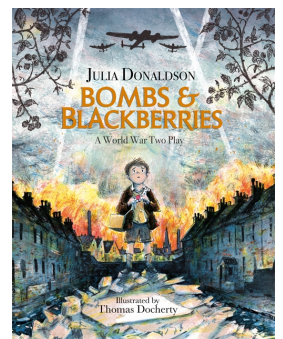
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WRITING

- Character profiles: Using evidence from the text, write a description of one of the key characters. Use similes, adjectives, adverbs, verbs, prepositions, metaphors and personification in your descriptions. Does the character change throughout the story? Compare two of the characters. What is similar/different about them?
- Create a 'role on the wall' to track a character's feelings at different points of the play. Words to describe what the character looks like can be placed outside an outline of the character, and observations concerning the character's feelings can be placed inside.
- Write your own story using the key events from the play.
- Diary entry: Write about a chosen event from the perspective of one of the key characters. Describe the character's thoughts and feelings, writing in the first person and using time connectives, adjectives and conjunctions.
- Choose one of the scenes and write a description of the setting. Think about the senses; what can you hear, feel, see, smell?
- Write a newspaper article reporting an event from the play. Use appropriate language and presentational features.
- Create a poem to describe the air raid in Scene 5 using words and phrases that will create a vivid picture, atmosphere and mood for the reader.
- After reading the play and other resources, pretend you are an evacuee and write a letter home describing what you have been doing in the countryside.



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BEYOND THE BOOK – History Project on World War II

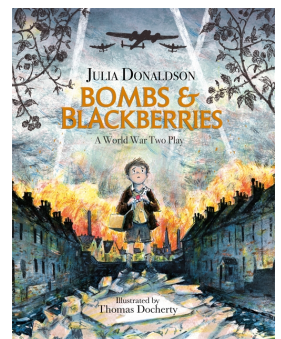
KS1 History (2014 Curriculum): Pupils should be taught about events beyond living memory that are significant nationally or globally; the lives of significant individuals who have contributed to national and international achievements.

KS2 History (2014 Curriculum): Pupils should be taught about a study of an aspect or theme in British history that extends pupils' chronological knowledge beyond 1066 (e.g. a significant turning point in British history).

- When was World War Two and what caused it to begin?
- Who was Adolf Hitler? What was his role in World War Two?
- Role play: Pretend you are a group of advisors for the British government and debate the advantages and disadvantages of going to war with Germany.
- Who was Winston Churchill? How did he contribute to the Allies' success?
- Was Dunkirk a success for the Allies?

Write a newspaper report on the event from a British perspective. Discuss the role of propaganda, censorship and morale in media reports.

- Why was the Battle of Britain a turning point in World War Two?
- What was life like for Stanley in the British Army?
- What would the advantages and disadvantages have been to Britain if Germany had succeeded?
- How did Britain prepare for war? What would you do to prepare your country for war if you were Prime Minister?



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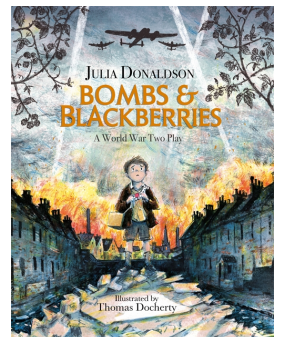
- Why were children evacuated from cities during World War Two?
Explore the pros and cons and create a public information leaflet promoting evacuation.
Explore what it would have been like to be evacuated during World War Two. Do you think evacuation was the right decision?
- Make a comparison of what life was like for children during the 1930s/40s and today.
- Why was rationing introduced? Why were some foods in short supply?
- Look at the poster in the grocery shop. What was 'Dig for Victory'?
Design your own propaganda poster promoting 'Dig for Victory' and create a catchy slogan to encourage civilians to take part.
- What was life like during the Blitz? What was the impact of the bombing?
Make a voiceover for the radio to explain what to do in a blackout or during an air raid.
How did the Blitz affect the major towns and cities of Britain? Why were some places chosen and others ignored? Which cities do you think Hitler targeted? Give reasons for your choices.
- What was life like for the civilians in other areas of Europe? Divide the class into groups, each taking a different country and presenting findings in a digital presentation.

CROSS-CURRICULAR LINKS

GEOGRAPHY

- Which countries were involved in World War Two? Find them on a map/globe/digital map.
- How much of Europe did Hitler invade? Which countries were invaded and when did the invasion take place?
- Explore what happened in your local area during the war.
- Compare and contrast an urban and a rural setting in Britain, commenting on human and physical features.

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DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY

- Design, make and evaluate an Anderson shelter for the Chivers family to use in their garden during an air raid.
- Design and make a gas-mask box.
- Design and make a selection of props for the play before performing it to an audience.

COOKING & NUTRITION

- Luigi mentions Italian bread during Scene VI. Sample and make different bread from Italy.
- In groups, make a traditional savoury dish from the 1930/40s.

ART AND DESIGN

- Be inspired by the illustrator and create your own picture of the air raid.

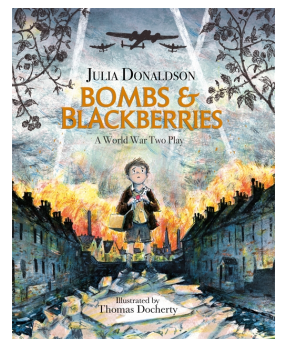
MUSIC

- Create sound effects for the play using tuned and untuned instruments and/or voices.
- Listen to music from the 1930s and 1940s. Discuss what you like about the music and compare to music made today.
- Sing World War Two songs and add actions ready to perform to an audience.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- Dance: Explore dances from the 1930s and 1940s. Learn how to waltz and perform to an audience. Self/peer assess performances.

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PSHE

- What is the role of the United Nations? Are there areas of conflict around the world today? How can we work towards overcoming such conflicts in the future?
- Design a peace treaty for either a historical or current conflict.

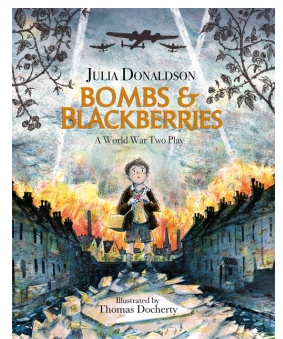
LANGUAGES

- Learn some key phrases in German, French and Italian.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Scene 1

- Look at the illustrations and describe what is happening in Manchester, Autumn 1939.
- What is the significance of the title of Scene 1 – ‘Farewell, Manchester, Autumn 1939’?
- Why do the children have labels on their coats and gas masks in boxes around their necks?
- Where do you think the children might be going to with their teacher?
- Why is mum crying as Elsie, Jack and Joey leave Manchester for the country?
- Why are the children going to the country without their parents?
- What would you pack if you were an evacuee? Make a list in the outline of a suitcase or bring your suitcase into school to discuss.
- Who is Miss Oldham?
- What had the family been using as a flowerpot for the geranium?
- Why does Mr Chivers want his helmet back?
- How could citizens help during the war in the city?
- What does Mr Chivers mean when he says ‘We’ll have Hitler licked in no time.’?
- What are ‘crackpot ideas’?
- Why have the station names been painted out?
- Why are the children concerned about the Germans?
- What is a spy?



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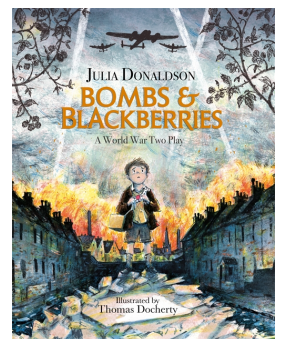
- Why does Miss Oldham keep encouraging the children to sing songs during their train journey?
- What has Stanley joined up to? Why is Mrs Chivers upset?
- What happens at Metrovick? Why is this important at this point in history?
- Why did so many men join the army before being called up?
- Why might Mrs Chivers get a job at Metrovick?
- What was life like for women during this time?
- Why does the author use the phrase 'hush-hush' to describe the house and factory?

Explore Language Used:

jostle, geranium, daft, shrapnel, braining me, folks, rubble, aye, hanky, crackpot ideas, daftie, pipe down, recruiting office, suchlike, tons of workers, hush-hush

SCENE 2

- Why is the scene entitled 'The Vackies'?
- Why are the children waiting in the village hall? How do you think they might be feeling? Describe their emotions in five words.
- Why does Mrs Smiley say 'This isn't a cattle market' to Farmer Gregg?
- Where do all the children go?
- Imagine you are an evacuee. Write a short description of yourself on a luggage label describing why someone should pick you.
- Why does Sarah Huggins want Elsie to live with her?
- Why has no one chosen Vera and May Dawson?
- Who is Albert?
- Why does Mrs Smiley think that Elsie, Jack and Joey are lucky to be going with Albert?
- Why does Mrs Smiley repeat the sentence 'The fresh air will do them good' every time the children are picked?
- What game are the children playing at school? Describe the rules to a partner.



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- Discuss the attitude of the village children towards the evacuees from Manchester.
- Can the words we say be hurtful? Discuss how we should treat others and embrace differences.
- How does Sally try to help?

Explore Language Used:

parish clerk, bustling, sturdy, tumbledown, scrummy, asthma, toffs, vackies, lice

SCENE 3

- What is a blackout? Why was the blackout important during the Blitz?
- Read the letter from Elsie. What have the children been doing in the country?
- Why is it too dangerous for the children to remain in Manchester?
- Why does Mrs Chivers believe that the real danger is the blackout and not Hitler? Do you agree?
- How is Doris helping during the war?
- How does the author show that Mr Briggs is from the north of England?

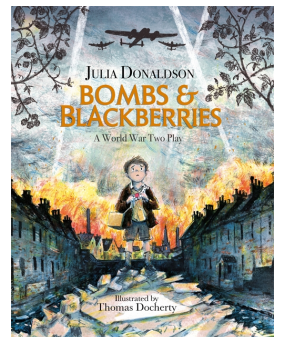
Explore Language Used:

parish clerk, bustling, sturdy, tumbledown, scrummy, asthma, toffs, vackies, lice

SCENE 4

- How long have the children been away from home?
- Discuss why the scene is called 'Trickling Home'.
- Why is Miss Skelton cross?
- How does Kite Hall compare to their home in Manchester?
- Why does Joey not want to play anymore?
- What is a ration book?

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- Imagine you are shopping on a ration. Plan a well-balanced meal using your rations.
- Why was Mrs Chivers cross when she left the grocer's?
- Why does Mrs Chivers decide to bring her children back to Manchester?
- How did Stanley get from France to Britain?
- Why has Stanley come home to Manchester?
- What does Brian mean when he says 'Shut up, Jack! I keep telling you, walls have ears.'?

Explore Language Used:

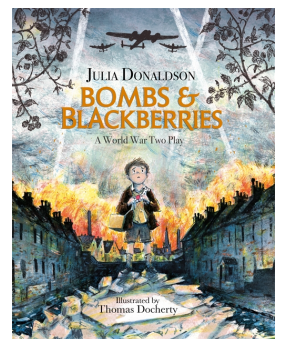
trickling, convenience, fond, grocery shop, ration book, Spam, cluster

SCENE 5

- What was the Christmas Blitz?
- 'Christmas will still be Christmas, cake or no cake.' What does Mr Chivers mean when he says this?
- What is a wireless? Compare technology from the 1930s and technology used today.
- Why does Mr Chivers have to do an extra duty tonight?
- What is an air raid? Why does the family need a shelter in the garden?
- Imagine you are a member of the Chivers family. What would you take into the air-raid shelter?
- What is a Stuka and a Heinkel? Investigate other planes used during World War Two.
- Why does the family switch off their torches when they peep outside the shelter?
- What do they see when they look outside?
- Describe the feelings of the characters when they realise that a bomb is on the roof. What would you do in this situation?
- How does the author create a 'cliffhanger' at the end of the air-raid scene?
- What do we learn from Stan's letters?
- Why was it important to have rest homes during the war?

Explore Language Used:

cheerio, wireless, as quick as you can say Jack Robinson, daresay, by gum, jollier



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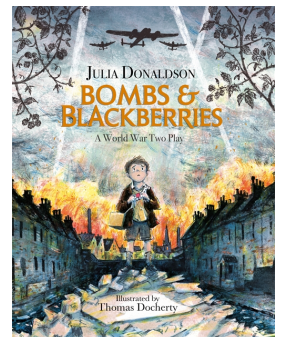
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SCENE 6

- What is a prisoner of war?
- Who are Paolo and Luigi? Why are they in Britain?
- Who is Mussolini? How did Italy become involved in the war?
- How does the author show that Paolo and Luigi are from Italy?
- Would you speak to the Italians? Why?
- Create a tourist brochure for Siena.
- What would you miss the most if you were in a foreign country?

Explore Language Used:

rosehip syrup, foreign, invaders, pleaded



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