

Alice By Heart

Sound Concept

Research

Sounds of the Blitz:

- **Air-raid siren sounds the warning.**
 - Air-raid sirens first sounded the warning in London in September 1939. They became an almost daily part of life in the capital a year later during the height of the Blitz.
When people heard the siren they would stop what they were doing and make for a shelter. These might be Anderson shelters constructed from corrugated iron which were built in gardens, or Morrison shelters which were constructed indoors.
In London many people crowded into tube stations and spent the raid underground. Often daily life would continue within the larger shelters - for example, children continuing their lessons inside their school shelter.
- **Air-raid siren sounds the 'all clear'**
 - The air raid warning system was developed in 1938/9. The sound of the 'warning' signal and the 'all clear' would become very familiar to people living in large cities in Britain. Air raid sirens were placed on the top of tall buildings - often police stations or similar - or on the top of poles if no suitable building could be found. In cities the sirens were powered electrically and produced two signals. The first was the warning - a rising and falling signal, created by varying the power to the siren. The second was the all clear - a single, continuous note. After it was confirmed the skies were clear of enemy aircraft the 'all clear' would sound. It brought relief to countless thousands as they made their way wearily out of shelters to resume daily life.
- **The sound of a fire engine racing through the streets during the Blitz.**
 - One of the preparations Britain made for war was to create an Auxiliary Fire Service with 25,000 members which would fight fires alongside the regular fire brigade.
The bombardment that began on 7 September 1940 caused the biggest fires seen in London since the Great Fire of 1666. Many members of the AFS had never fought major fires before and now found themselves expected to deal with major incidents on an unprecedented scale.
Many of the bombs dropped on London and other major cities were incendiary devices intended to start fires. These bombs had the dual effect of spreading destruction and lighting up the city to make it easier as a target.
Firefighters worked in very demanding conditions. They worked during raids, while the bombs were falling. They were at risk from collapsing buildings and falling shrapnel from anti-aircraft guns. They often worked 15 hours at a time, in clothes that were soaked through.
The fire service played a key role in ensuring that some cities were not totally destroyed during the War.

- **Lancaster bomber takes off**
 - The Avro Lancaster bomber was a key weapon of the Allies during the War. More than 7,000 were produced, which flew a total of more than 150,000 missions - from which more than 3,000 planes were never to return. The roar of a bomber squadron taking off and returning was a familiar sound to many thousands of people living in southern England. The Lancaster remains a feature of events to commemorate the War.
- **A BBC report describes families sheltering in London's tube stations.**
 - At the start of the Blitz many Londoners decided to make use of tube stations as air raid shelters because they felt more secure here than in other shelters - for example, Andersen shelters. It was initially discouraged by the authorities, because it was felt an important service would be disrupted. However, as the War continued platforms filled up and eventually it became necessary to provide canteens and toilet facilities for those sheltering in the stations. Sheltering in a tube station may have given a sense of security but conditions were hardly attractive. Space was limited and many have spoken of the terrible smell of so many people sheltering in a confined space without adequate ventilation. Many people became territorial about 'their space' leading to frequent arguments. Nor was the tube always as safe as those sheltering within had hoped: in January 1941 a bomb fell above Bank station in the City of London, killing more than 100 hundred people sheltering below.
- **A BBC reporter describes fires out of control in central London.**
 - The main targets for air raids outside London were Liverpool, Birmingham, Plymouth, Bristol, Glasgow, Southampton, Coventry, Hull, Portsmouth, Manchester, Belfast, Sheffield, Newcastle, Nottingham and Cardiff. During the Blitz more than 2,000,000 houses were destroyed. 60,000 civilians were killed; a further 87,000 were seriously injured. Many of these were women and children - indeed, during the early years of the war civilians were at greater risk than combatants. However, the intense bombing failed to have the desired effect. The infrastructure of key cities survived, while many ordinary people have suggested that their resolve was strengthened by the Blitz.
- **Public health information**
 - The destruction of housing caused by bombing presented urban communities with some basic health and hygiene challenges. In this recording from November 1940 Ministry of Information loudspeaker vans advise the residents of Coventry after the raid on that city about the need to ensure drinking water is not contaminated...and other matters too!
- **A woman describes her experience of being 'bombed out' by a direct hit.**
 - More than 2,000,000 homes were destroyed in Britain by enemy bombs - about 60% of these in London - and a great many others were severely damaged. 1,400,000 Londoners were bombed out of their homes between September 1940 and May 1941. It meant that many families that survived the bombardment were faced with the tragedy of homelessness.

Britain was not prepared for homelessness on such a scale. State assistance was inadequate and emergency centres set up to deal with the problem could not cope. Many families had to rely on relatives and friends. The job of repairing buildings during the War was hampered because many craftsmen and labourers had joined the Armed Services.

Temporary dwellings - often little more than huts - began to spring up in bomb-damaged areas. In some of the worst affected areas - for example, the East End of London - families were still living in pre-fabricated bungalows long after the War had ended.

- **A teacher takes her young children through their gas mask drill.**

- Gas masks were issued to all children as a precaution against attack by gas bombs. The masks came in cardboard boxes, with a strap for carrying them on the shoulder. Children were instructed to keep their masks with them at all times and were the key item of luggage for evacuees.

Gas mask drill was a daily feature of life at school. The routine for the drill was: i) remove mask from box; ii) put mask on face; iii) check the mask is fitting correctly; iv) breathe normally.

Many wartime children have subsequently admitted that they struggled to take the drill seriously and that their masks were frequently the source of games and much fun.

This recording dates from 1941 and features a teacher instructing her infants to put their gas masks on (...prior to getting their knitting out and listening to a story...!)

- **A boy describes being bombed**

- Another personal testimony - this time from a boy in Croydon - of the experience of being bombed.

- **HRH Princess Elizabeth broadcasts to the nation's children**

- In October 1940 HRH Princess Elizabeth - the future Queen Elizabeth II (1926 - 2022) - made her first radio broadcast aged 14. It was a message of sympathy to the children of Britain and the Empire.

DESIGN CONCEPT

Big Thoughts

- Multiple Subs, one in the pit for sure, and one in the back of the theatre.
 - Used for the *feeling* of bombs in the distance, even when we don't *hear* them. Psychological vs. audible.
- The struggle between real and fantasy. Unfortunately, the real always bleeds over into fantasy.
 - Alice, a 15 year old, is surrounded by chaos she cannot control. She is surrounded by signs, "Keep Calm and Carry On," however, in the tube station in which she is living with her dying best friend shakes ever so often due to the bombs in the distance. What is she to do?
 - She does what teenagers do.. she avoids reality. She jumps into this fantasy book world. I have started personally using social media as an analogy. The fun stories of the world are funny videos, but that made up world shakes when the viewer is confronted with something that reminds them of the world's current situation. For some, that is a news clip or a post that doesn't sit right with them, for Alice, it's confronting her best friend's death that is happening within the small space they are sharing.
 - When Alice and Alfred go to the caterpillars, the caterpillars offer something that *stops time*. This is intriguing to Alice. This could have a modern day analogy to marijuana, or for legal purposes, a glass of wine at the end of the day. For some, they rely on it, to slow time or to avoid the reality. For others, it may slow time, but it only makes it that much worse when returning to the reality of the situation.
- A ticking to be used for Alfred/White Rabbit.
 - Fades onto the stage where he enters and off where he exits.
 - When he 'smokes,' it slows down, but. It. Never. Stops.
 - As we grow closer to the end, the faster the ticking gets and more sporadic. Mirroring the breathing of real life Alfred.
- Jabberwocky, octave voice modulation.
- Storybook manipulation. What is she reading vs. what is she experiencing. A good example is listed on page 58 and described in my small thoughts section.
- HEAVY SUB in the Mad Hatter Scene.
- During dance break on Jabberwocky song, punctuated with bombs.
- Return to the sound of garden for innocence. Back to the bones of the story. The part she likes. The part she knows by HEART.
- When Alfred dies, the ticking is gone.

- ## Small Thoughts

- ## PRELIM SPEAKER PLOT

- Mains
- Audience Speakers
- Subs
- On Stage Monitors
- Band Monitors
- Band Tio System (Under Platform)

