

Rationing memories

Here are some memories of rations from people who were children during WWII.

'I actually liked powdered eggs, of course I didn't have much experience with real eggs; they were something rare and exotic, and came from far, far away. We had a chocolate bar once a week if we were lucky. Instead of normal sweets, we would suck on cough drops if we could scrounge them, even though they often tasted awful. We made our own chocolate by mixing cocoa and sugar together, and we would put the mixture into a scrap of newspaper, then take it out into the street to share with our friends.'

'I remember my uncle bringing back some bananas when he came home on leave. He gave me one and I took it to school. Everyone crowded around me and my teacher showed it to the whole class. It seemed like a priceless treasure. I was a very popular girl that day. Everyone wanted me to open it and eat it, but I wouldn't. I took it back home with me and left it till it went black, but it still smelled so good.'

'My parents used to put margarine in a butter wrapper so that I would eat it and I used to say 'There's something very funny about this butter. But you didn't have any brands of anything then, you had national margarine and you had national cheese, which tasted like national soap. It was all wrapped in plain wrappers.'

'My mother was not so good at cooking with rations. Her pastry suffered from a lack of fat. It became common practice in those days to mix margarine with dried egg and some milk to make it go further. Mother, however, always added too much liquid. My brother used to say (out of her hearing), I don't know why she doesn't put this revolting mess into a jug, it pours better than it spreads.'

1. What did children eat instead of sweets and chocolate bars?



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2. Why do you think everyone was so curious about the banana?



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3. Why do you think parents put margarine in a butter wrapper?



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4. Why did people mix margarine with egg and milk? Do you think this tasted as good as using butter? Why or why not?



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Teacher's sheet

Based on **pages 34 to 37** of *Children in the Second World War*

Rationing memories

Age range

- Years 3/4 (SP4/5).
- Years 5/6 (SP6/7).

Resources

Copies of the worksheet.

Using the worksheet

Everyone who lived through WWII had a lot of memories about the food. Many people, especially children, got used to eating powdered eggs and milk and when the war was over they did not know the difference and still preferred these things. But for most people rationing meant having to get used to eating food that did not taste as good as before the war.

You may want to begin by reading these rationing memories out loud, or having the students read them, and then discussing how what the students eat every day differs from what people ate during the war. For example, you may like to ask the students how often they have chocolate bars, sweets or bananas and how they might feel if they could only eat these things once a month or so.

You may also like to use this exercise along with worksheet **18B** 'What we eat then and now' (pages 110–111) to give students a chance to see how their diet compares with that of children during WWII.

You may need to explain that pastry needs fat in order to make it flaky and rich-tasting. You could bring in some baked shortcrust pastry and a tortilla, and students could compare them. The shortcrust pastry is made with flour, water and fat, while the tortilla is made with just flour and water. You may also want to mix up some dried egg, dried milk, margarine and a little water so students can compare that mixture to butter. They could even spread a little of each on a cracker to compare the taste (make sure you check with your school's health and safety regulations before giving the students anything to eat).

Younger students

Let the students read through the passage and answer the questions. You may like to use the questions for a class discussion and the students can write down their answers afterwards.

Outcomes

The students can:

- Extract information from a text.
- Make comparisons about life in the past with life today.

Older students

Let the students read through the passage and answer the questions. They may also like to use secondary sources to read more rationing memories.

Outcomes

The students can:

- Extract information from a text.
- Make comparisons about life in the past with life today.
- Use a range of sources to investigate a topic.

Answers

1. They ate cough drops, or mixed cocoa and sugar together.
2. Because they hadn't seen any bananas in a long time (or at all).
3. To try and fool children into thinking it was butter so they would eat it.
4. Margarine was mixed with egg and milk to stretch it and make it last longer.