

Activity 8

What makes a *good* food ration?

In brief: A card sort activity is used to predict which foods were included in the WWII food ration. The ration is then 'analysed' using the Balance of Good Health Food Plate. This continues the development of the children's understanding of the key components of a healthy diet. There is a series of John Boyd Orr's video diaries to accompany this activity. Clips of one of the authors engaged in this activity with children at her school are also included on the DVD.



Main activity

1. Distribute the food cards on *Resource Sheets 4 and 5* (These are the same food cards used in Activity 2).
2. Ask the children to work in pairs.
3. Show video clip 4a, in which John Boyd Orr thinks about how the food ration should be formulated.
4. Ask children to group together the foods they think were included in the weekly war-time food ration and to stick them on to a paper plate using Blu-tack.
5. Bring class together to allow pairs to show and discuss their plates and the reasons for their decisions. Allow the children to discuss differences.
6. View the video clip 4b), in which Boyd Orr shows an actual food ration from 1942 and talks about why it will be nutritionally adequate, and also the following clip 4c) where he describes the success of the rationing system and what people did to supplement their rations. There is also another written diary extract to support this activity (extract 2).
7. Clarify with the children which foods were in the weekly ration from 1942: butter, cheese, margarine or lard, tea, sugar, jam, bacon, meat, eggs and milk.

8. Ask the children to select these food cards for the next part of the activity.
9. Ask the children to work in groups and place these rationed foods on the blank Balance of Good Health Food Plate (*Resource Sheet 7*).
10. What do they notice?
11. In their pairs ask them to discuss the following questions:
 - Are all the food groups represented in the weekly ration?
 - Why do you think these foods were chosen?
 - Vegetables and fruit were not rationed, why?
 - Bread was not part of the weekly ration, why?
12. Ask pairs to share their thoughts with rest of class.
13. Record key points on the whiteboard.
14. Encourage the children to relate their discoveries to their own situations.
 - Do they think they be able to manage on the ration?
 - What foods would they miss and why?
15. Facilitate a class discussion on these points.

Additional activity

Design a publicity campaign

Boyd Orr played a leading role in the publicity campaign undertaken by the UK Government to inform the population about the food rationing system and to convince them of its worth. This is an opportunity to show children some of the well-known war-time posters such as 'Dig for Victory'. They could create their own posters and make other suggestions for a successful publicity campaign. For instance, Boyd Orr also made many radio broadcasts. What media might be used for a publicity campaign in present-day Britain? Good cross-curricular links to art and design, media and English.

Looking for evidence of learning and understanding

This activity provides children with the opportunity to:

- Apply skills of sorting and classifying;
- Draw conclusions;
- Understand the notion of rationing and how it worked;
- Apply their understanding of nutrition and health.

They will have done this by:

- Sorting foods to decide if they were included in the ration or not;
- Having their ideas challenged by considering and reviewing the decisions about rations made by John Boyd Orr;
- Grouping foods on the Balance of Good Health Food Plate;
- Sharing the outcomes of this activity.

You should see evidence of learning and understanding through:

- The initial ideas about rationing;
- The grouping of the rationed foods on the food plate;
- Their responses to questions.

■ Background information for teachers

- Foods from main groups were rationed such as meat, butter, cheese, sugar, milk. A list of these, with quantities, is included for teacher reference (*Resource Sheet 42*). These are the key foods which Boyd Orr identified as essential for survival.
- Rations changed during the war depending on food availability.
- Foods which were imported were rarely available e.g. orange juice, and therefore were not rationed, or were reserved for groups with specific requirements (e.g. pregnant women).
- Children often think in terms of composite foods such as pizza, or meals such as chicken curry. Encourage them to analyse what are the components of these foods and whether, therefore, it would have been possible to make these meals. Do they think pizza and curry were common food choices in war-time Britain?
- Vegetables and bread were not rationed because people were encouraged to grow their own vegetables and bake their own bread. Boyd Orr understood the importance of these foods for optimal health and played a leading role in the publicity campaign to encourage the UK population to 'grow your own'.
- The 'National Loaf' was made with less-refined flour which contained more of the grain than was used in white bread, resulting in a greyish-brown loaf.
- Children will not be able to place tea on the Balance of Good Health Food Plate. Tea is a beverage, and drinks and beverages are not considered to have significant nutrient value, so they are not included in any of the food groups.