

The Evacuees

The steam train chugs into a small country station,
The sleepy children wake startled by the unfamiliar scene.
They gather their few belongings and step out warily,
Onto a cold, draughty, station platform.

Hered like sheep into a village hall filled with noise and laughter,
Hot cups of tea, cake and biscuits bring them cheer.
Small presents, a knitted doll, a wooden car,
A kindly smile, a gentle pat, "There, there".

A new beginning, a big adventure, who knows,
For this was wartime, children's wartime.
Parents far away, mum toiling in the factory, dad fighting the foe,
Brave children far from home!



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Section A

Choose the best word or group of words to fit the passage and put a ring around your choice.

The train in the poem arrives at

- 1 **a city.** **a hamlet.** **a village.** **a small country station.**

The children have

- 2 **been there before.** **never been there.**

In verse two the group of children are compared to

- 3 **a herd of cows.** **a flock of sheep.**
a pack of dogs. **a school of dolphins.**

The people who met them are

- 4 **funny.** **angry.** **kindly.** **sad.**

In the last verse the poet remembers the children's mothers

- 5 **at home making cake.** **working in the factory.**
working on a farm. **working as mechanics.**

The poet concludes in the last line that the evacuees are

- 6 **stupid.** **clever.** **brave.** **kind.**

Section B

- 1 What is the author describing when she says the steam train 'chugs' into the station?

- 2 Why do you think the children were 'startled by the unfamiliar scene'?

- 3 Why did the children just have a 'few belongings' with them?

- 4 Why does the author use the phrase 'herded like sheep' when the children are guided towards the village hall?

- 5 How do you think the village hall felt compared to the station platform?

- 6 Why would 'hot cups of tea, cakes and biscuits' bring cheer to the children?

- 7 What other things were given to the children to cheer them up?

- 8 How would 'A kindly smile, a gentle pat, "There, there".' help the children?

- 9 Why was this 'A new beginning' for the children?

- 10 What is meant by the phrase 'children's wartime'?

Section C

Imagine you are a wartime evacuee. Write a poem to describe your feelings about being sent away from home.