



"History is concerned with relations between people and their thoughts. The historian tries to re-live what was once experienced by people like ourselves. The true study of history involves our imagination and conjures up pictures and visions."

J. Huizinga

When Huizinga says that the historian is concerned with conjuring up "pictures and visions", it is almost as if he is talking about films. "Hope and Glory" conjures up a "vision" for the audience of what life was like for a family who lived through the London Blitz in 1940, as seen through the eyes of the youngest son, Bill. It is a near autobiographical story of the early years of the film's director, John Boorman. The family that we see on screen are based on his family; most of the events that take place are based on events that actually happened to John Boorman.

"It's about the war as I remember it as a child; a time of tremendous excitement and enjoyment."

John Boorman

Before we look at the film in more detail, however, we first need to ask some questions about how useful a feature film can be to someone who is studying history.

Barry Jones has asked the following questions about feature films and history. See if you can answer them.

1. What should a good historian try to do when writing about history ?
2. What should a good feature film director try to do in his/her film ?
3. What problems do you think face a film director when making a historical film ?
4. How can film assist a student exploring a historical period ?
5. Do you think that it is possible to make a “good” historical film that would appeal to audiences and also satisfy historians ?

In answering these questions, you might have raised certain problems about “filming history”. Look closely at your answers to questions two and three. We have already said that “Hope and Glory” is autobiographical, yet the director has had to realise that the audience of the film must be “entertained”, must be involved in the film.

Once you have seen the film try to answer these questions:

1. Do you think that John Boorman is trying to be factual, describing what really happened, in the film, or is he trying to make the events more interesting, adding and changing events ? What details in the film could you check on ?
2. Why do you think that he made the film ?

When we talk about a war film we would normally expect to see something which dealt with battles. However, “Hope and Glory”, whilst set in the Second World War, looks at an aspect of that war which is rarely covered in films - the stories of the people in Britain, the civilians who had to endure the bombing and the strains and stresses of daily and family life in the Blitz.

THE DAY THAT WAR BROKE OUT

3rd September, 1939. In many history books, the date and time of Chamberlain's announcement that war had broken out is all that is written. For the people who were there that day, other memories remain which can add detail to that rather bland statement.

How is the announcement of war shown in the film?

How do the individual characters react to the announcement ?

Write a list of the characters and say how each responds to the announcement.

Below are three people's memories of that day:

"I was sitting on the step outside our house. The radio was on and this voice said we were at war with Germany. It didn't really mean anything to me, I was too young. Then all of a sudden the air raid warning sounded. 'Oh God' my mum said. 'They've started. We're going to be blown to hell' She was wearing a flowery dress. Don't ask me why I remember that. We ran to the nearest shelter. It was only a false alarm."

"I was on the beach at Frinton with my family. There were quite a few people there but it was quiet. In the morning there had been the usual beach sounds -people laughing, children playing, but now it was quiet. Nobody said a thing, people just sitting there, looking out to sea. By night the town had emptied of people"

"My mother started crying. Father was already away in the Navy. 'Come on Kids', she said, 'let's get packing. We're not staying here.' So we packed and two days later we were in the country staying with relatives. I missed all of the Blitz. It was like one long holiday with my aunt."

In what ways do you think that people's lives suddenly changed when war broke out? In Bill's family in "Hope and Glory", what changes are we shown happening during the film ?

What difference does it make to the family when the father goes off and joins the Army?

Why do you think that the father's attitude is so different to the mother's about the war?

In the First World War, towns had not really been bombed to the extent that they were in 1940. The Second World War was really the first "total war" where everybody was in danger, where civilians were also looked on as a legitimate target. The development of the aircraft had meant that bombers could range over enemy countries and so no one was safe.

In 1940, Germany started to launch massed bomber attacks against the cities of Britain. The civilian population were suddenly in the Front Line.

THE BLITZ

Below are some memories of people who lived through the Blitz. How do they compare to the picture that we are shown in "Hope and Glory" ?

"It was terrible. We lived near Limehouse in the East End and they were always bombing the docks. You'd go down the shelter in the evening and sit there till the all clear sounded. I couldn't sleep, I was too afraid. Night after night with no sleep. You couldn't wash in our shelter and I didn't take my clothes off —there were too many people there. So there were days when I wouldn't change my clothes. Then you'd have to walk to work because the damage done by the bombs was so bad. Five miles I had to walk and then do a day's work."

"I couldn't be bothered with going down the shelter. It was too cold in the winter. We used to get under the stairs. Looking back it was stupid. If the house had been hit it would have come down on top of us. But then, you never thought it would happen to you."

"It's the sounds and smells you remember most. 'Crump' 'crump' of the bombs, the scream sound as they came down. The bells of the fire engines, the shouts. The smell of sweat in the shelters, the smell of burning."

"Four times we were bombed out. By 1941 we had nothing left of our own. Everything gone. Not a possession of our own to our names."

Try to find people - either relatives or people who live near you - who remember the bombing in the Second World War. Ask them what their memories are of the Blitz. It was not only London that was bombed - Liverpool, Plymouth, Coventry, in fact most of the major cities were bombed during the war.

In the film we see Bill's father and his friend building an air raid shelter in the back garden. These types of shelter were known as Anderson Shelters. Try to find out details about Anderson shelters and also other places where people could take shelter from the bombs.

RATIONING - a pot of Jam.

Before the Second World War, Britain had imported a lot of its foodstuffs from abroad. When war broke out, imports suddenly fell. Ships were needed for other purposes.

What other purposes do you think ships were needed for ?

Because of the lack of imports, certain foods and other items were “rationed”, that is people were only allowed a certain amount per week or month.

Food rationing began in January 1940 when sugar, butter and bacon were rationed. Meat, tea, fats and margarine followed later on that year. Foods that were not rationed became scarce. People found it more and more difficult to feed their families.

By November 1940, the butter ration was down to 2oz. of butter per person per week. If you take a modern 250 gm pack of butter and cut it in four, you'll have some idea of just how much this was. One of the quarters would have to last someone for a week.

Below is the weekly food ration for one adult. Measure out all of these and compare the amounts with what you would normally eat in a week

Food rationing introduced January 1940. Weekly ration per person:

2 oz. Tea

2 oz. Butter or Margarine

2 oz. Cooking fat

8 oz. Jam/Honey or Marmalade
(if you were lucky and what strange stuff it was!)

8 oz. Sugar

2 oz. Cheese

4 oz. Bacon or Ham

10d of Meat

There was also a points system of 20 points a month with which to buy spinach, baked beans etc. All of these assumed that the food was available, which was not always the case. Fruit was hardly ever seen and what there was would be for young children only.

In "Hope and Glory", when Father brings home the tin of jam, he really is bringing home a rarity.

Why do you think that the family are afraid to eat the jam ? What does this tell you about the civilians' knowledge of what was happening in the war and what they thought of the Germans ?

Because of the short supply of foods, all sorts of strange recipes were invented. How would you like to eat "Potato and Jam pudding with custard" or "chocolate potato cake"? Eggs almost disappeared and dried egg took their place. The Ministry of Food produced cookbooks with all types of recipes, most of which sound horrible today but, with food in short supply, tried to suggest ways in which basic things such as potatoes could be prepared in different ways so as to make a more varied meal.

TASK

Ask relatives or people from your area what they remember about food during the war. Also try to find out how much of the rationed food people were allowed a week and what unrationed food was available. As a comparison, keep a log of how much you eat a week and then compare it with the amounts that were available during the war. Could you have survived ?!

It was not only food that was rationed during the war. Clothing was also in short supply. Each person was allowed 66 coupons per year to use on clothes. Even if you were very rich, the idea was that you could only buy clothes if you had coupons. How would you spend your coupons ? Below is a list of coupon values which will help you make your choice. Compare the amount of clothes that you could get with the amount of clothes that you get a year now.

WOMEN		MEN	
coat or raincoat	14 coupons	overcoat or raincoat	16 coupons
dress	11 coupons	blazer	13 coupons
pyjamas	8 coupons	trousers	8 coupons
nightdress	6 coupons	shirt	8 coupons
vest	3 coupons	underpants	4 coupons
skirt	7 coupons	shoes	7 coupons
trousers	8 coupons		
briefs	2 coupons		
stockings	2 per pair		
shoes	5 per pair		

People exchanged clothes or bought second hand clothes. If not then they had to "make do and mend".

Despite these hardships, people felt a sort of togetherness. Everybody suffered the same, rich and poor. Although there was an illegal market for food and clothes, in the main everybody was "in the same boat".

EVACUATION

The Government had planned to send children away from the major cities in order to protect them from the bombing. They were to be evacuated to the country or even abroad. Canada and Australia were two countries to which children were sent. We see Bill's mother planning to send him to Canada. At the end of the film, after they have been bombed out, the family goes and lives with Bill's grandparents in the country, safe from the bombing and also with the chance of being better fed.

- 1 Why do you think it was so painful for mothers to send their children away?
2. What do you think could have been some of the problems for children from the cities being sent to the country ?

Some children ran away when they had been evacuated and made their own ways home. Others enjoyed the experience, being in the country for the first time in their lives. The sight of hundreds of children with name tags tied to their collars was a common sight at railway stations in the first months of the war.

TASK

Imagine that you are to be evacuated from home. What would you take with you ?
What do you think your feelings would be ? What do you think you would miss ?
Try to write all of this up into a story.

When you have completed the research that has been suggested in this study guide,
you can then compare the picture of life given in "Hope and Glory" with life at the time.
How well has John Boorman managed to capture this period ? Has he seen only the
happy moments or does he capture all of life ?

Try to answer the following questions:

1. What are the problems that face the family during the film ?
2. Is the film only about happy memories ? Are there any sad or shocking moments ?
3. How is Bill's life shown ? Is being young all fun or are there difficult moments for him ?
4. What parts of the war are actually shown in the film ?
5. How does each member of the family try to come to terms with the war ?
6. In what ways would you say that the war changes Bill ?
7. Do you think that the film "Hope and Glory" gave you an idea of what life was like in Britain during the war

Find out how your local town was affected during the war. Was it bombed ?
If it was, which parts of the town were bombed ? Were children evacuated ?

Can you find out where to ? What evidence is there of the war in your town or city ?

2. Your family in the war. Try to find out as much as you can about the members of your family during the war. If they were not living in England, try to compare their experience of the war with people's families who were. They might have been living in a country occupied by Germany or Japan or they might have been little affected by the events.
3. During the war "utility clothing" was produced. Try to find out what the fashions were like between 1939 and 1945. How well did the film "Hope and Glory" capture the fashions of the day ?
4. Try to find other sources which give details of the Blitz. Try to build up a picture of what life was like during this period.

5. In the film we quite often see Bill at the cinema or listening to the radio. Try to find out about entertainment during the war. What were the popular films ? Who were the film stars of the day ? What else could people do apart from go to the cinema ? (don't forget there was no TV in those days).

Bibliography - The screenplay of the film "Hope and Glory" together with a short memoir and details of the film's production have been published by Faber & Faber.

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