

THE BETHNAL GREEN MEMORIAL PROJECT

TEACHING PACK WORKSHEETS



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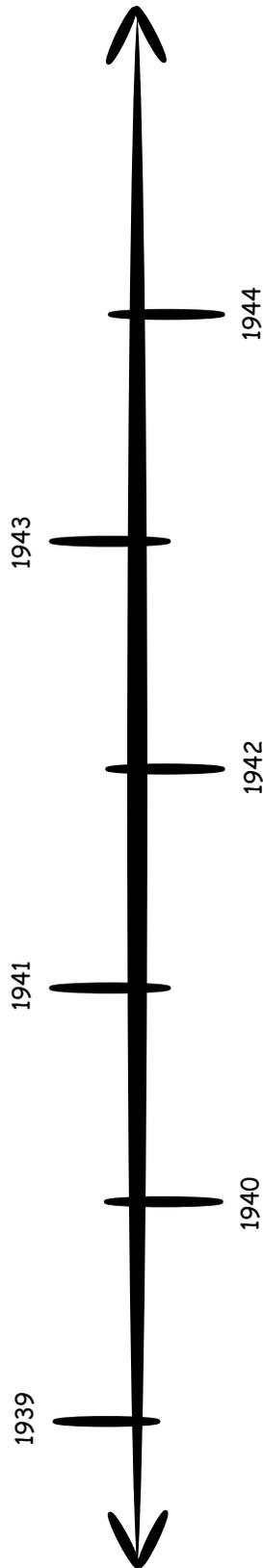
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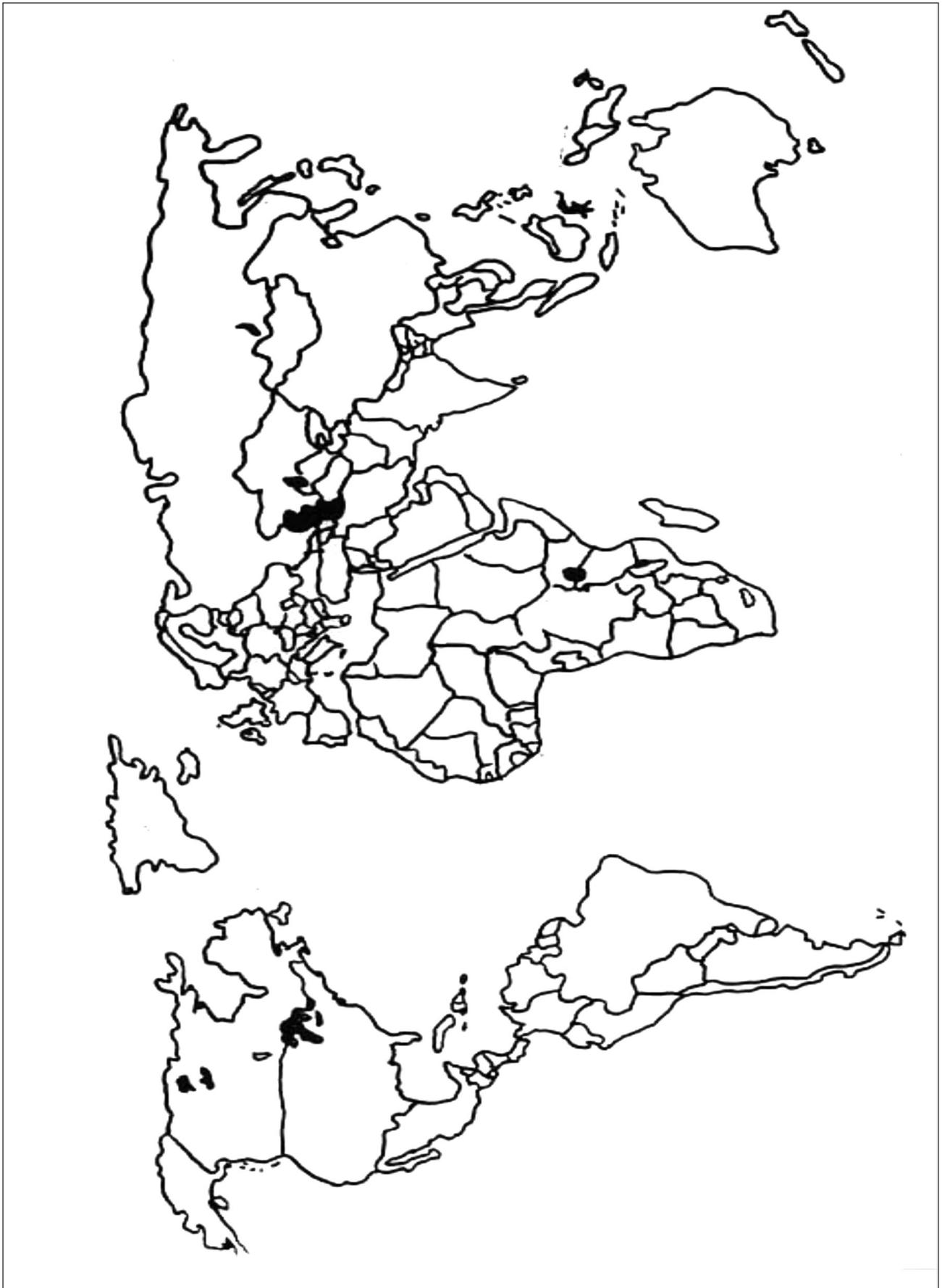
WORKSHEETS:

W/SHEET	Lesson	Challenge	Topic
1	1	2	WW2 Timeline
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4	2	1	Blitz Questions
5	2	1	Poster
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30	6	1	List of Victims (3/3)

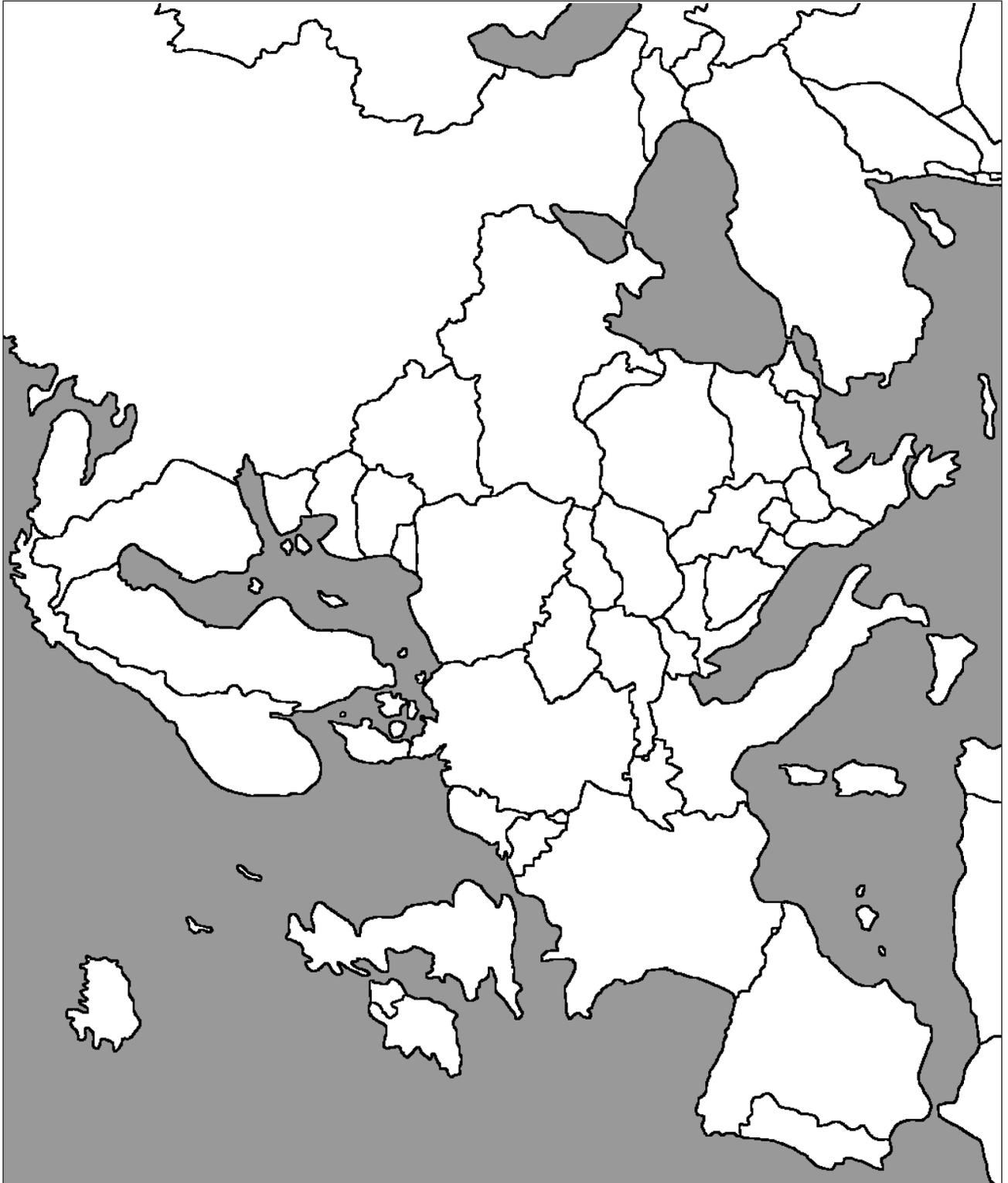
Lesson 1 Challenge 2



Lesson 1 Challenge 3



Lesson 1 Challenge 3



Lesson 2 Challenge 1

Look at the pictures and answer the questions.

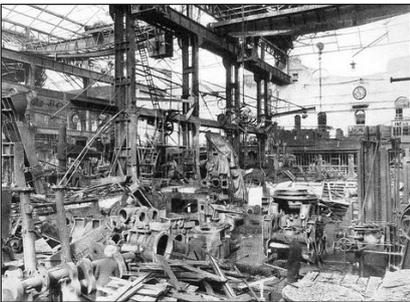


What has happened in this photo?

How would the people be feeling?



Why would the Germans have bombed British planes at airports?



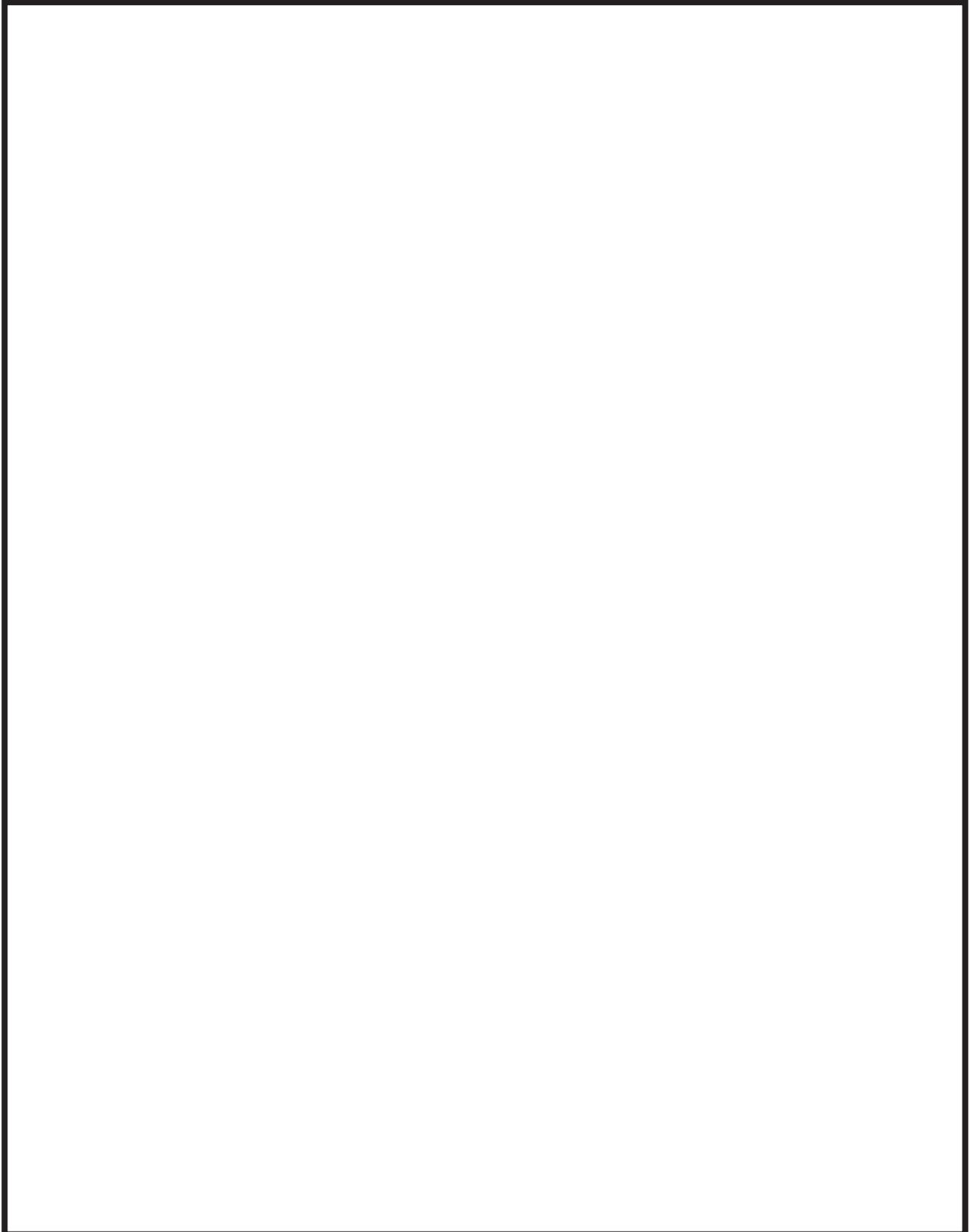
What have the Germans bombed here?

Why would they bomb places like this?

Explain the difference between 'the Battle of Britain' and 'The Blitz'?

Lesson 2 Challenge 3

Produce an information poster about how people coped during the Blitz. Include a morale-boosting title and information on how to use shelters, enforce the blackout and respond to air-raid signals

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for students to create an information poster about coping during the Blitz. The box is currently blank.

Lesson 3 Challenge 1

Survivors Speak

Answer these questions about what happened on the night of the Bethnal Green tube disaster:

How did Peter/others survive?

How did people find out if their family members had died?

What happened to the dead bodies?

What emotions do people reveal in their accounts?

Lesson 3 Challenge 1

First-hand accounts of the disaster

Read these first-hand accounts and answer the questions which follow.

Alf Morris, who was 13 at the time, tells what happened to him on the night of 3rd March, 1943:

My father instructed me and my aunt, Lillian Hall, to go to the shelter from 106 Old Ford Road. We went out the door and started walking towards the tube. As we got to Globe Road the air-raid warning started sounding. We got up as far as Victoria Park Square and then the air-raid warning was dying away. We got to the entrance of the tube and started to walk down. I was at the top and my aunt was to the right, and I was walking down the centre. I got to the middle of the staircase and the rockets fired. As they went up they made a tremendous 'swooshing' noise and we all thought it was a bomb. Everybody started to shout, 'There's a bomb, there's a bomb, get down, get down.' They surged downstairs and I got separated from my aunt. My aunt went to the right and I went to the left. I got pushed and shoved and pushed and I got carried, and I ended up at the third stair from the bottom. The people were just falling around me. I was standing upright. There was a little handrail and there was rough concrete that I was lying against. These people were dropping all around me and I went to move and I couldn't. A lady air-raid warden, she grabbed me by the hair. I was hollering and hollering as it hurt, but she didn't let go, and eventually pulled me free by grabbing me from under my arms. Mrs Chumbley; I can see her face now. She went, 'You go downstairs and you say nothing.'

I was crying and I walked down the stairs and at the bottom there was a thick steel door. I pressed the bell and the man pushed the door open and said, 'What are you crying for, boy?' I was frightened, I didn't say a thing. I walked down to my bunk and I was still crying and sat on my bunk. All the women and men kept saying, 'What's the matter, Alfie?', 'Why are you crying?', 'Where is your mother?', 'Where's Lily?' I didn't say anything.

My aunt came down about fifteen minutes later. She was short of her coat, her shoes, and her stockings were all torn, and she was all bruised down one side. They said to her, 'What's the matter?' She didn't say anything.

Lesson 3 Challenge 1

First-hand accounts of the disaster:

William and Estella Nichols lived on Old Ford Road and had two daughters: Jean, aged 16 and Babette, aged 11. When the siren sounded on 3rd March Estella and her daughters walked to the bus stop to get to the tube shelter. Babette remembers:

The no. 8 bus was just pulling away so we had to wait a few minutes for the next one, a 106 (lucky for us we missed that first bus as I don't think we'd have survived the crush). We got to the station and there were a lot of people there going in, the searchlights were going around the sky, but I don't remember any aircraft up there. Then suddenly there was this terrific noise of rockets going up, it was very frightening, and with that the crowd of people waiting to go into the station started pushing. I can remember being pushed along in the crowd with my sister holding onto my hand; I fell over something but my sister hauled me up and we were then pulled out of the crush. We didn't have any idea where our mum was, but we were taken over to the shelter under the railway arches. There were several people there who knew us, and my sister was asking anyone if they'd seen Mum. She was told by someone to go into a room to see if she was in there; unfortunately all the people in there were dead. Thank God she wasn't. It transpired Mum had been pulled out and taken over to St John's Church.

I've no idea how we came to be together again, but I can remember walking home with our bundles in the early hours of the morning. As we got near our house, a policeman neighbour was coming out of his house to go back on duty. He took us into his house, and his wife made us a cup of tea. Whilst all this was going on my dad, who worked for the Admiralty as a lorry driver, heard about the disaster when it came into his depot on the wire. He knew we'd be down there, so he dropped everything and rushed down to the station. He then helped to pull the dead out whilst looking for us. He worked there for several hours, and then made his way home. As he came down the road, he saw the same policeman who'd helped us, and he told Dad that we were all safe and in his house. With that, Dad collapsed onto the pavement and the policeman and another neighbour picked him up and carried him into the house we were in. From what I remember everyone was in tears, and I couldn't understand why my big strong dad was crying.

Lesson 3 Challenge 1

First-hand accounts of the disaster:

Alfred and Caroline Perryment had three children: Alfred Jr, Iris and Peter. On 3rd March Mrs Perryment's sister, Mrs Mary Land and her two children, Barbara and Joanie, accompanied her to the tube shelter, along with Peter and Iris, after hearing the warning. Peter remembers the night very well:

My mother, my aunt, my two cousins and my sister were coming towards the air-raid shelter, and we got about 100 yards away and the sky opened up. My mother said to my sister, my little cousin and myself, 'You three run in front quick', so we ran in front. We got about half down the stairs in the middle and we couldn't get any farther, and there were still people coming in behind us. I was there a long time and I was getting crushed, so what I did was to put my hands together, crept low down as far as I could, and my sister and my cousin were just in front of me on my left, and they were standing up. I don't know how long I was there for just on my hands and knees. After a considerable time they were moving all the people behind me. I didn't know that they were dead. When I finally got turned around, a policeman got hold of me and said, 'Who are you here with?' and I said 'I was here with my mother but I don't know where she is.' He said, 'Come back with me and I'll take you across the road to the air-raid shelter under the arches.' When they took me out, they were laying all the dead bodies on the pavement. I didn't know they were dead because they were all the bodies behind me. My sister and cousin were dead, as well as all the bodies in front of me. At the arches he said to me, 'Wait here until the All Clear goes', so that's what I did.

I came out and I was going back towards home and I met my older brother and he said, 'Mum is looking for you and Iris and Barbara everywhere.' We went home; my mother and my aunt were there and they asked me, 'Where is Iris, and Barbara?' I said, 'I don't know, they were with me, in front of me.' The next morning my mother, my aunt, Alfie and myself went round the hospitals looking for them, and of course we couldn't find them and nobody knew anything about it. We went home at about 1.30 and my father came home from work, and my mother said, 'We can't find Iris or Barbara'. So he went to the London Hospital and couldn't find them there and he went to the Bethnal Green Hospital and a man told him that there were more bodies at the church. About an hour later he came back. The first words he says to my mother, 'She's dead, Caroline'. My aunt said she had to go find Barbara, so my dad told my brother, 'Don't let Aunt May go, you go and see if you can find Barbara.' So my brother went to the church and was walking along the dead bodies, and he saw a little pair of black shoes and asked to see the body; the man turned the blanket back and that was Barbara.

Some of the boys that died in the disaster were in my class. Jimmy Taylor was one of them. In the list of the dead there is a family of Hoye. Their son, he was with his mother and three sisters, and he was the only one to survive. He asked me how I survived, and I told him I put my hands up like so and crouched down on my hands and knees, and he said that was exactly what he did.

When my mother died recently we found Iris's coat from that night in her wardrobe. She had kept it all those years.

Lesson 3 Challenge 1

First-hand accounts of the disaster:

George and Louise Newman had one son, George, in the army, and four daughters: Louisa, Eileen (Peggy), Rosina (Rosie) and Doris. Louisa remembers:

As we were walking along, Rosie's shoe strap broke, and we stopped to wait for her. Doris had tonsillitis so my father went ahead with her to get her settled. My dad never stayed with us in the air-raid shelter; he would take us down there, make sure we were settled and then would wait it out with his friends in the Black Horse pub.

As we started to go down the steps all I remember is the four of us being pushed up against the right hand side of the wall; after that I don't remember anything until we were down in the underground and were waiting for my sister and dad to come. In the morning there was still no sign of them, and my eldest sister Peggy went to the police station to look for them. She eventually was directed to St John's Church which was being used as a temporary morgue. Peggy was then told to search up and down the rows of bodies to see if she could identify her dad and little sister. She later said, 'You couldn't put a pin between the bruises on some of the victims.'

When they brought the bodies home Doris didn't have a mark on her, but my dad was in a closed coffin as he had a huge boot mark on his face.

It seemed that it was fate that my dad and Doris would die together as she idealised him, and I don't think he would ever have recovered if he had survived without her.

Eric Linden was a messenger for the Daily Mail:

Normally if the warning went my father, who was an air-raid warden, would either go to the post if he was on duty, or he would come home. In this case he didn't come home. I knew he wasn't on duty, so I went out to look for him, and that's how I came across what was going on at the station. People there were trying to help and pull the bodies from the top of the stairs, but it was hopeless. I didn't know that my father was actually there under the crush, he was one of them killed.

I rang the story into the Daily Mail and they sent a reporter and a photographer. The story was never used; it was killed by the War Office who had decided that it was not in the public's interest if it was realised the shelters were not safe havens.

Agnes Morris was with her family in their Morrison shelter on 3rd March. Her Aunt Lydia, however, preferred to go to the tube shelter. Agnes remembers:

My brother George Morris was out on his bike that night. When he came home he told us that there had been an accident down the tube at the Salmon & Ball pub. Lots of people had died and he had been helping to fetch them up. He said they had to put the bodies anywhere they could: churches, hospitals, on the pavements, and in Bethnal Green Gardens behind the tube station.

The story going round afterwards was that somebody shouted, 'Bombs!', causing a panic; a woman carrying a baby fell down and everyone else fell on top of her.

The next day when people didn't return home their relatives started searching for them. In some cases finding the victims was made more difficult because there was nothing to identify them. Their belongings had been stolen. My Aunt Lyd used to take all of her valuables such as jewellery, money, ration book, etc. down the tube with her. It took two days to find her; she was in St John's Church but had no identification on her. All her jewellery was missing. On her face was the mark of a heel of a man's shoe where she'd been trodden on.

Lesson 3 Challenge 1

First-hand accounts of the disaster

How did people find out if their family members had died?

What happened to the dead bodies?

What emotions do people reveal in their accounts?

Lesson 3, Challenge 2

Under the two headings, record the reasons why the Bethnal Green tube disaster happened. Make sure you have found the causes in the inquest report into the disaster.

Physical causes of disaster	Psychological causes of disaster

Peer assessment: check with a partner and see whether you have found the same reasons. Can you add anything after talking with your partner?

Lesson 3, Challenge 2

Causes of the disaster, from the Dunne inquest report (1943) Summary

The causes of the disaster can be divided into two main groups:

The psychological change in the way the people felt about air raids and shelters.

The physical causes.

More than half of Bethnal Green's total shelter space was in the tube station, which was a much larger proportion than in any other borough around. This showed that the people here tended to prefer this type of shelter, even though other shelters might be nearer to their homes. Apart from regular users of the tube, there were other people who lived further away who would also use it if there was a very heavy air raid.

On 3rd March 1943 people were nervously expecting an air raid by the Germans because Berlin had been bombed two days before by the Allies. Also, in the newspapers there had been descriptions of new types of bigger, deadlier bombs which might allow less time to take cover. People also knew of the dangers of splinters falling from the anti-aircraft barrage, but they were quite unfamiliar with the new anti-aircraft rocket guns which were tried out for the first time that night.

A lot of children who had been evacuated during the Blitz had now returned to the East End of London, and their parents were anxious to get them into the safest shelter possible.

All of these reasons led to there being a loss of self-control amongst the hundreds of people all trying to get into the shelter quickly; and the large numbers of small children slowed them down.

The shelter only had one entrance, which was unusual considering how large the shelter was inside.

The lighting on the stairs was very dim so that people were more likely to lose their footing and, if they did, the darkness would cause confusion.

There were no handrails to steady people down the centre of the staircase.

There was no crush barrier outside the entrance to prevent the huge pressure of a crowd.

There was a sudden rush of about 350-400 people towards the entrance.

Probably no other London shelter had these problems all at the same time; and one has to remember that it was not designed as a shelter but as a tube station.

Lesson 3, Challenge 2

Causes of the disaster, verbatim extracts from the Dunne inquest report (1943)

Dealing now with the contributory causes of the accident, they may, I think, be conveniently separated into two main groups:

a psychological change in the attitude of the population towards air raids and shelters generally; and

the physical causes:

The borough had some 60 per cent of its public shelter accommodation in this tube, a much larger proportion than any neighbouring borough. This had instilled in the minds of the people a marked preference for this type of shelter, to the exclusion of more easily reached shelters more widely dispersed. Apart from the regular users, a large number of people not in the immediate vicinity of this shelter had come to regard it as a desirable haven to resort to in the event of what might prove to be a heavy raid.

A particularly strong apprehension of drastic reprisals for the recent heavy raid on Berlin. This apprehension was fostered by newspaper accounts of the effects of new types of bombs.

A realization that new bombing tactics allowed far less time to get under cover than formerly was the case, and that a raid might be expected to reach its maximum intensity in a very short time. In the new type of raid the air-raid warning might precede the bombs by a very short margin.

A wholesome respect for the danger from splinters from our new barrage. The mouth of the shelter stands, as I have said, in a somewhat exposed position.

A lack of knowledge of the nature and appearance of the anti-aircraft rockets now in use.

The desire of parents to get their children under cover quickly, which induced numbers of people not hitherto users of the shelter to go there before a threatened raid. A very large number of children have fairly lately returned to the area.

All these factors combined to produce a loss of self control in some hundreds of people attempting to enter the shelter.

The physical presence of large numbers of children who have come back recently to the area retarded the speed of intake into the shelter, and the speed at which people could reach it.

The shelter has only one entrance. In this it is, if not unique, very exceptional in relation to its size.

The lighting on the stairs was very dim, which not only increased the chance of a fall on the stairs, but was bound to produce confusion if one occurred. If a fall occurred, however, no lighting could, in the circumstances of the present disaster, have prevented that happening which did happen.

Lesson 3, Challenge 2

Causes of the disaster, verbatim extracts (continued)

There were no handrails down the centre of the stairway. These might have enabled a person falling to save himself. If such a person was burdened with a child in arms and a bundle, as many were, their value would be problematical. If a jam happened despite their provision, they would almost certainly make matters worse. As a contributory cause I attach little importance to their absence.

The absence of a crush barrier, allowing a straight line of pressure from the crowd seeking entrance to the people on the stairs. This was, in my opinion, the main structural defect at the time of the accident.

The main and proximate cause was a sudden rush for the entrance by probably 350-400 people.

The question as to how far these factors should have been appreciated by the local authority and provided against must be a matter for individual opinion. It is one thing after a 'fait accompli' to make a retrospective analysis such as is contained in this report and that after an exhaustive enquiry into all the matters which have now thrown light on the position. It is quite another to be sufficiently prescient to give the proper values in advance and to take the right action upon them. A fairly simple inductive process enables one to realize now that this accident was more likely to happen at this shelter at this time than previously. Similarly we can say now, that while most of the factors present here are present in other shelters, it is quite certain that not all of them are to be found in any one other shelter and that therefore it was more probable that this accident should happen at this shelter than at any other.

One must bear in mind that no actual indication of such a disaster had previously been given, and that the physical imperfections of this shelter entrance are exactly reproduced in scores of other tube entrances in the Metropolitan area. This similarity may well have served to obscure the significance of the exceptional feature here, that this was the only entrance into the largest deep shelter in this part of the metropolis. Further it should be remembered that this was not a specially designed shelter. In the circumstances the local authority had to make the best use of what there was: radical alteration was at no time a practical possibility. For myself, I confess surprise that the accident has not happened before, and no one, I think, can exclude the possibility of its happening elsewhere.

by Laurence Dunne, 23rd March 1943

Lesson 4 Challenge 1

Read through the evidence provided from the first-hand reports, newspaper articles and letters. Now complete the table using these three headings:

Reported reason for the disaster	Evidence to support idea	What was the source of this information? What date was it published?

Lesson 4, Challenge 1

Many residents of Bethnal Green suspected that the borough's Jewish population was to blame for the disaster. At the meeting of the Borough's Emergency Committee the morning after it had happened, it was suggested by some that a 'foreign element' might have caused it, and that foreigners were more excitable than the 'good ol' Cockney'. But Mr Bridger, the Chief Warden of the tube shelter, said that only one in a hundred who used the shelter were Jewish, and caused no trouble.

The inquest, which was held by Mr Dunne two weeks after the disaster, received many letters from members of the public suggesting that 'foreign elements' were to blame. There were so many rumours like this that Mr Liverman, who was Chairman of The Board of Deputies of British Jews, wrote to Mr Dunne pointing out that Bethnal Green was not a Jewish district, in fact Jews tended to avoid living there as it was a 'centre of Fascist activity'; in fact, those who did use the shelter were often victims of anti-Semitic behaviour.

But then, on 12th March, the Police received an anonymous letter stating that the disaster had been a 'planned piece of Fascist hooliganism' by the Blackshirts of Bethnal Green. It said that the Fascists had shouted 'Gas!' and started pushing people down the shelter steps, and later spread rumours that foreigners were to blame.

Other letters, sent to the inquest, said that Fascists had shouted 'bombs, bombs!' to cause panic, or that it might have been deliberately caused by a gang of pickpockets.

Lesson 4, Challenge 2

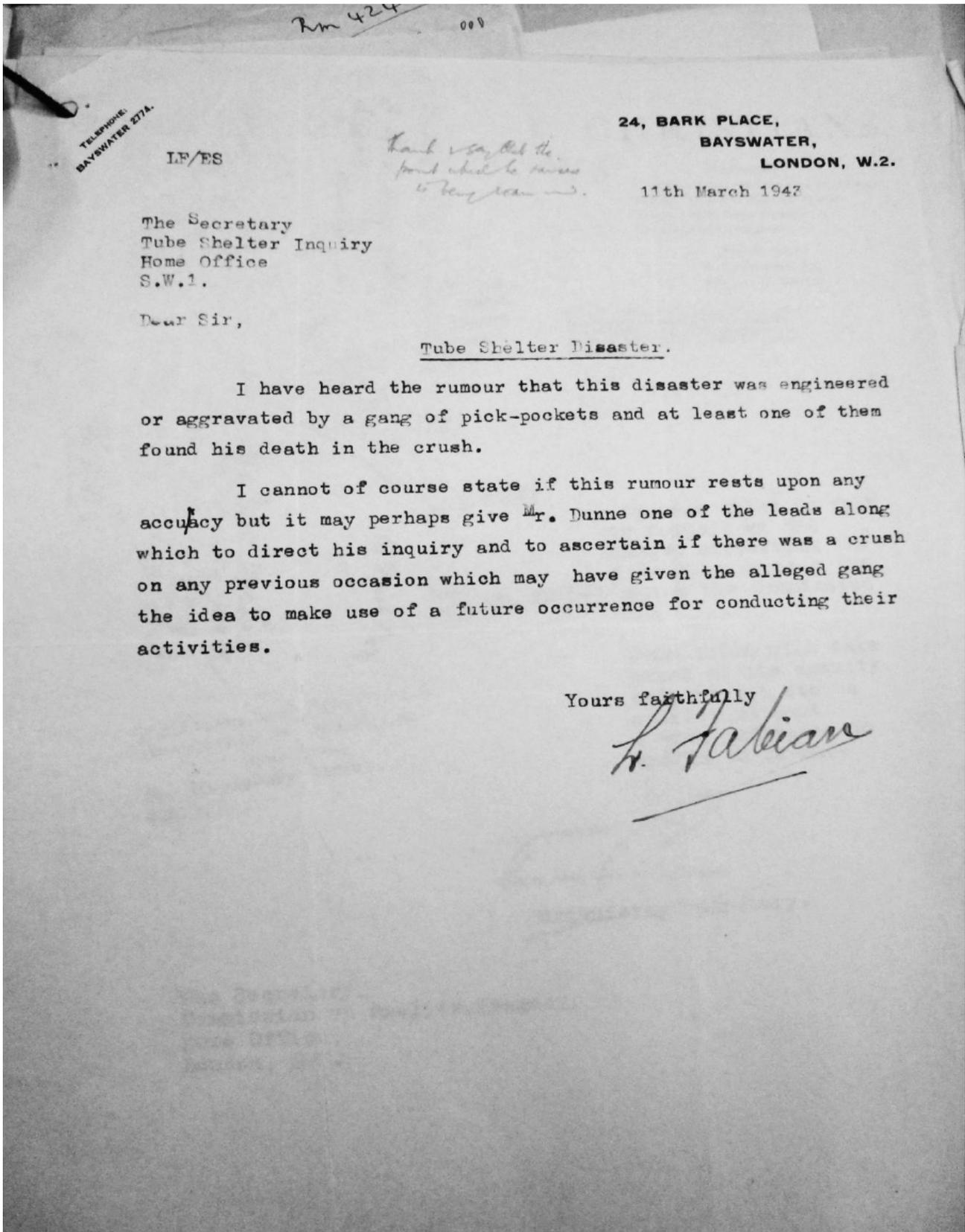
Extract from the Dunne Report, 1943

I should like at this point to deal with two specific allegations which have received some publicity, and which are without any foundation whatsoever. Each may be dismissed with a very few words:

a) That this was a panic induced by Fascists or criminal persons for nefarious purposes. There were some deaths among men with criminal records. They and their relatives are as much entitled to sympathy as any of the other victims. This story had some local, and I hope limited, circulation. It is an absurdity.

b) That this was a Jewish panic. This canard had a much wider circulation and was, I understand, endorsed by the broadcast utterances of a renegade traitor from Germany [Dunne is referring to Lord Haw-Haw who broadcast pro-Nazi radio propaganda]. Not only is it without foundation, it is demonstrably false. The Jewish attendance at this shelter was, and is, so small as to constitute a hardly calculable percentage.

Lesson 4, Challenge 1



Lesson 4, Challenge 1



The news report above covers the verdict of the coroner, an official who has to determine the cause of death. He went on to say, 'There is nothing to suggest that any particular section of the populace became victims of this disaster. Taking the names as a whole, they represent a cross-section of the populace of East London.' His report was made after the inquest.

Lesson 4 Challenge 2: Information sheet

Lord Haw-Haw: character profile

William Joyce, aka Lord Haw-Haw, was a notorious broadcaster to the UK of Nazi propaganda during World War II. His announcement 'Germany calling, Germany calling' was a familiar sound across the airwaves, introducing threats and misinformation that he broadcast from his Hamburg base.

In 1945 Joyce was captured and returned to Britain, where he was later hanged for treason.

Lord Haw-Haw's broadcast

After the Allied bombing raid on Berlin on 1st March 1943 Lord Haw-Haw broadcast on Rome Radio on 5th March about the 'devastating' reprisal raids on London by the German Luftwaffe on 3rd March, and then went on to say: 'As proof of the panic which spread over the population of London as a consequence of these heavy raids, came the announcement by the British Ministry of Public Security that during the alert 178 people were killed and 68 were severely injured in front of a shelter. The incident was caused by the fall of a woman. The people who lost their footing were smothered and trodden over by more panic-stricken people rushing to the shelter.'

Lord Haw-Haw gave a longer version on the Daily Digest World Broadcast the following day. The B.B.C. issued the following extract from it:

'LONDON TUBE SHELTER PANIC: MORRISON'S FAIRY TALE

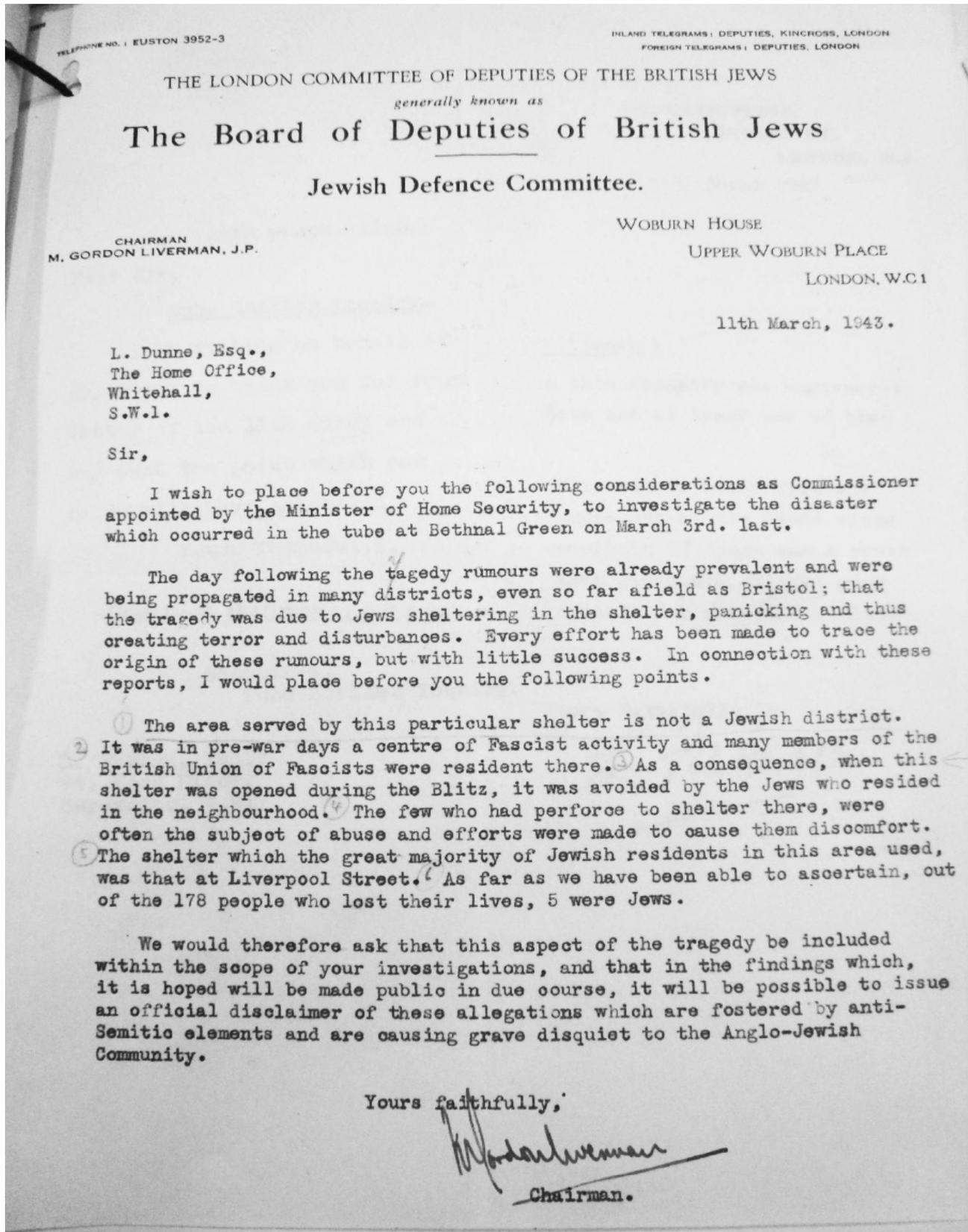
As a result of panic during an air raid, 178 persons were killed and 60 were injured in a London shelter. There were 600 people already in the shelter when a woman carrying a child stumbled on the stairs. In less than a minute hundreds of people were trampled upon. In his report about the incident the British Home Secretary added that there had been no bombs dropped in the vicinity of the shelter. That sort of fairy tale can only be told to a child or an Englishman. It is plain that as far as air raids are concerned, the nerves of Londoners seem to be on edge. If 178 persons are trampled to death in hardly a minute, thousands must have tried to force their way down to this shelter.'

A piece of propaganda by Dr Joseph Goebbels, German Minister of Propaganda

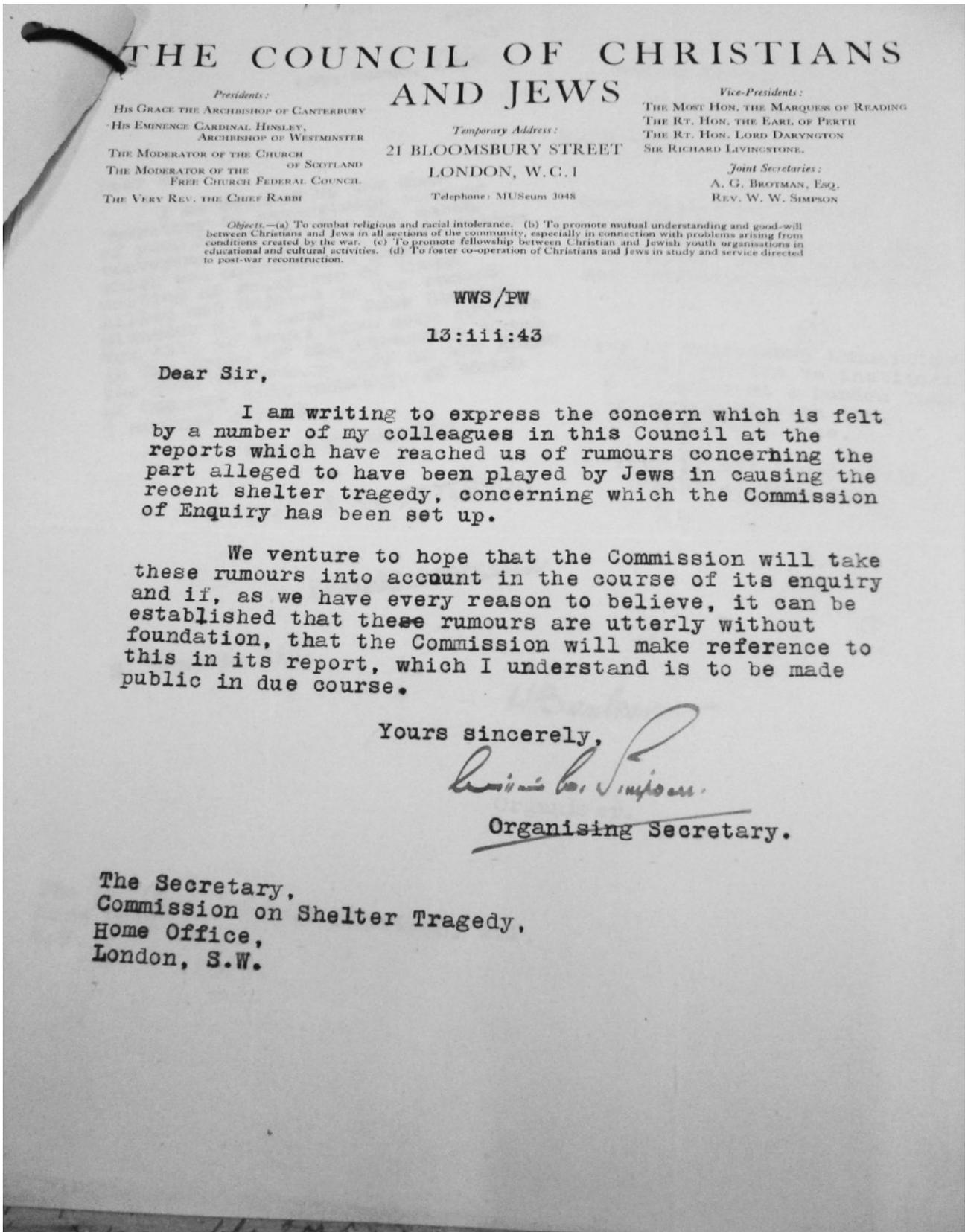
'According to an official report, a peculiar disaster has occurred in a London air-raid shelter. At the sound of the alarm, people trooped into the shelter and a woman, accompanied by a child, stumbled at the foot of the stairs leading down into the shelter. Instead of the unfortunate woman being helped to her feet, she was trampled on by the crowd behind her. In the jostling which resulted 178 people were suffocated and 60 others badly injured within a few minutes. The curious thing is that no single bomb fell in the area of the air-raid shelter.'

Nazi broadcasts about the disaster were sent to many countries. There was also one sent to Italy mentioning a similar disaster that happened in the Italian town of Genoa, which the Nazis think the British exploited: 'The last thing we want to do is gloat over the disaster in the shelter during the last German bombardment of London. But when a similar disaster occurred at Genoa not so very long ago, due to practically the same cause, British propaganda, with its usual bad taste, did its utmost to make capital out of it. In the B.B.C. broadcasts to Italy, they actually did exploit it with a view to spreading the belief in Italy that the Government had been inactive in making adequate preparations...'

Lesson 4, Challenge 2



Lesson 4, Challenge 2



Lesson 5, Challenge 1

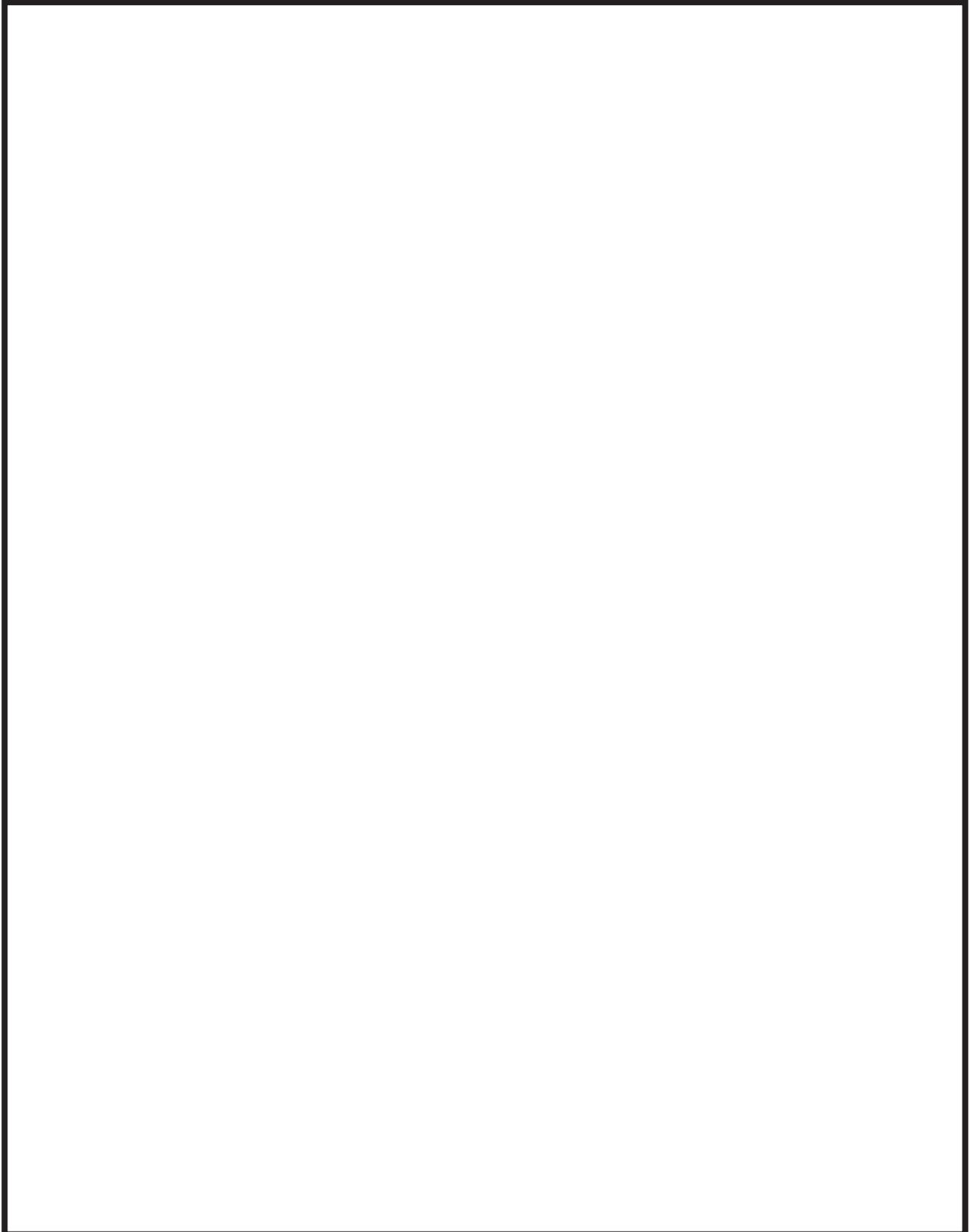
Requests for improvement of Bethnal Green Station

Bethnal Green Borough Council had a General Emergency Committee which met to discuss urgent matters. In August and September 1941 the Committee wrote some letters to London Regional H.Q., which was run by the Government. They asked for permission to make the shelter safer by replacing the wooden hoarding at the entrance with a brick wall. This is how they described the entrance: 'The iron railings of the Bethnal Green Gardens link up with two newly constructed brick pillars at each side of the entrance to the shelter, and the structure between consists of a double wooden gate and a small wicket gate at the side.' They thought this wooden gate was too flimsy for a shelter that could comfortably accommodate 5,000 people on bunks and another 5,000 if necessary, and they were worried that if there was a particularly severe air raid, a lot more people than normal might try to push their way in, some coming from other, ground-level shelters. The weight of all those extra people might cause the wooden hoarding to collapse so that people could fall through and down the stairs. They pointed out that such improvements had been made in other boroughs. They also mentioned that there was no roof over the entrance stairs, so that they got wet and slippery when it rained. They added that if the Committee's proposals were turned down, the Committee could not be held responsible for any serious consequences.

London Regional H.Q. sent a technical adviser to inspect the entrance together with the Deputy Borough Surveyor. The adviser then reported to London Regional H.Q.: 'I am still of the opinion that it would be a waste of money to build up a wall round the steps to prevent the crowd from forcing their way into the shelter; the existing fence with a little stiffening with salvaged timber could be made very much stronger than the gate. If anything is at all likely to be forced, it is the gate which I agree might be stiffened with advantage.' However, he did recommend that a roof should be erected over the entrance and staircase, which it was a few months later. Handrails were also fitted, but only to the walls of the staircase.

Lesson 5, Challenge 1

Re-design Bethnal Green Station, remembering to label any improvements you have made.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for a student to draw and label their re-design of Bethnal Green Station.

Lesson 5, challenge 2: Information for the mock inquest

Question sheet (Questions that they will be asked by the magistrate)

SHELTER STAFF (INFORMATION SHEET 1)	
Where were you stationed?	
What did you see?	
How did you try and help?	
Were there enough staff present and in the correct place?	

POLICE (INFORMATION SHEET 2)	
When did you arrive at the scene?	
What did you see?	
What did you do?	
How did you deal with the incident after it had happened?	
Did you arrive quickly enough?	

BOROUGH SURVEYOR (INFORMATION SHEET 3)	
Should you have replaced the fence with a brick wall? Why not?	
Would this have stopped the disaster? Why not?	

BOROUGH EMERGENCY COMMITTEE (INFORMATION SHEET 3)	
What improvements did you ask for at the station?	
Would these have prevented the disaster?	
What should you have been asked for?	
Should you have visited the site with the Borough Engineer to discuss the improvements you wanted	

CIVILIANS (CONSIDER PREVIOUS SOURCES USED)	
What did you see at the station?	
What do you think caused the disaster?	
Did you lose any members of your family?	

Lesson 5, challenge 2: Information for the mock inquest

Information sheet 1

The shelter staff

While the shelter was filling and during the alert on the 3rd March there was one warden officially on duty between the main gate and the bottom of the stairs—he was in fact down in the booking hall when the accident happened; two wardens were passing the people from the booking hall down the escalators; and one was on duty near a watertight door close to the office. He was also in the booking hall at the time of the accident. There were no wardens on duty in the street outside the shelter at that time.

When the Chief Shelter Warden got the first message by telephone from the booking hall he immediately rang up the police, and followed this up with a second message a few minutes later saying that assistance was badly needed at the entrance to the shelter. His first message to the Control Room in the Town Hall was at 8.40 p.m. precisely. From then on Control took charge of the situation and dealt with the matters of ambulances, rescue parties, etc., while the police were trying to restore order at the shelter entrance.

The whole of the shelter staff of wardens on duty were at the time of the accident below street level, and did what they could to extract casualties from below, which was at first almost impossible. Apart from one woman, no casualties were dealt with by the qualified nurse on duty in the shelter until after half an hour after the accident, and then only a very few. It appears from her evidence that it was only after the 'all clear' at 9.43 p.m. that any real progress was made in getting out casualties from the bottom of the steps. The great majority were in fact removed from the upper level and taken to hospitals.

Information sheet 2

The police

At the exact time when the trouble at the tube shelter started, at 8.27 p.m., there was no policeman present. Any policeman patrolling the streets in the immediate area had instructions to go to the tube shelter as soon as there was an air-raid siren warning, to take up duty there within five minutes of the alert. Police Constable John Henderson was five minutes walk away when the alert sounded, but did not reach the shelter until ten minutes later because he was held up by having to stop people using torches carelessly in the street.

On arrival he saw no other policemen, only air-raid wardens desperately trying to pull a huge crowd of shouting people back from the shelter entrance. Henderson managed to pull some people away and got onto the top of the steps but was soon jammed tight. He managed to twist himself around and turned back to tell people to go to other shelters, but they were completely out of control. He started running to the police station for help.

The Chief Shelter Warden had already phoned the police, so halfway to the station Henderson met three other police officers, one of whom he sent back to the police station to get much more help, then he and the other two returned to the shelter.

Gradually, and with the help of more policemen who arrived, they managed to get people to pull back and go to other shelters. Sometimes they had to use brute force because people were desperately trying to reach their friends and relatives in front of them in the crush.

Lesson 5, challenge 2: Information for the mock inquest

Information sheet 3

The Borough Emergency Committee and the Deputy Borough Surveyor

Bethnal Green Borough Council had a General Emergency Committee which met to discuss urgent matters. In August and September 1941 the Committee wrote some letters to London Regional H.Q., which was run by the Government. They asked for permission to make the shelter safer by replacing the wooden hoarding at the entrance with a brick wall.

This is how they described the entrance: 'The iron railings of the Bethnal Green Gardens link up with two newly constructed brick pillars at each side of the entrance to the shelter, and the structure between consists of a double wooden gate and a small wicket gate at the side.' They thought this wooden gate was too flimsy for a shelter that could comfortably accommodate 5,000 people on bunks and another 5,000 if necessary, and they were worried that if there was a particularly severe air raid, a lot more people than normal might try to push their way in, some coming from other, ground-level shelters.

The weight of all those extra people might cause the wooden hoarding to collapse so that people could fall through and down the stairs. They pointed out that such improvements had been made in other boroughs. They also mentioned that there was no roof over the entrance stairs, so that they got wet and slippery when it rained. They added that if the Committee's proposals were turned down, the Committee could not be held responsible for any serious consequences.

London Regional H.Q. sent a technical adviser to inspect the entrance together with the Deputy Borough Surveyor. The adviser then reported to London Regional H.Q.: 'I am still of the opinion that it would be a waste of money to build up a wall round the steps to prevent the crowd from forcing their way into the shelter; the existing fence with a little stiffening with salvaged timber could be made very much stronger than the gate. If anything is at all likely to be forced, it is the gate which I agree might be stiffened with advantage.'

However, he did recommend that a roof should be erected over the entrance and staircase, which it was a few months later. Handrails were also fitted, but only to the walls of the staircase.

It was unfortunate that members of the Borough Emergency Committee never went to inspect the shelter entrance together with the Deputy Borough Surveyor, to see and discuss what improvements really were needed. They would have seen that London Regional H.Q.'s proposals were quite inadequate. They might also have noticed other things that could have been improved: better lighting and a central handrail, for instance.

Lesson 6, Challenge 1

Here is a list of victims from the Bethnal Green tube disaster.

Highlight which of the group you are looking for:

Male under 18: Male 18-60:
 Female under 18: Female 18-60:
 Male and Female over 60:

NAME	(age)
AARONS, Betty	14
ASSER, Jessie	33
BAILEY, Mary	72
BAILEY, Rose	41
BAKER, George	38
BAKER, Minnie	14
BASS, Eileen	7
BEAKEN, Eileen	17
BEAKEN, Ethel	53
BEAKEN, Matilda	44
BEGER, Emily	57
BENDON, Elizabeth	38
BENNETT, Emma	48
BOSWORTH, Edith	50
BOSWORTH, Irene	17
BOWLING, Bessie	59
BOWLING, Eliza	31
BOXER, Annie	25
BROOKS, Henry	10
BROOKS, Jessie	46
BROOKSTONE, Israel	67
BUTTERFIELD, Alan	3
BUTTERFIELD, Charlotte	28
BUTTERFIELD, George	28
CHANDLER, Doreen	14
CHANDLER, Lilian	35
CHAPMAN, Charlotte	25
CHAPMAN, George	23
CLATWORTHY, Iris	8
CLATWORTHY, Joan	9

NAME	(age)
COLEMAN, Maude	54
COLEMAN, Richard	34(akaDickieCorbett)
COLLETT, Doreen	10
COLLETT, Ronald	8
COLLETT, Rose	50
COURT, Patricia	23
DAY, John	69
DONGRAY, Annie	22
ELLAM, Annie	43
ELLAM, Frances	20
ELLAM, Pauline	2
ELLAM, Rosina	17
EMERY, Clara	77
FLETCHER, Alexander	3
FLETCHER, Elizabeth	28
FORBES, Irene	17
FORBES, Leonora	57
FOWLER, Mary	45
FRENCH, Lilian	29
GEARY, Carol	5 months
GEARY, Sylvia	6
GROVER, Ethel	48
HALES, Joseph	54
HALL, Annie	52
HALL, Edna	13
HALL, Irene	8
HALL, Mary	47
HAMMOND, Rhoda	44
HARRIS, Olive	17
HAWLEY, Leonard	64

Lesson 6, Challenge 1**(List of victims from the Bethnal Green tube disaster continued)**

NAME	(age)
HAYMAN, Mary	19
HEWITT, Mary	27
HIGGINSON, Emily	62
HILLIER, Mary	61
HISCOKE, Ivy	22
HOYE, Lillian	13
HOYE, Louisa	44
HOYE, Margaret	7
HOYE, Rosina	19
HUTCHINSON, Joan	10
HUTCHINSON, William	7
INGLE, Agnes	28
JOHNS, Peter	7
JOHNSON, Caroline	14
JOHNSON, Ellen	6
JOLLY, Sarah	51
JONES, Estella	59
JULIER, Henry	18
KOROBENICK, Matilda	33
LAND, Barbara	7
LAND, Martha	56
LAPHAM, Ronald	15
LAWSON, Anthony	7
LAWSON, Patricia	3
LAZARUS, Maurice	42
LECHMERE, Florence	66
LECHMERE, Thomas A	66
LECHMERE, Thomas C	43
LEGGETT, Benjamin	33
LEGGETT, Rose	31

NAME	(age)
LEGGETT, Roy	7
LEWIS, George	9
LEWIS, Lilie	14
LOFTUS, John	13
LOFTUS, Louisa	15
MAGUIRE, Jean	8
MASON, Charles	50
MATHERS, Ruby	18
MEAD, Eliza	67
MEAD, Florence	35
MEAD, George Jnr	12
MEAD, George Snr	40
MEAD, Kenneth	10
MEAD, Maureen	4
MORRIS, Derek	6
MORRIS, Florence	30
MYERS, Geoffrey	6
MYERS, Sophia	40
NEVILLE, Alfred	45
NEWMAN, Doris	9
NEWMAN, George	45
NEWTON, Sarah	28
NIXON, William	14
PAPWORTH, Rosina	27
PATTERSON, Mary	44
PERRYMENT, Iris	17
POOLE, Sarah	54
PRICE, Rose	27
PUSEY, Emily	48
PUSEY, Henry	51

Lesson 6, Challenge 1**(List of victims from the Bethnal Green tube disaster continued)**

NAME	(age)
QUORN, Emily	42
QUORN, Gwendoline	5
QUORN, William	14
RAULINAITIS, Joseph	32
REDWIN, Eileen	7
RELF, Rose Jnr	13
RELF, Rose Snr	41
REYNOLDS, George	72
RIDDELL, Stella	13
RIDGWAY, Ellen	28
ROCHE, Bessie	42
ROCHE, Edmund Jnr	7
ROCHE, Edmund Snr	39
ROCHE, Joan	10
SCEATS, Lillian	15
SEABROOK, Barry	2 years 9 months
SEABROOK, Sarah	62
SEAR, William	50
SHARP, Irene	16 months
SHARP, Kenneth	5
SHEPHERD, Arthur	42
SINNOCK, Lydia	62
SMITH, Dorothy	11
SPEIGHT, Edith	47
SPICER, Anthony	9
SPICER, Joan	4
STEVENS, Mary	54
STRETCH, Rosa	41
STRETCH, William Jnr	10
STRETCH, William Snr	49

NAME	(age)
TARBUCK, George	45
TARBUCK, Louisa	44
TAYLOR, James	12
TAYLOR, Sarah	54
THOMPSON, Kate	63
THORPE, Barbara	22 months
THORPE, Marie	12
THORPE, Olive	36
TILBURY, Clara	52
TRAYLING, Irene	20
TRICE, Isabella	39
TROTTER, Lillian	36
TROTTER, Vera	7
VANN, Maud	23
VANNER, Florence	49
WARRINGTON, Doris	16
WELCH, James	52
WHITEHEAD, James	69
WILSON, Edna	15
WOOD, Alfred	63
WOOLNOUGH, Elsie	37
WOOLNOUGH, Olive	12
YEWMAN, John	13 months