



With so many families learning from home at the moment, we have put together some activity ideas for families to look at, based on the workshops we normally do with schools.

Have fun, and remember that if you need any extra help, our Museum Learning Team are only an email away, and are happy to help in any way they can!





What can you discover about the World War Two mystery object?

Use the questions below to try and work out what the mystery object was used for. Talk about your ideas with your family if you can. When you are ready, look at the next page to find out the answer.

Don't worry if you can't figure it out, or if the answer is different to what you expected! Learning to be a good historian isn't about being right all the time, it's about having a go and being brave about our ideas.

What was it used for?

What materials is it made from?

How did it work?

When was it used?

Who owned it?



The mystery object is a baby's gas mask! A baby would be placed inside it so that they could breathe clean air.

At the start of the war, the government gave everyone in Britain a gas mask. They were very worried that the German bombers might drop poisonous gasses to kill people in Britain. A gas mask was protection against poison gas. This is what a gas mask for an adult looks like:



The government also made gas masks for children, which looked like smaller versions of the adults one. They were often made in bright colours.

But a baby couldn't wear a gas mask like that. It wouldn't have been safe as it wouldn't have stayed in place properly. Instead, a gas mask for a baby looks like a pod they could fit into. The baby's head went into the steel helmet and the glass covered the baby's face (almost like an astronaut's helmet!). Then the canvas part wrapped around the baby's body, with the straps holding it in place. There was a rubber coating inside the fabric to stop the gas getting through.

On the side of the mask there is a rubber tube with a handle- the baby's parents would have pumped air into the gas mask using this handle, and a special filter absorbed the poisonous gas meaning the baby would be breathing clean air.

Luckily the gas masks didn't ever have to be used, as Britain did not suffer any gas attacks during WW2.



The government also made gas masks for children, which looked like smaller versions of the adults one. They were often made in bright colours.

To make them look less scary, gas masks were also sometimes made to look like cartoon characters. This didn't always work, and sometimes they looked even creepier than before- if you are feeling brave research a children's Mickey Mouse gas mask and see for yourself!

Draw a children's gas mask below. Try to make your gas mask look like your favourite cartoon character, or use colours and patterns to make it look nicer for children.