

# The Wartime Diary of Eliza Beale

## Second World War Evacuee



Dear Diary,

Today has been simply awful.



Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> August 1939

This afternoon, Mum told me that the government is becoming increasingly concerned about the threat of war and that they have served an evacuation notice. London is no longer considered safe so we need to move to the countryside. Can you believe it, diary? I can't.

At first, I thought that we would all be going together and I even got excited about the idea of a family holiday (I started imagining days on the beach). However, one look at Mum's tear-filled eyes made me realise how wrong I was. We don't own two suitcases so George and I have a pillowcase each that we've filled with clothes and a few biscuits for the train. He doesn't understand what's happening and is getting excited about the 'adventure' that Mum told him we were going on: I wish that I were George.

As I lie here trying to sleep, my mind is spinning. I tried my best to get more information from Mum (like how long we are going away for or where we are going) but my multitude of questions were met with a sad silence. All I know is that we must get up early tomorrow morning to go to Waterloo station.

Eliza



George



my mum

Dear Diary,

Friday 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939 - morning



I'm writing to you from the train station. It feels as though my world has been turned upside down. Last week, I was worrying about needlework classes and now I'm here with an uncomfortable tag dangling around my neck as if I'm a piece of luggage. The tag even says my full name on it: 'Elizabeth Beale'. I tried explaining to the woman who labelled me that everyone calls me Eliza but she just looked at me with pity and briskly shouted for the next child. I've decided to hide it underneath my gas mask box; that way, people will have to ask me for my name instead of reading it from a label.

## The Wartime Diary of Eliza Beale

There are hundreds of us here. All of the teachers from school are with us but our parents weren't allowed any farther than the station barrier. It was heartbreaking saying goodbye.

We've been told that our school will be getting on the next train but we don't know how long that will be. I'm so hungry. I'm regretting giving George my biscuits but he looked so sad at the time that it felt like the right thing to do. At least he's stopped telling me that he doesn't want to go on an adventure any more.

Eliza



Dear Diary,

Friday 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939 - evening



Was it only this morning when we last spoke?

The train journey was horrible. We were all packed in so tightly that I could scarcely breathe. Whenever I've been on a train before, I've felt queasy but this time was so much worse. At one point, I thought I was going to be sick into my pillowcase.

After what felt like hours, we arrived in a small town. All of the children were shepherded to the town hall and given a drink. Before long, adults started coming in and picking children. Luckily, George and I were picked together. The lady who took us with her is called Mrs Farthing and she lives in a grand house on the outskirts of the town. By the time we had walked there, it was very dark; I carried George most of the way because he was struggling to stay awake.

When we arrived, Mrs Farthing explained that she had two sons who were already in bed and that her husband (Mr Farthing) was out tending to the animals. It turns out that Mr and Mrs Farthing live on a farm! They've got cows, sheep, pigs, chickens, two horses and a donkey! She says that we can even go and help to take care of the animals tomorrow.

Currently, I'm curled up in bed trying to sleep. George is snoring softly in the bed next to me. We both wept a little when we realised that Mum couldn't tuck us in; it's terribly difficult being away from her but at least we have each other. I've promised him that I would look after him just as a big sister should.

Eliza

1. ...the government is becoming increasingly concerned...

Which of the following is closest in meaning to the word **concerned**? Tick one.

- angry
- fed-up
- frightened
- worried

2. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they happened in.

- Eliza tried explaining that nobody calls her Elizabeth.
- Eliza and George packed up their pillowcases.
- Eliza wrote the diary entry for Friday 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939 – morning.
- Eliza thought that she was going on holiday.

3. Look at the paragraph beginning **I'm writing to you from the train station...**

Find and copy one word which means the same as **quickly**.

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4. Why did Eliza and George have to pack their possessions into pillowcases?

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5. On which day did Eliza give her biscuits to George?

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6. Compare how Eliza is feeling as she's writing her first diary entry to how Eliza is feeling as she's writing her last diary entry.

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7. Explain why you think that the author has chosen to use diary entries to tell the story of Eliza.

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8. **Before long, adults started coming in and picking children.**

How do you think the children were feeling at this point? Explain your answer.

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9. **All of the children were shepherded to the town hall...**

What impression does this give you of the events following the arrival of the train?

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10. Think about what you know about Eliza.

What might she write in her diary entry for **Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1939**?

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