



Screaming Demons

I can still remember when the war first came to my street. August 1940. It had been going on for over half a year by then, of course. We'd been well drilled in what to do if the Germans tried to drop any of their bombs on our city of Manchester. Actually, we lived on the outskirts in the suburb of Salford, but we were close enough to be at risk. Or so our head teacher, Mr Atkins, assured us.

We'd heard the air-raid siren often enough by that point that, like the whole war itself, it seemed almost comical and even exciting to the nine-year-old that I was at the time. This night felt different though, right from the beginning.

Siren-sound filled the air, and the scream of demons flew through the night sky. Outside, people were screaming and shouting for their families to move indoors. I sat and stared at the nightmare unfolding in the street below from my bedroom window. It wasn't easy, the blackout meant that all windows had to be covered up in case the pilots saw the lights inside your house. Never-the-less, we normally managed to peel back a small corner of the wallpaper that our mother had used to cover the bedroom windows. I still remember the awful floral pattern that burnt into my eyes each night as I fell asleep. Through the tiny gap, I could see the lights streaming over the sky as plane after plane made its way to its drop zone. The air seemed like it was filled with mosquitos but, no matter how hard I tried, the fact that they'd been sent to bomb us didn't seem real.

In the distance, fires were already breaking out where the bombs had struck their targets. I knew then that it was only a matter of time before our house was hit. I think that's when I began to realise that it was deadly serious. Each time a bomb landed close by, the whole place would shake, and I would hold my breath as I waited for the walls to crumble around me. Just the week before we'd been told about a boy in London who had been killed when the front wall of his house collapsed. His mother and sister had been in the kitchen at the time and had survived. The ARP who visited our school had scared us all with that story. For the next few days, we found ourselves all making sure that we were at least a yard away from all walls at all times in case they suddenly collapsed.

"Billy!" my mother cried as she stuck her head around my door and caught me peaking at the window. "You know not to stand near to the glass! What if it gets shattered?"

"Sorry mum," I moaned. I knew the rules well enough, but I couldn't tear myself away from the scenes outside. Somehow, watching it happen made it easier to get through the nights.

The war had been going on for just over a year now, and I was bored with it. I know that sounds brattish when so many were giving their lives, but it's honestly how I felt. I could still remember the day, 3rd September 1939, when the head teacher had called all of the children to a special assembly. Most of the teachers had seemed panicked and scared at the time, but the children had no idea what was going on. It had taken Mr Runthorpe a good while to calm us all down before he could explain what was going on. I could still recall the man's pale face as he'd told us that we were, once again, at war with Germany. Little did I know just how much it would go on to change our lives.



1

When did the effects of the war first arrive in the character's street?

1 mark

2

Where does the character live?

1 mark

3

Using information from the text, tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

	True	False
The air-raid sirens sounded a lot.		
The character could sense something was wrong, that night.		
The children knew that walls were dangerous during the bombings.		
The headteacher told the children that they were at war.		

2 marks

4

Look at the paragraph beginning: *"Sorry mum," I moaned.*

Why couldn't he stop looking out of the window?

1 mark

5

Siren-sound filled the air, and the scream of demons flew through the night sky.

What were the **screaming demons** in this sentence?

1 mark

6

Look at the paragraph beginning: *In the distance, fires were already breaking out...*

Which words best describe the character's feelings during the paragraph?

Tick **two**.

Excited

Fearful

Concerned

Jubilant

2 marks

7

What is the character's name?

1 mark

8

What had the mother used to cover the windows?

1 mark

SATs Practice - Answers

1. August 1940
2. Salford
3. **Give 1 mark for two correct answers. Give 2 marks for three or more correct answers.**
True
True
True
False
4. Watching it made it easier to get through the nights
5. The planes
6. Fearful
Concerned
7. Billy
8. Wallpaper