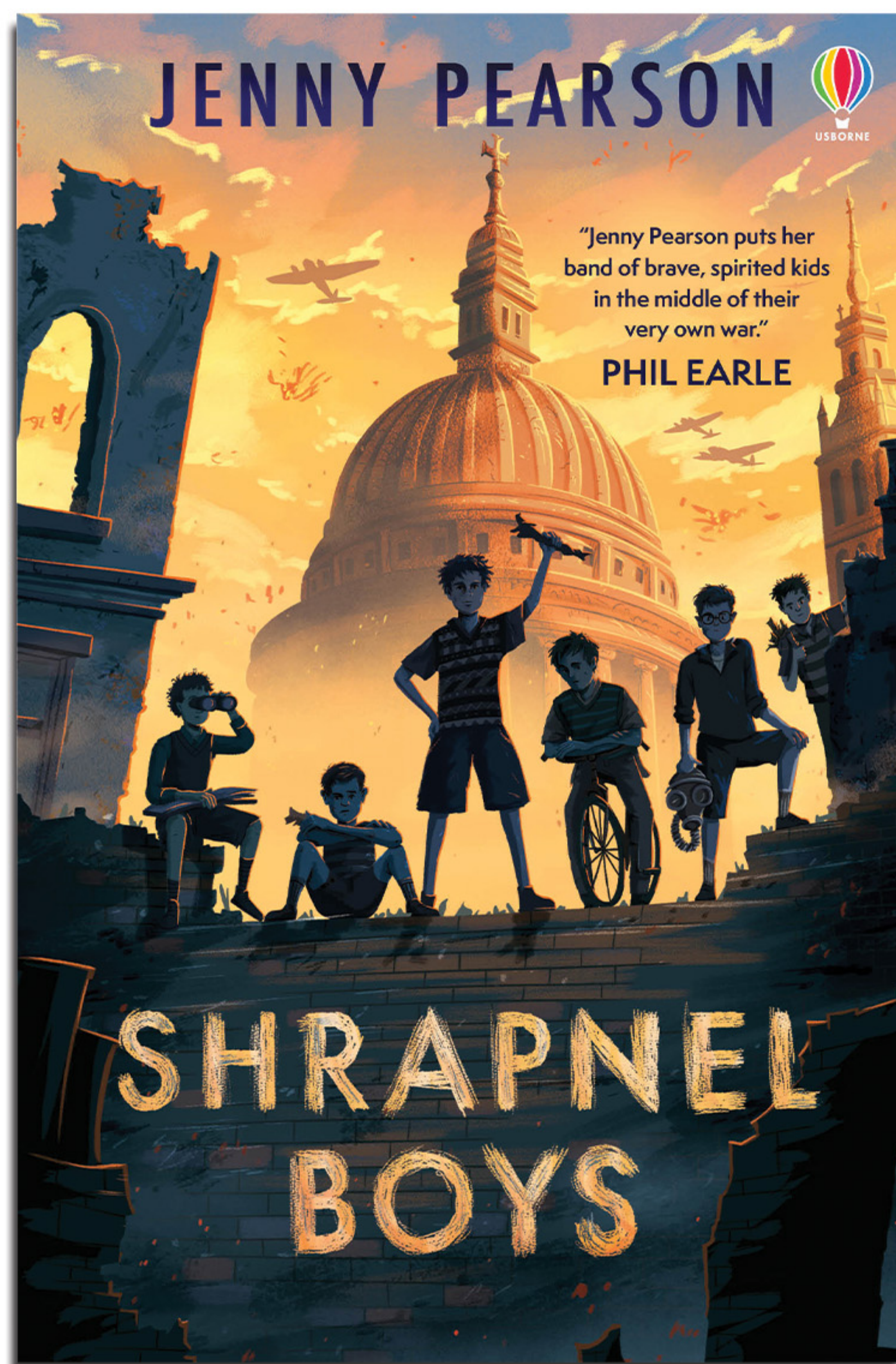


# SHRAPNEL BOYS

## KS2 RESOURCES



### About the book

SHRAPNEL BOYS is an explosive novel about the friendship and courage of a group of young boys living through the Second World War, from award-winning author Jenny Pearson.

*There's a war going on out there, and I'm missing it.*

When war comes to London in 1939, Ronnie Smith is scared and excited: scared of the bombs that fall at night, but excited to race his friends to collect the best bits of shrapnel every morning.

But for Ronnie, the battles aren't just in the sky and on the streets. They're at school and at home too. His little brother is up to no good with a secret job and dangerous new friends, and Ronnie's worried he's getting himself into big trouble.

Ronnie's desperate to help his little brother. But he isn't expecting to uncover secrets that could change the fate of the whole war...

This pack includes discussion notes and suggested activities for KS2.

2025 is the 80th anniversary of VE Day. Use this pack to explore the Second World War through the story of Ronnie and his friends. Then, celebrate VE day with your class:

- Use the art you have created to put together a Second World War display
  - Encourage children to dress up in 1940s outfits for the day
  - Create bunting to decorate the classroom for your celebration
- Put on an assembly where your class can share what they have learnt about the Second World War with the rest of the school
- Listen to some 1940s music, and have a go at learning some 1940s dances!



Jenny Pearson is an award-winning author, teacher and mother of two young boys. Her books have been translated into 21 languages, and she has been shortlisted for the Costa Children's Book Award, the Waterstones Children's Book Prize and the Week Junior Book Award and was the winner of the Laugh Out Loud Book Award.

As a primary school teacher, Jenny regularly covers the Second World War in her classroom and was inspired to write *Shrapnel Boys* by the extraordinary resilience of Londoners living through the war.

# JENNY PEARSON





# SHRAPNEL BOYS

## DISCUSSION NOTES

### PART ONE: THE PHONEY WAR (p. 1-137)

- *Shrapnel Boys* begins with an evacuation of children from London. What do you know about evacuation? How do you think these children felt leaving their homes?
- *"Doesn't feel like we're at war. Thought there'd be more fighting – planes dropping bombs from the sky – that sort of thing."* (p. 33) Ronnie and Micky feel as if the war hasn't really started. Although the war hasn't brought bombs to London yet, what changes has the war brought to their lives?
- What are your first impressions of Johnny? Do you trust him? Do you think he's hiding something?
- Start a list of the words and people you're introduced to in the book: evacuation, Anderson shelter, rationing, fascist, pacifist, Oswald Mosley, Blackshirts. Write down their definitions as you learn more through the story.
- What battles is Ronnie facing in his own life?
- Why do you think Micky refuses to tell Ronnie what he's getting up to?

### PART TWO: THE WAR ARRIVES IN LONDON (p. 138-246)

- While the war could feel scary, Ronnie finds some of it exciting – why do you think this is?
- Discuss all the sounds, smells and sights that everyone experienced when they left the air-raid shelter onto Deptford High Street (p. 152).
- When Ronnie holds a piece of shrapnel, it makes him *"feel alive. Almost like it was a reminder that I'd survived. Proof that I was part of the war."* (p. 164). Why do you think this is?
- When the Battle of Britain arrives, Ronnie realises it's going to be worse than he thought it would be: *"The war that I'd been waiting for had arrived and it was more terrible than I could ever have imagined."* (p. 168), *"I suppose the war was its own kind of season, a season that brought with it deadlier but no less covetable trophies."* (p. 184) Which scenes in the book feel most shocking to you?
- Why do you think the boys decide to hunt for shrapnel?
- How are Ronnie's friendships impacted by the war?
- Ronnie decides that the way to survive is by closing yourself off to sad things (p. 202). Do you agree with this?
- Both Lugs and Ronnie receive news about their dads via telegram. Discuss how this would feel, and the ways the boys comfort each other.
- Throughout the book, there's a lot of discussion about courage and bravery. What do these words mean to you? Who do you think shows the most courage in *Shrapnel Boys*?

### PART THREE: THE BATTLE ON THE STREETS (p. 247-369)

- *"When the world don't make sense, it's hard to figure out what's right and wrong."* (p. 259) How has the war affected people's behaviour and beliefs at home?
- Discuss the views of the Blackshirts as they are revealed throughout the book. How do you feel about their attitude to the war?
- Lugs sticks by Ronnie to help him uncover Johnny's plan. What does this mean to Ronnie?
- *"Are you a Blackshirt or are you one of The Shrapnel Boys? Because the way I see it, you can't be both."* (p. 333) What makes these two groups so different? Discuss what they both stand for.
- Through this story we see how out of control children must have felt during the war. How did this feeling allow Johnny to influence them?
- *"People aren't simple. The world, it doesn't allow for that. I guess we are all carrying round the scars of what has happened to us and finding ways to stop ourselves getting wounded again."* (p. 359) What has the war shown Ronnie about people and how they can be affected by their experiences?
- Through the terror of the war, what gets the boys through?

JENNY PEARSON





# SHRAPNEL BOYS

## A DAY IN THE LIFE

Fill out the table below with the activities that you carry out during a regular day in your life. Think about what you might eat, how you get to school, what you might learn about and how you would spend your evening. Then, fill out the column for Ronnie's life. How different does a day look for a child living through World War Two?

TIME	MY LIFE	RONNIE'S LIFE
7AM		
8AM		
9AM		
12PM		
1PM		
3PM		
4PM		
5PM		
6PM		
7PM		
8PM		
9PM		



# SHRAPNEL BOYS

## REPORTING ON THE WAR

Use the prompts below to plan a newspaper article reporting on the bombing that took place in London. Once you have planned your article, write it out in a newspaper style: with a headline, 2 columns and an image.

Headline, reporter and date

Introduction: cover the 5 W's  
(when, where, what, who, why)

Second main paragraph: add more detail

First main paragraph: add more detail

Witness quotes to add in

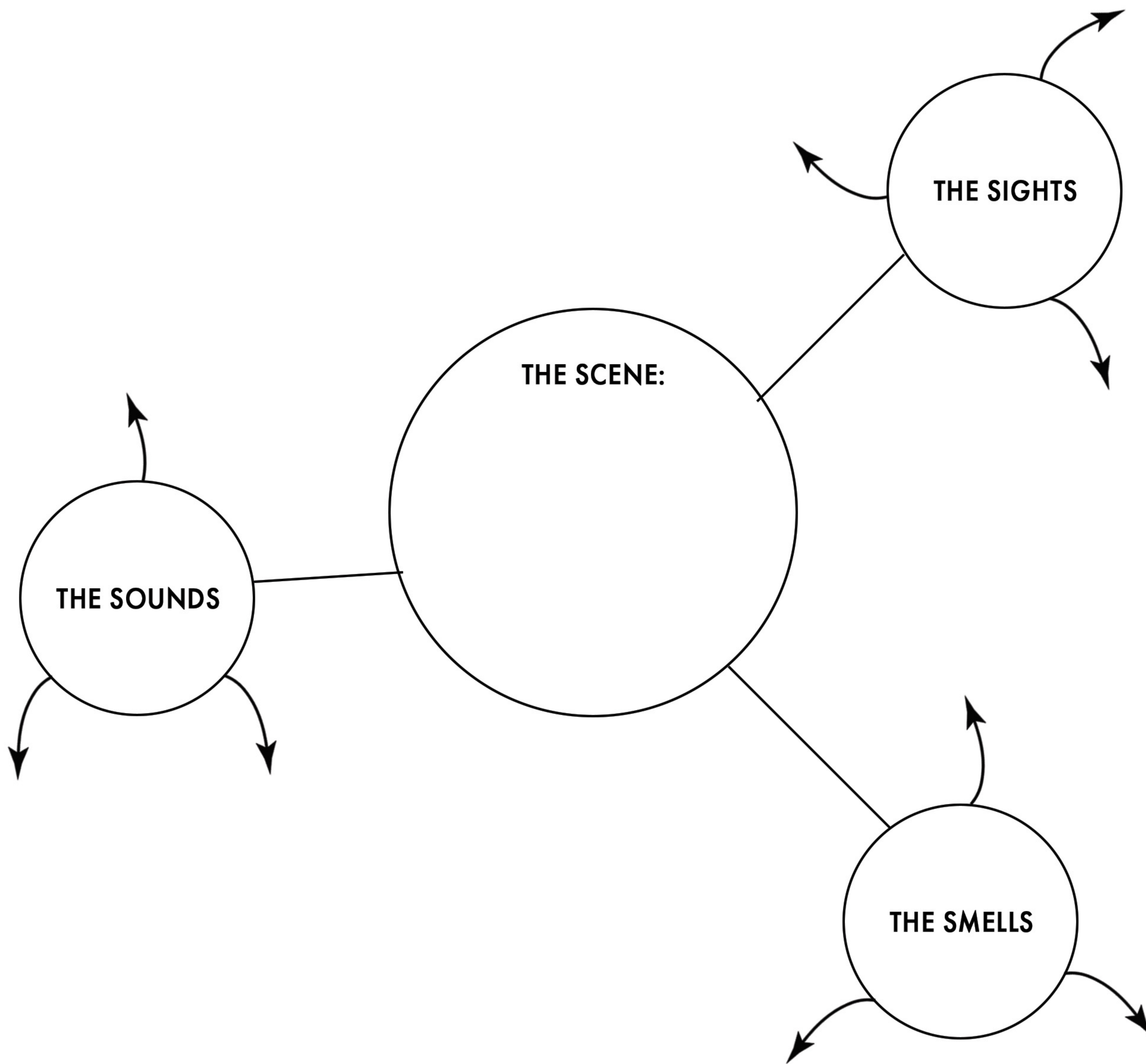
Conclusion



# SHRAPNEL BOYS

## IMAGES FROM WARTIME LONDON

Choose a scene from the book such as inside an air raid shelter, in Ronnie and his friend's den, or on the streets of London. Add to the diagram below all of the sights, smells and sounds you might experience if you were there. Then, use this to create a piece of art depicting the scene. This could be a drawing, collage or a poem. Try to convey all of the words you have noted below in your art.



JENNY PEARSON

