

Students are not expected to be able to answer the questions in full but the following are example answers which can also be used for further information and discussion. Most of the answers can be found elsewhere in the workbook.

### PRE-VIEWING QUESTIONS

1. **When/where does the story take place?**

Brighton, East Sussex  
Friday September 20, 1940

2. **Who are the main characters?**

A.R.P. Warden Fred Baxter  
Tom (Young boy)  
Tom's Father  
Tom's Mother  
Derek (alleyway drunkard)

3. **What happens?**

*(Students are urged to retell the story in their own words and with their own interpretation)*

Fred Baxter is a young Air Raid Precautions warden evacuating a residential area during a midday air raid in Brighton, on Friday the 20<sup>th</sup> September, 1940. His unpopular choice to work on the home front rather than fight on the front line (with his older brother Eric) is revealed when he tries to help Derek, an alleyway drunkard, towards the shelter, who responds with nothing more than verbal abuse.

But when he sees a young boy innocently playing marbles his choice is further tested. The boy sees the warden as a threat and runs away into an abandoned house. Inside the house, the warden discovers that it has only recently been abandoned, with food still on the table and music playing over the wireless. But his attention is then drawn to a large unexploded German bomb that has crashed through the ceiling and is impaled into the floor boards. With it now more urgent than ever to find the boy, the discovery of a marble on the floor confirms the boy is in the room and he finally finds him –hidden behind rubble next to the bomb!

Despite the the warden's attempts to explain the danger the boy does not understand the situation. Fred Baxter is almost about to give up when he remembers the marble in his hand. He makes the marble magically disappear from his hands and then tells the boy he knows a place where they can get more. Tom is now curious to know where he can find more marbles. The warden is now able to help him out of the house and away from the bomb.

Outside the house Fred encounters Tom's parents who have been fervently searching for their lost son. The father, a RAF officer on leave, is shocked to see Tom in the arms of Fred, who he knows has refused to fight on the front-line. Although Tom's mother seems thankful, the RAF officer tells the warden to 'clear off' and they quickly make their way back to the air raid shelter.

Moments later the unexploded German bomb explodes, completely destroying the house, Fred only just managing to escape.

## **POST-VIEWING QUESTIONS**

### **◆ Basic**

**1. What does an A.R.P. warden do?**

Their key duties (as seen in the film) involve:

- Helping people to shelters during air raids
- Reporting unexploded bombs and bomb damage

**2. Where are all the people running to?**

Their nearest air raid shelter.

**3. Why is it so important to get young Tom out of the house?**

Because there is an unexploded bomb in the house.

**4. How does the warden get young Tom away from the danger?**

By playing with and talking about marbles (Tom loves marbles).

◆ **Advanced**

**1. What is the historical context of the story?**

Brighton, East Sussex, Friday September 20, 1940. This is an actual historical date in which 15 people were killed in the Caledonian Road area of Brighton. The film *A.R.P.* shows photographs of ARP advertising, air raid shelters, unexploded bombs and bomb damage.

**2. Explain Fred Baxter's reaction to the war and why you think he chose to be an A.R.P. warden.**

As a conscientious objector he has chosen to work as an ARP warden rather than fight on the front-line (unlike his older brother Eric). He states that such a choice has not been made out of fear. He believes that such a choice is just as brave as those fighting on the front-line.

**3. What do you think the drunk's background is and why does he refer to the 'front-line'?**

Derek is regularly found asleep and drunk in the alleyway. A once wealthy, upper-class Brighton man, his reaction to a war that has resulted in great personal loss, is to hide from it through drink. On this occasion, the warden's help during an air raid is met with negative references to the warden's choice not to fight –rather than talking about the way to the air raid shelter he asks about 'the way to the front-line'.

**4. Why does young Tom run away from the warden?**

The warden's uniform and whistle scare him –seemingly no different from a soldier or policeman. He may also have run away from his parents.

**5. What kind of family do you think lives/lived in the house?**

The house has only recently been abandoned, with food still on the table and music playing over the wireless. They are likely middle to upper class. A family member, probably a son, is serving in the armed forces (according to the photograph).

**6. Why is the house deserted?**

An unexploded German bomb has crashed through the ceiling –maybe during their breakfast or lunch.

**7. What dilemma does the warden face in the house?**

Despite the the warden's attempts to explain the danger involving the bomb, the boy does not understand the seriousness of the situation

**8. Why does the warden's use of the marble work better than forcing young Tom to leave?**

Focusing on something that interests the boy –the marble- works better than trying to scare him into leaving. He gains the boy's trust through the marble. This relates to the warden's belief that fear is a reaction but a choice should not be based on fear.

**9. Although Tom's father acts without realising what the warden has really done, why do you think he reacts so strongly?**

The father, a RAF officer on leave, is shocked to see Tom in the arms of Fred, who he knows has refused to fight on the front-line. Under intense pressure during the war, he has possibly lost friends and comrades and is insulted by the warden's choice. Also, the pressure of the moment –losing a son during an air raid- may have caused him to loose his temper.

**10. Do you think the drunk's and the father's reaction to someone who has chosen not to go to war is typical of the time? Explain.**

The prejudice depicted in the film is based on true events. In the height of war feelings often run strong –'if you are not with us you are against us' was a common feeling. Many misunderstood those who chose not to go to war and labelled them cowards or unpatriotic.

**11. What do you think is the film's message?**

Fred Baxter states at the beginning of the film that 'fear is a reaction' but his choice to be a warden is not based on fear. This choice is tested in an obvious fashion through the abuse he receives from Derek and Tom's father. But a more subtle test is the way he handles the situation involving the young boy and the bomb. He realises that the same principle applies –the boy will not respond to fear other than just through simple reactions –running away or hiding. By appealing to the boy's interests rather than his own, he is able to solve the problem.

Another running theme is that a choice based on conscience –even against popular opinion- is just as brave as those who go with along with the crowd.

**12. How do you think the film's themes/messages apply to what is happening today?**

Attitudes to war have changed dramatically in recent years. But everyone still faces a choice. This film is a reminder of those who made choices during World War Two and encourages us to analyse what our own choices might be if we were or are ever faced with similar circumstances.

It should also make us think about respecting other people's choices, if they are different from our own. Do we belittle -or even worse- attack others for choices they have made, just because we disagree?

Finally, there is a phrase that 'if there is one thing we have learned from history it is that we never learn from history'. It is important to remember what happened and how it has shaped society of today. And that involves not only those who fought in the war, but those who had to face many obstacles and choices on the home front.