Be a Shock Trooper in the Austerity Army!

In 1942, Elsie Curtin (sometimes called ‘Mrs John Curtin’) encouraged Australian women to follow her example of austerity in support of the war effort. Read her article and answer the questions that follow.

There are more tips on austerity measures in the full version of the article at the URL below:

► The Australian Woman’s Weekly, 19 September 1942, p.13. Transcript and downloads available in left column. (Includes JCPML00376/242 of Elsie Curtin)

Name: ____________________________

How the Curtins live

MRS. JOHN CURTIN, wife of the Prime Minister, has been a housewife all her life. She has looked after her husband and raised two children in their cottage at Cottesloe, West Australia. Since living at the Lodge in Canberra she has applied the same simple, efficient housekeeping.

She has closed many rooms and has arranged plain wholesome meals for herself and husband.

In the article on this page she describes the housewives’ part in the war effort based on the principles she has put into practice in her own home.

They taste as well as the more expensive cuts.

She can use mutton and lamb, of which we have plenty, instead of beef and pork which we need for canning for our own and the American forces in Australia and for our Allies.

She can use fresh fruits, green vegetables and honey, which are plentiful, instead of foods in short supply such as potatoes and rice.

By rigid economy she can make the weekly allowance of better and sugar go further, thus releasing more butter and sugar to help meet Britain’s urgent needs.

She can release labor for war work by refraining from buying processed food.

She can release time for war production by purchasing fresh food instead of tinned food.

She can keep up the nation’s food reserve by keeping down her own—i.e., by refusing to buy foodstuffs at the expense of others.

She can revise her weekly food quantity and order so exactly that the rubbish bin is used only for rubbish, not for food that has to be thrown away.

She has time she can knit the children’s school socks at home. Hand-knitted socks last much longer and can easily be repaired. When it is no longer possible to darn them with wool.

She can discard stockings in the summer and wear socks, which are more economical and use up less material.

Above all she can follow the golden rule for austerity shopping—buy only the things you really need and at the time you really need them.

Never buy an article unless you really need it to replace something you have already used up.

If she follows all these austerity hints—and the many others that will occur to her—the housewife will be making a telling contribution to Australia’s war effort.

In a very real sense she will be a shock trooper in Australia’s new Austerity Army.
1. **Oral work 1 – discuss with others**
   
a) Examine the title of the article, *Be a Shock Trooper in the Austerity Army!*
   
i) Define ‘shock trooper’.
   
ii) Look at the photos and their captions. Using the clues here, how would you define ‘austerity’?
   

b) Consider the following:
   
i) Who wrote the article?
   
ii) Why would her advice be influential?
   
iii) What is ‘the Lodge’?
   
iv) Why did the Prime Minister live in Canberra and not at his home in Perth?
   
2. **Written work**
   
a) What is the job of the new Austerity Army? _____________________________________________
   
_________________________________________________________________________________
   
_________________________________________________________________________________
   

b) Who can belong to this army? ________________________________________________________
   

c) Write a simple definition of the term ‘austerity’. _________________________________________
   
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d) Briefly list the ways in which a housewife could practise austerity in the home.
   
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e) What was Mrs Curtin’s ‘golden rule’ for austerity shopping? ______________________________
   
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3. **Oral work 2 – follow up**
   
a) Look at the article title again. How would you explain it now?
   

b) Austerity and rationing were used in conjunction with each other. How important do you think that they each were to Australia’s war effort?