

The Age of

BOOM!

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The Age Of **BOOM**

THE AGE OF BOOM is a game about a family who moved to Bracknell, a modern town in England, in 1951. Ten years later, they must decide whether to leave.

To Set Up

Read the card “How you came here” out loud, one paragraph each.

Choose which family member everyone will play: Ally, Bob, Charli, Daf or Erik. If there are fewer than five players, leave out Charli, Daf or Erik. Try to pick the family member whose role in the household is least like your role in real life.

Read the instructions for your family member. Bob and Ally also read their special instructions.

To play

It's a family Scrabble evening in 1961. Set up for a game as normal, talking as your characters.

When Bob or Ally play their first word, they tell the family they must make a decision: should they stay in Bracknell or return to their home town?

Talk as a family and decide what to do.

By the end of an hour, decide together whether the family will stay in Bracknell or return to their home town. Any child may alternatively decide to leave the family and go to London.

If you haven't made a decision by the end of one hour, you'll all return to your home town,, except for any children that decide to go to London.

How you came here

Your family moved to the neighbourhood of Priestwood, Bracknell, on Christmas Eve 1951. You always said that, in ten years, you'd return to your home town.

You moved here because the engineering firm Ally worked for, Fluidrive, relocated here. That's how you got the house, which was one of the first built in Bracknell. It had central heating, an indoor toilet and a bath, all things you hadn't had before.

Charlie was eight when you moved, Daf was six and Erik five. They all went to local schools and Bill stayed at home to take care of them.

In the first few years, food was rationed and money was tight. But things changed fast. You bought a washing machine, refrigerator and vacuum cleaner. You are even wondering whether to buy a car.

And Bracknell has changed too, with more people and cars than ever. There is even a modern town centre, with concrete walkways and every shop you can imagine.



Special Instructions

Ally and Bill, you must choose where your home town is.

If you want a realistic game, your home town is **Isleworth**, a town on the outskirts of London. The whole family knows this.

If you want a fantastic game, you may decide your home town is **Moscow** (because you are Russian spies) or **the Fairie Realm** (because you are fairies). This is a secret, which you will tell the family for the first time tonight. They think their home town is Isleworth, but this is either brainwashing or fairie magic.

If you choose a fantastic location, have fun with it, but try to keep the discussion focussed on the decision to leave, rather than spycraft and fairiedom.

Wherever you choose, the descriptions given elsewhere are the same. For example, if this is a realistic game, then the half-demolished houses Charlie remembers are in Isleworth. If not, then he may think they are in Isleworth, but they are really in Moscow or Fairie.



Ally (40)

When you think of your home town, you remember a cold, cramped house. You walked to work through thick fog, passing ruined houses.

When you moved here, you found it uncomfortably quiet, although you liked the fresh air. Your walk to work takes you through country lanes and concrete underpasses. It was hard to afford the rent at first, but things got better, which is good, because there are always more advertisements telling you to buy things.

You eat better here too. The work canteen keeps you well-fed. In your home town, you remember having to eat chips and bread for supper. These days, you have roast beef for Sunday lunch, and sometimes even roast chicken.

You like having the radio on at home, especially *Hancock's Half Hour*, which is funny. You might even get a TV.

You always said you'd give it ten years, then go back home. You do have fond memories of home and you'd like to see whether the people you grew up with are still there. But Bracknell is modern and exciting, so perhaps you should stay.



Bill (39)

When you think of your home town, you remember the cold and damp. You spent hours trying to clean the house, scrubbing at soot until your hands were raw.

When you moved to Bracknell, the new house was bigger than you could have imagined. There was an indoor toilet, which you didn't have to share with the neighbours, and even central heating and electricity throughout.

At first you distrusted the new town centre, with its modern concrete walkways and bewildering array of shops. You got lost a couple of times! But it's made life better: you remember stumbling into Radio Rentals, unsure what to ask for, and getting a washing machine on hire purchase. That, and the Hoover, has made your life so much easier, even if Daf keeps fiddling with them.

You felt lonely at first, but you've joined local clubs - you love gardening and you've even started photography - and you like having neighbours around for coffee.

You always said you'd give it ten years, then return home. You do sometimes feel things are moving too fast and think fondly about the old town. But could you give it up and go back to scrubbing and washing?



Charli (18)

When you think back to your home town, you remember playing in half-demolished houses. You miss those houses: once, you found a human bone.

Moving to Bracknell was lonely at first, but you started playing football in the street and other children joined in. Once, you built a model boat with your parents and sailed it on Jeans Pond. It's better than listening to the radio at home, especially *Hancock's Half Hour*, which is stupid, he's just sad all the time. You hope you get a TV, so you don't have to go to the cinema so much.

At first, the food was rubbish. You hated eating mince and tinned salmon. Then you started having chicken for dinner and even fish fingers, although boil in the bag curry is disgusting. You've heard a burger bar is opening soon, in the new town centre.

You finish school soon and you're wondering what to do. You've heard the Met Office is moving to Bracknell: perhaps you could work for them.

But you'd like to travel too. Perhaps you could go back to your home town and see what's there. Or perhaps you could go to Central London: you've heard about the coffee bars and clubs there and you'd like to see them.



Daf (16)

You don't really remember your home town. There's a dim memory of grey, cold streets, without anything fun to do.

Growing up in Bracknell, you loved how modern everything was: the shiny cars, the concrete underpasses from which you suddenly emerged in the centre of town. When the new town centre opened, you loved running up escalators and along the elevated walkways.

You like the local cinema, especially the Saturday matinees. And you like listening to the radio, although, if you're honest, you mainly like to twiddle the dials. When the washing machine arrived, you liked pressing the buttons on that too, then watching the washing go around.

You're even building a radio of your own. You've carefully sourced parts from mail order catalogues. It's nearly working!

You've heard that electronic firms are coming to Bracknell. If they do, you'd love to work for one of them.

You don't know how you feel about your home town. Is it old and boring there? Do they even have cinemas and radios? Shouldn't you just go to Central London, the most modern city of all?



Erik (15)

Your earliest memories were playing with the other local children in Jock's Lane in Bracknell. You don't remember your family's "home town" at all.

You like it here. There's always something new in the shops. When you were little, you loved chocolate and milk. Now, there are all kinds of sweets and fizzy drinks.

The food at home has got better too. You like steak and kidney pie and you love boil in the bag curry, even if nobody else does.

When you're not at home, you spend your time at clubs. There's a youth club in town, where you play cards and table tennis with the other kids. Sometimes, you'll go around their houses and play records on their record player.

You get bored at home sometimes, especially with Bill Hoovering all the time and listening to *Hancock's Half Hour* on the radio, which isn't funny. You hope the family gets a telly, even a car.

You don't know what other places would be like to live in. If they were like Bracknell, maybe they would be okay? You'd miss your friends, but maybe you'd get new ones?



Hints

This game is a way to get people talking about Bracknell's history. And it's a game about a decision, not a family argument. Don't shout at each other and don't damage the Scrabble board.

You can either keep playing Scrabble during the game or stop to talk. If you don't have a Scrabble set, substitute another game or activity.

If you don't understand a word, phrase or where a place is, do an Internet search.

Please be careful about playing this game during a pandemic. At the time this game is set, Britain had just created a nationalised healthcare system, so ensure you have one of these in place before play. You could take other precautions too: ensure nobody feels ill or has been in contact with ill people, make sure everyone is vaccinated, wear masks.

You may also wish to play outside: if you do, substitute Scrabble for an outdoor game, such as quoits.

The name "The Age of Boom" is taken from a newspaper quoted in Dominic Sandbrook's *Never Had It So Good*.

Thanks to the Royal Berkshire Archives, which I visited to research this game.