

Keystage history

Knowledge organiser

Britain during the Second World War



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Why this period is important

In this topic you will learn why Britain went to war and was threatened with invasion by Hitler's Germany during the Second World War from 1939-45, just over 20 years since the horrors of the First World War. But most of the time will be devoted to working out how the British people managed to cope with life on the Home Front for 6 years, much of that time with rationed food, restricted freedom and the threat of bombing, especially in large cities. You will learn how families were torn apart, with men fighting in all parts of the world, older men preparing to stop any invasion, women working on the land and in factories and children evacuated to the countryside. What kept people going was what came to be known as the 'Blitz spirit', which people sometimes refer to today when times are hard. One of the most important things you will learn about relates to the world of 'fake news' today. To keep up people's spirits the government produced a lot of propaganda as well as censorship to put a positive spin on events. You will learn how to spot this - an important skill for life. In terms of the wider world war, you will learn much more about the fighting itself in KS3.

1939

Summer 1939
Plans for
evacuation in
place

1 September 1939
1.5 million people
took part in 3 day
evacuation



1940

September 1939-April 1940 The Phoney war. As there was no fighting many evacuees returned home

3 September
1939 Britain
declared war
on Germany



January
1940 Food
rationing
began



May 1940
British troops
had to leave
Dunkirk

June 1940
France
surrendered
to Germany.
Britain now
fights alone.

1941

Sep 1940-1941 The Blitz

1940 August
Battle of
Britain



1942

December
1941 USA
enters the war
on Britain's
side



1943

June 1944
DDay
landings



1944

1945

May 1945
End of the
war





Key vocabulary

Allies	Countries fighting on the same side
Anderson shelter	Outdoor steel cage shelters put up in gardens and covered with earth
ARP - Air Raid Patrol warden	Responsible for making sure people wore gas masks, hid in shelters and put lights out at night
Battle of Britain	Famous victory in the air battle involving Spitfires which took place in the skies of Kent in the summer of 1940 when Britain alone was fighting Germany
Billeting	Place of evacuated children in volunteer foster parents' homes
Black market	Illegal sale of scarce goods people couldn't get through rationing.
Blitz	Lighting attacks by German bombers on British ports and cities, London and Coventry were worst hit.
Censorship	The government control of news to make sure it didn't help the enemy
Civilian	Someone not in the armed forces
Dunkirk	A place in France where British army was trapped and had to be rescued by all sorts of small boats coming from the UK
Evacuation	Large-scale sending of children from cities likely to be bombed to safe places in the countryside
Home Guard	1.5 million men between ages of 17 and 65 who guarded the coast and important army posts

Top takeaways

1. Britain was at war with Germany and her allies for 6 years but managed to win the war, despite all the hardship people faced.
2. Britain was led through the darkest days of the war by Winston Churchill and was helped especially by the USA, Russia and troops from across the British Empire, to win the war.
3. Many British cities were badly bombed and people killed, especially during what was known as the Blitz which saw massive destruction in the main industrial cities and ports as well as London.
4. Many children had to be evacuated to the countryside and billeted on foster families to avoid being bombed or gassed in air raids.
5. Everyone had a part to play in the war effort including 1.5 million women who worked in factories, farming transport and defence doing jobs such as delivering planes.
6. People still talk about the 'Blitz spirit' of coping with hardship, but not everyone behaved wonderfully. Propaganda was widely used to lift people's morale.
7. The government made use of propaganda to persuade the people that the war was going well.

Morale	The amount of confidence felt by a person or group of people.
Morrison shelter	Indoor shelters for those without gardens
Propaganda	The government made sure that posters and radio messages persuaded people that the war was going well. Because German ships stopped food coming into the country, there were shortages of food. People had to use a card which allowed them only a limited amount of certain items, including essential food.
Rationing	