

# History – Was it Britain's Finest Hour? (Year 6)



## Key Vocabulary

**annex** – where one territory moves into another.

**allies** – (supporter) The UK, France and Poland, later joined by other countries including The United States of America and China.

**axis** – (enemy) Germany, Japan and Italy.

**propaganda** – information designed to promote a political idea or opinion.

**rationing** – to control the amount of something an individual can have.

**evacuation** – moving someone away from an area that is dangerous to somewhere safer.



The government's 'Dig for Victory' campaign encouraged people to grow their own food. Some people also reared their own animals for meat and eggs. Clothes and other items were mended or made into new things.

A Journey Through History at Christ Church



## Rationing

Supply ships were targeted by German bombers and it was necessary to conserve as much food as possible. Rationing meant that each person was only allowed a fixed amount of foods. Ration books were issued, with coupons that showed people how much of each item they were allowed. Shopkeepers would remove or stamp the coupons when they were used. People were also encouraged to 'Dig for Victory' and grow as much of their own food as possible.

Petrol, soap, clothing and timber were also in short supply. Clothing ration books were issued and people were encouraged to 'make do and mend'.



## Why did WWII start?

The leader of Germany, Adolf Hitler, had plans to take over other countries. In March 1938, Germany invaded and annexed Austria, which made other countries worried. On 29th September 1938, British, French, German and Italian leaders signed a treaty called the Munich Agreement. This allowed Hitler to annex the Sudetenland (an area of Czechoslovakia) if he agreed not to invade anywhere else. However, in August 1939, Hitler broke the agreement and invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia, followed by Poland on 1st September. Britain, France and Poland had made a pact to support each other, so Britain and France declared war on Germany.



## Time Line

Key Events		
1939	1 <sup>st</sup> September	German troops invade Poland.
	3 <sup>rd</sup> September	Britain and France declare war on Germany.
1940	10 <sup>th</sup> May	The Battle of France begins.
	26 <sup>th</sup> May	Allied forces are evacuated from Dunkirk in France.
	10 <sup>th</sup> July	The Battle of Britain begins.
	7 <sup>th</sup> September	The Blitz begins.
1941	22 <sup>nd</sup> June	Germany invades the USSR (Soviet Union).
	7 <sup>th</sup> December	Japan bombs Pearl Harbor in the US.
1943	16 <sup>th</sup> and 17 <sup>th</sup> May	The Dambusters bombing raid is carried out.
1944	6 <sup>th</sup> June	The D-Day landings.
1945	7 <sup>th</sup> May	Germany surrenders to the Allies.
	6 <sup>th</sup> and 9 <sup>th</sup> August	The US drops atomic bombs on two cities in Japan.



## The Battle of Britain

In July 1940, Germany planned a secret mission to invade Britain. They began by sending the Luftwaffe (German air force) to bomb British ships, airfields and other targets. RAF (Royal Air Force) planes fought back in what were known as dog fights



Believing they were winning, the Luftwaffe moved on to bombing London on 7th September 1940 (the start of the Blitz). On 15th September, the Luftwaffe launched another attack but the RAF fought back and it was clear that the Germans would not be able to win. This date is commemorated every year as the end of the Battle of Britain.



### Impacts



Every year, special celebrations are planned to honour and remember the people whose lives were affected by the war. Large commemorations are usually held for events including the evacuation from Dunkirk, Holocaust Memorial Day, VE Day, D-Day and the Battle of Britain, as well as for Remembrance Day.



### Evacuation

During World War II, over 3.5 million children, along with some of their teachers and helpers, mothers with very young children, pregnant women and people with disabilities, were evacuated from the cities to the countryside, where it was believed they would be safer from bombing. All evacuees had to take their gas mask, ration book and identity card. When they reached their destination, a billeting officer would arrange a host family for them.

Evacuation happened in waves, beginning on 1st September 1939. Other waves occurred at the start of the Battle of Britain and at the start of the Blitz.

