

National
Literacy
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THE ROYAL BRITISH
LEGION



VE DAY

8th May 1945

WHAT IS VE DAY?



VE Day - 8th May 1945

What do the adults in your family know about VE day?



What do you know about VE day?



VE Day - 8th May 1945

VE Day or Victory in Europe Day marked the end of fighting in Europe during the Second World War – which had lasted nearly 6 years.

On 7th May 1945, Winston Churchill announced on the radio that Germany had officially surrendered.

He declared that the next day (8th May) would become Victory in Europe day and a national holiday for everyone.



You can listen to Churchill's full speech here:

<https://winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1941-1945-war-leader/end-of-the-war-in-europe/>



8th May 2020 75th Anniversary of Victory in Europe

This year it is the 75th anniversary of VE Day – which means that 75 years ago on the 8th May, war in Europe ended.

To commemorate the event, the early May bank holiday (usually a Monday) has been moved so that the bank holiday is the same day as VE Day – Friday 8th May.

Why do you think it is important that together we remember VE Day?



On VE Day, people held big celebrations across Britain such as parades or street parties.

The largest crowds were in London with one crowd reaching up to 50,000 people celebrating into the night.

Huge crowds also gathered outside Buckingham Palace where the King and Queen, their daughters and the Prime Minister appeared on the balcony to greet everyone.



Why did people come together on VE Day to celebrate?

How do you think the people in this picture were feeling?



Crowds gathered to celebrate

Triumph and Sorrow on VE Day

*Why do you think people felt both victorious and sad on VE day?
What were they celebrating?*

Why was VE day still a sad day for many?



Let us turn our thoughts to this day of ...
triumph and ... sorrow."

Winston Churchill



Triumph: a great victory or achievement



Sorrow: a feeling of great sadness



Triumph and Sorrow on VE Day

Winston Churchill gave a speech recognising the importance of remembering those who lost their lives.

On VE day, there was a mix of feelings. It was a time for celebrating the end of the war, but it wasn't only a **celebration**, it was also a sad time because:

- Millions of people had lost their lives or loved ones in the conflict.
- There was a lot of damage after the war, for example many people's homes were destroyed in the air raids.
- Soldiers who survived and were able to return home were full of the memories of war and conflict
- Many people weren't home yet - including Prisoners of War or evacuees



Millions of people lost their lives

Between 50 – 60 million people died in WW2.

18,000,000

18 million service personnel killed

45,000,000

45 million civilians killed

67,000

67 thousand killed in air raids in the UK



Civilian: a person who serving on the Home Front



Service personnel: people serving in the armed forces

Homes, buildings and streets were damaged

I...

I...



What might they be thinking or feeling?

What do you notice in the background of this picture?

Homes, buildings and streets had been damaged across the UK during the war. Everyone had worked hard to end the war but there was still a lot more work to do – the country needed to be rebuilt.

Soldiers returned home with memories of war and conflict

For those soldiers who survived and returned home at the end of the war, it wasn't all about celebration.

Many were distressed about what they had seen and experienced during the war.

Those returning home included surviving Prisoners of War (POWs) – soldiers who had been captured by enemies.

How do you think returning soldiers felt about coming home?



Many people hadn't returned home yet

There were 40 million refugees scattered across Europe



This picture shows a large group of Polish refugees in Germany, waiting to be returned to Poland



Refugees: people who have been forced to leave their country due to war, violence, conflict or persecution.

On V.E Day, although some people were at home taking part in the celebrations, there were still many people who had not made it home yet.

There were approximately 40 million refugees scattered across Europe trying to get home.



Millions of people never even returned home at all and some had to find new homes in different countries.



Refugees: people who have been forced to leave their country due to war, violence, conflict or persecution.

Michael Wetton's Story: A Child Evacuee



In 1939, Michael, aged 6, and his two older siblings were evacuated from London to the Essex coast.

For the first 2 years, he was moved from home to home and he found it very hard being away from his family and home in London.

To begin with, Michael was kept together with one of his brothers. But after a while they were separated and were sent to live with different families.

In 1941, he finally found a family to live with, where he felt happy. Aunty Rhoda and Uncle Tom looked after him well for the next four years.

Sadly, during the air raids, Michael's home in London was bombed. His mum survived, but they lost all of their possessions and no longer had a house to live in.

On VE Day, when others were celebrating the end of the war, Michael was still an evacuee, unable to return home to be with his family.



Evacuees were sent to live with other families in safe areas of the country whilst London was being bombed.

Michael Wetton's Story: A Child Evacuee



Michael was one of many children who were evacuated from London during the war.

Evacuees were sent to live with other families in safe areas of the country whilst London was being bombed.

Michael's experience stayed with him forever, and throughout adulthood he dedicated himself to helping others.

He became a teacher and supported charities like Save the Children.

VE Day Reflection

On the 75th anniversary of VE day, let us:

- Give thanks to the Second World War generation for protecting the freedoms, democracy and ways of life we enjoy today
- Remember the bravery, service and sacrifice of the British and Commonwealth Armed forces who fought in the war; those who lost their lives, those who were still trying get home, and those who didn't have a home to return to
- Remember those who contributed to the war effort, including emergency services, families and civilians
- Do we know anybody in our communities or families who remembers WW2 and could share their stories with us?

Activity 1:



A taste of war time?

Plan a VE day party menu! What special party dishes might people have made to share with their friends and family on VE Day?

TOP TIP

Food was rationed during wartime so you will need to find out what food was available before you design your meal!

TAKE IT FURTHER

You could try making a war time recipe from your party menu such as a cake or some lemonade, to share with your family on VE day.

Some helpful links to wartime recipes:

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/croome/recipes/wartime-carrot-cake>

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/siteassets/home/visit/ve-day-75/ve-day-pack.pdf>

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/history/handsonhistory/ww2_recipes2.pdf

Helpful links to find out more about wartime rationing:

<https://www.lavenderandlovage.com/2012/11/the-wartime-kitchen-living-of-rations-with-ration-book-cooking-day-one.html>

Activity 2:

Create a peace display



Design a poster to remind everyone to be kind to each other.

TOP TIP

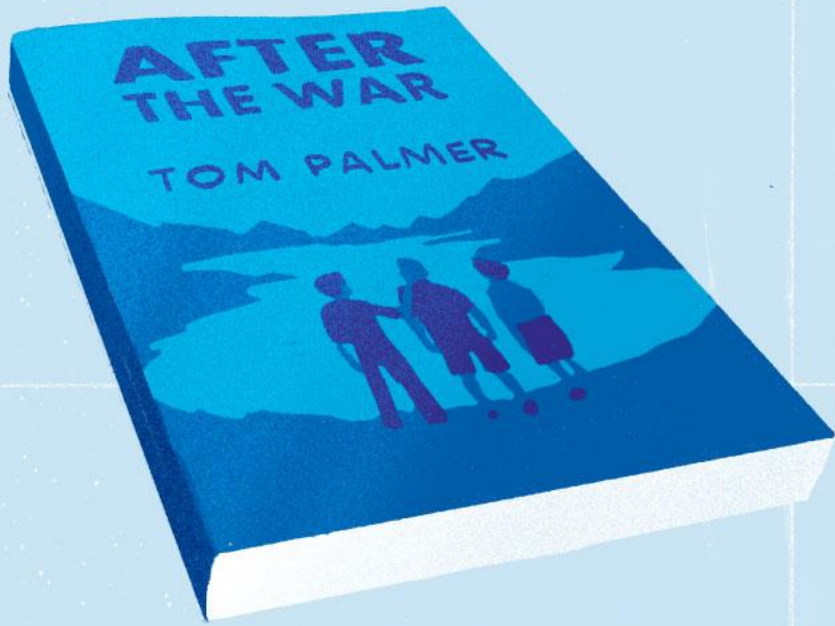
Find somewhere to display the poster so as many can see it as possible.

TAKE IT FURTHER

Learn the word for “peace” in as many different languages as you can.

[Download template](#)

Activity 3: Share stories of VE Day



Transport yourself back in time and write a VE Day diary entry. Imagine what it would have been like to take part in a VE day street parade or party. Think about:

- What did you do to celebrate?
- How did it feel knowing that the war in Europe was over?
- Who joined in the celebrations with you? Was anyone missing and why?
- Why might there have been a feeling of sadness too?

TOP TIP

Use the information you have learnt in this presentation to help you describe what happened on VE Day and how it felt. You might like to write from the perspective of a child evacuee, using Michael Wetton's story to help you.

TAKE IT FURTHER

You might like to read a story about VE Day or WW2 to learn more about what it was like.

Helpful Links:

<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/booklists/w/world-war-ii-childrens/>

<https://www.lovereadingschools.co.uk/lists/12025/World-War-Two-WW2>

<https://tompalmer.co.uk/after-the-war/>

Activity 4:

Step back in time

Learn some 1940s dance moves to celebrate VE Day. You might like to find out about the popular 1940s dance: The Lindy Hop!

TOP TIP

You could film yourself performing some of the dance moves or even create a tutorial for your family so that they can learn too!

TAKE IT FURTHER

You could learn some popular 1940s songs to sing along to and perform on VE Day.

Watch the Lindy Hop: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5DWLZGQOoE>

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/siteassets/home/visit/ve-day-75/ve-day-pack.pdf>

