What was the Blitz and did Britain really have a ‘Blitz Spirit’?
What does Blitz mean? (think back to our lesson on Blitzkrieg)

“The Blitz” was a German bombing campaign of large towns and cities by the Luftwaffe. After the failure of the Battle of Britain, German bombers focused on bombing industrial cities, particularly London, and ports.
What happened during the Blitz?

It was dangerous living in a big city during the war. Cities were the target of enemy aircraft that flew over at night and dropped bombs.

At 4:56pm on 7 September 1940, following the defeat in the Battle of Britain, the air raid sirens wailed as the German Air Force, the Luftwaffe, launched a massive raid on London. 2000 people were killed or wounded on this first day alone!

Over 350 V1 bombers flew across the Channel from airfields in Nazi occupied France and dropped 300 tonnes of bombs on the docks and streets of the East End of London.
Night after night, from **September 1940 until May 1941** (8 months!), German bombers attacked British cities, ports and industrial areas.

London was bombed everyday and night, bar one, for 11 weeks.

One third of London was destroyed from over 5000 tones of German bombs!
People were warned of a likely air raid by loud sirens, positioned in different parts of towns and cities. During the blitz, they became an almost daily part of life.

When people heard the siren they would stop what they were doing and make for a shelter. Many people slept in London’s underground train stations.
During the Blitz 32,000 civilians were killed and 87,000 were seriously injured.

Two million houses (60 per cent of these in London) were destroyed in the Blitz.
Bombed out church in Liverpool, still just a shell
KES was bombed and the boy’s bedrooms have been left exactly as they were that night – luckily no one was there at the time. The Germans were aiming for the docks but due to the black out they missed and hit KES.
What is a significant difference between the Blitz and WWI?

WW2 brought the war to Britain, WWI was mainly fought in the trenches of the Western Front.
Total War: This is a war in which every person and every resource is put towards the war effort. WW2 was the last Total War that this country has been in.

Luftwaffe Aims:

Destroy Britain’s industrial bases (factories etc) and psychological warfare (to destroy the moral of the British people, reducing their willingness to support Total War.)
What do we mean by the term ‘Blitz Spirit’?

The term “Blitz Spirit” was used to describe the resilience of the British people in the face of the German bombing. The news was full of examples of people getting on with their daily lives in spite of the bombing campaign.

As a result the term “Blitz Spirit” has entered the English language to describe a group of people showing determination in a difficult or dangerous situation.

In the recent Coronavirus Pandemic, several newspapers encouraged people to adopt a “Blitz Spirit”.

Can Boris Johnson conjure up the spirit of the Blitz? As the coronavirus crisis worsens, the challenge and risks confronting the Prime Minister are Churchillian in magnitude, writes SIMON WALTERS.
Was there really a Blitz Spirit?:

Read through this information and copy each box into one of two columns.

Evidence of Blitz Spirit and evidence of no Blitz Spirit

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<tr>
<th>Evidence of Blitz Spirit</th>
<th>Evidence of No Blitz Spirit</th>
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<tr>
<td>The crime rate went up during the Blitz. Burglaries went up as criminals took advantage of the blackout and people in bomb shelters at night. The murder rate increased by 22%.</td>
<td>Many wealthy people simply left the cities to live in country houses. It was the poor working class (much poorer than today) who were more likely to live in the inner cities and were less likely to be able to move, who took the brunt of the attacks. They kept going because they had no other choice but to work.</td>
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<td>Workers continued to strike during the Blitz.</td>
<td>People built their own bomb shelters.</td>
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<td>Some people tried to charge money to let people into the Tube stations to sleep at night.</td>
<td>Anti-Semitism (anti-Jewish prejudice) increased during the Blitz.</td>
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<td>Many married women chose to work in jobs vacated by men going to war even though they didn’t need to</td>
<td>Many people volunteered to be Air Raid Protection (ARP) Wardens.</td>
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<td>Many people who couldn’t fight in the army volunteered for the Home Guard.</td>
<td>A few people exploited the crisis for their own gain. “Bomb-chasers” followed the latest raids so they could loot shops.</td>
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<td>People grew their own food in the “Dig for Victory” campaign.</td>
<td>“Spivs” sold goods illegally on the black market to get around rationing.</td>
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Read this page carefully (next to this lesson’s link on our website) and make a list of as many examples as you can showing what the Government did to deal with the Nazis Blitz attacks...
Thanks to the ‘Blitz Spirit’ and our government’s actions, The Blitz ultimately failed. After the war started to turn in the allies favour, British bombers attacked Germany on a large scale. Cologne, Hamburg and Dresden were all heavily bombed.

In Dresden, incendiary bombs caused firestorms (hot air rising from burning buildings gets replaced with cold air rushing from the outside, leading to hurricane force winds of 120mph, fanning the flames further), resulting in the deaths of 25,000 German civilians in just 3 days.

Dresden was particularly controversial as it happened in February 1945, just 3 months before the end of the war in Europe. The allies already knew they were going to win. What do you think?

Perhaps 400,000 German civilians died as the result of allied bombing in total. By contrast, 40,000 British civilians died in the Blitz.
Arthur “Bomber” Harris, the Commander-in-Chief of Bomber Command has been a controversial figure ever since.

The modern British military purposely attempts to avoid civilian casualties where possible.

Can the bombing of civilians ever be justified?