

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?

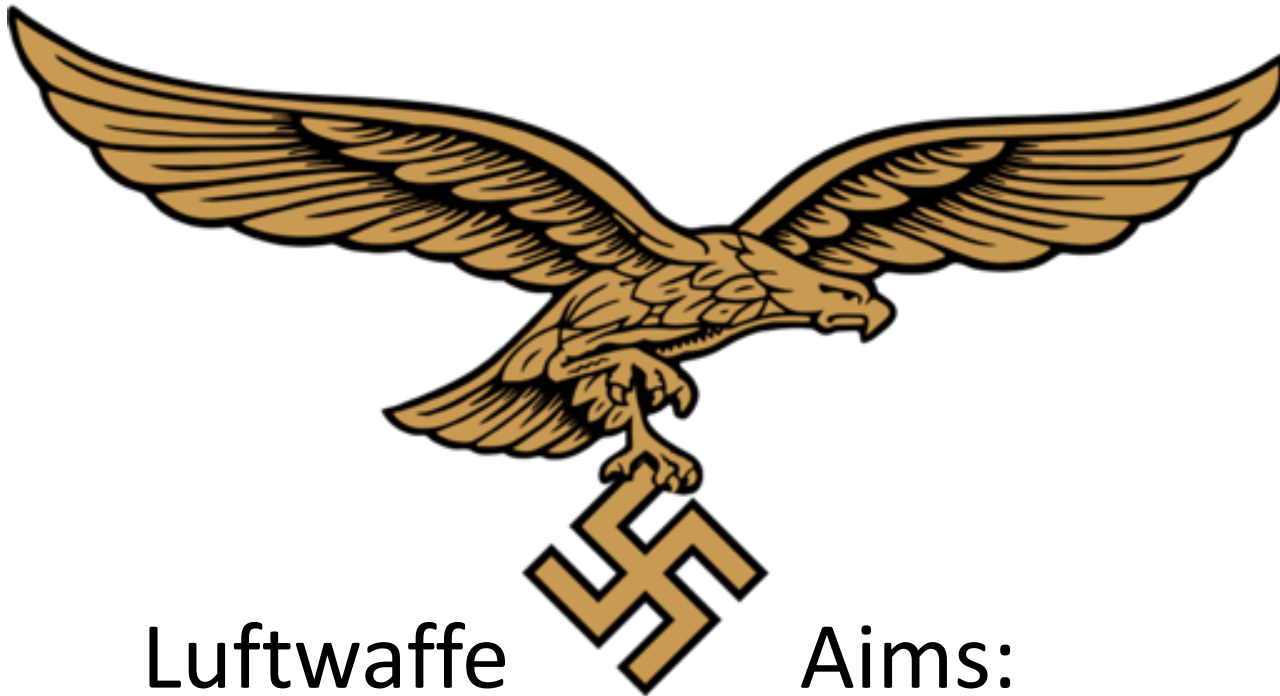


WW2 brought the war to Britain, WWI was mainly fought in the trenches of the Western Front



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.

Ad



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

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".

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

Evidence of Blitz Spirit		Evidence of No Blitz Spirit	
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Pick two colours for your key

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%.	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.
Workers continued to strike during the Blitz.	People built their own bomb shelters.
Some people tried to charge money to let people into the Tube stations to sleep at night.	Anti-Semitism (anti-Jewish prejudice) increased during the Blitz.
Many married women chose to work in jobs vacated by men going to war even though they didn't need to	Many people volunteered to be Air Raid Protection (ARP) Wardens.
Many people who couldn't fight in the army volunteered for the Home Guard.	A few people exploited the crisis for their own gain. "Bomb-chasers" followed the latest raids so they could loot shops.
People grew their own food in the "Dig for Victory" campaign.	"Spivs" sold goods illegally on the black market to get around rationing.

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...

Depth Study 5.6 The home front

The Second World War did not just involve soldiers, sailors and airmen. The armed forces also have women who went off to fight the enemy on foreign soil, but the people left at home had their part to play too, and were greatly affected by the conflict. So what impact did the war have on people back in Britain?

Mission Objectives

- Recall key terms and concepts such as rationing, Home Guard and total war.
- Identify ways in which the Second World War affected ordinary citizens.

In late 1940 German bombers began to bomb British major cities. This was known as the Blitz. Bombs hit London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Cardiff, Bristol, Southampton, Plymouth, Exeter and many other cities were targeted. London suffered the heaviest bombing. For the first time, other cities were bombed every night except over the end of May 1941, when London was bombed every night and 60,000 were seriously injured. In London alone, over a million homes were damaged or destroyed.

In May 1940, the government urged all men aged between 17 and 45 who weren't in the armed forces to join the Home Guard. They were to be trained in the use of small arms and to be prepared to fight. They were to be trained in the use of small arms and to be prepared to fight. They were to be trained in the use of small arms and to be prepared to fight.

When the war began, everyone expected to be bombed from the air – so citizens prepared for it. Millions of people built their own bomb shelters in their back gardens.

The German media ran all kinds of lies and other stories to try to stop the war. In 1940 the government introduced rationing. This meant that every person was limited to a fixed amount of food, clothing and other goods. The government also encouraged people to grow their own food in their back gardens and allotments. The slogan for the campaign was 'Dig for Victory'.

Fact

Members of the Home Guard were meant to be male – but women served in some units as cooks, messengers and telephone operators.

An RAF Firestorm (1977) was the last of a series of movies made to show the night-time bombing. The movie shows the night-time bombing of London. It shows the night-time bombing of London. It shows the night-time bombing of London.

The government could not afford to give people as much as a rationing system. The government could not afford to give people as much as a rationing system. The government could not afford to give people as much as a rationing system.

People put up their back garden to grow any kind of food. This was known as 'Dig for Victory'. People put up their back garden to grow any kind of food. This was known as 'Dig for Victory'. People put up their back garden to grow any kind of food. This was known as 'Dig for Victory'.

The government had the power to make people work in a job necessary to help with the war effort. Women worked in munitions factories, on farms, and in military hospitals. Single women were forced to work but married women were not. However, many women worked, however, many women worked, however, many women worked.

When war broke out, the government encouraged children to join the Home Guard. When war broke out, the government encouraged children to join the Home Guard. When war broke out, the government encouraged children to join the Home Guard.

Depth Study

Earlier on...

In 1915, a Women's Land Army was created to help with the war effort. In 1915, a Women's Land Army was created to help with the war effort. In 1915, a Women's Land Army was created to help with the war effort.

Fact

When a country uses all its resources to try to win, and the war involves all its people in some way, the conflict is often called a 'total war'. The term became well known in connection with the Second World War because it was used by leading British journalist in a 1940 speech in Berlin.

Change

- Explain two ways in which the home front in Britain in the First World War (see pages 10-11) and the home front in Britain in the Second World War were similar.
- Explain two ways in which the home front in Britain in the First World War (see pages 10-11) and the home front in Britain in the Second World War were different.

Open to You

- In your own words, define 'total war'.
- Prepare a short talk, or design a poster, aimed at primary school students. It should explain what life was like in Britain during the Second World War. Include details about:
 - the Blitz
 - air raid precautions
 - evacuation
 - changing roles of women
 - the Home Guard
 - rationing
 - the Dig for Victory campaign.
- List the three biggest changes to civilian life during the war.

Illustrations: War and Independence. Schools (2010). Project Day.

BLACKOUTS



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?