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A Child's War

The Second World War

The Second World War lasted from 1939 to 1945. On one side were the Axis Powers (including Germany, Italy and Japan). On the other side were the Allied Powers (including Britain, France, the Soviet Union and the USA). After six years of fighting, the Allied Powers won. Children, as well as adults, were affected by the war.

Key leaders

Allied leaders

Winston Churchill
Prime Minister of Great Britain

Charles de Gaulle
President of France

Joseph Stalin
Leader of the Soviet Union

Franklin D Roosevelt
President of the United States

Axis leaders

Adolf Hitler
Leader of Germany

Benito Mussolini
Prime Minister of Italy

Michinomiya Hirohito
Emperor of Japan

Evacuation

During the war, German planes dropped bombs on British cities in an attempt to destroy factories, dockyards and airfields but homes and schools were also hit. The government decided to evacuate children from the cities, where they might be in danger, to the countryside where they would be safer. Children who were evacuated were called evacuees. They went to live with other families who looked after them until the war ended.

The Blitz

The intense and sudden bombing of British cities was called the Blitz. Sirens were sounded in the streets to warn civilians that bombers were coming. To escape the bombs, people went into air raid shelters. Weeks of sustained bombing raids killed thousands of people and destroyed many homes and cities.

Air raid shelters

Many people built air raid shelters, called Anderson shelters, in their gardens. These were made from corrugated steel panels with soil spread over the top. Some people, who didn't have gardens, made a Morrison shelter inside their homes. This shelter looked like a steel table with wire mesh around the sides.

Propaganda

Posters, radio, films and newspapers were used during the war to keep up people's spirits, celebrate Allied victories and make fun of the enemy. This was called propaganda. Propaganda was also used to persuade people to do what the government wanted, such as carry a gas mask, grow vegetables, make or mend clothes and evacuate children from the cities to the countryside.

Food and rationing

During the war, there was a shortage of some foods because ships bringing food into Britain were at risk of sinking by German submarines. Rationing was introduced in 1940, which meant that each person could only buy fixed amounts of certain foods each week. Every person was issued with a ration book, and they had to hand over coupons from their ration book, as well as money, when they went shopping. Many foods were rationed, such as butter, bacon, sugar, meat, cheese and milk, but some were not, including potatoes and fish. People were encouraged to grow their own vegetables through the 'Dig for Victory' campaign.

Battle of Britain

The Battle of Britain started in July 1940 and lasted for many months. The German air force bombed Britain in an attempt to destroy Britain's Royal Air Force so they could prepare to invade Britain by sea. However, the Royal Air Force shot down many German planes and stopped Hitler's planned invasion of Britain.

Spitfires were used in the Battle of Britain

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Second World War timeline

Before the Second World War

1934	**19th August** Adolf Hitler, the leader of the Nazi party, becomes the leader of Germany.
1936	**March** German troops break the Treaty of Versailles when they occupy the Rhineland.
1938	**12th March** Austria becomes part the German Empire, which is known as the Third Reich.

During the Second World War

1939	**1st September** The Second World War begins when Germany invades Poland. **September** In the first three days of evacuation, 1.5 million children and vulnerable adults leave British cities.
1940	**8th January** Rationing starts. **10th July–31st October** The Battle of Britain takes place. **7th September** The Blitz begins.
1941	**10th May** The Blitz ends. **7th December** Japanese planes bomb the American naval base at Pearl Harbour in Hawaii, leading to the United States entering the war.
1944	**6th June** Allied troops land in Normandy, France to free western Europe from German control (D Day).
1945	**January** Allied forces begin to free prisoners of war from German concentration camps. **30th April** Adolf Hitler commits suicide. **8th May** Germany surrenders. The Second World War in Europe ends (Victory in Europe Day). **26th July** Clement Attlee replaces Winston Churchill as Prime Minister of Great Britain. **15th August** Japan surrenders (Victory over Japan Day). The Second World War ends.

After the Second World War

1945	**24th October** The United Nations is created to make sure a world war doesn't happen again.
1954	**4th July** Rationing ends in Britain.

Anne Frank

Anne was a German Jew who wrote a diary about her experiences during the war. When the Nazis gained control over Germany, Jews were persecuted and transported to concentration camps, so Anne moved with her family to Amsterdam in the Netherlands. When the Germans then invaded the Netherlands, Anne and her family went into hiding in a concealed room in her father's work building. Her famous diary tells her story while in hiding.

Glossary

Allied Powers	Countries (including Britain, France, the Soviet Union and the USA) that united to fight the Axis Powers.
Axis Powers	Countries (including Germany, Italy and Japan) that united to fight against the Allied Powers.
civilian	A person who was not in the police or armed forces.
concentration camp	A place where large numbers of people, especially Jews, were held and often killed.
evacuee	A child or vulnerable adult who was sent away from a city to live in the countryside, which was considered safer.
invade	To enter or occupy a country by force.
Nazi	A follower of Adolf Hitler, leader of the Nazi party.
persecute	To treat someone cruelly or unfairly.
propaganda	Biased news, media and communication, used to influence people's opinions.
rationing	The limited supply of food, clothes and other goods to prevent shortages.
Rhineland	An area of western Germany that runs along the River Rhine.
Treaty of Versailles	A peace treaty signed in 1919 that punished Germany for the First World War.

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