



The Royal British Legion Caring & campaigning for the serving and ex-Service community

Remembering VE Day School Assemblies

There are 3 assemblies for primary level and 1 assembly for secondary level.

Resources for assemblies include materials in The Royal British Legion's School's CD Rom which is a free educational resource you can request via the [Legion's website](#) if you do not have it already.

Primary assemblies

The following three assemblies to commemorate the 65th anniversary of VE Day are designed to be used in order to provide a build up to events and why VE day is remembered. However, the final assembly can also be used as a stand alone assembly.

Day One – The Second World War

In preparation:

- Optional The Royal British Legion School's CD Rom
- Materials from The Royal British Legion website (www.britishlegion.org.uk)
- Map of the world

Show a picture from the Legion's School's CD Rom of anything related to WWII such as Winston Churchill, troops etc.

Script: Has anyone heard of World War Two?

Well it is a war that lasted from 1939 to 1945 – and that probably seems like a long time ago now. This war took place all around the world, involving many countries and people. It affected the lives of lots of millions of people - men, women and children.

The war started in Europe in 1939 when Nazi Germany invaded the country of Poland and then went on to invade nearly all of the countries of Western Europe as well as many in Eastern and Southern Europe. In the end, the only countries of Europe that continued to fight Nazi Germany so that they wouldn't be taken over, were Britain and Russia.

All across the world, other countries and peoples were also fighting, either to prevent being invaded by Nazi Germany and its supporters, or to help nearby countries or the Allies (Britain, her Empire and the Commonwealth). After the end of 1941, one of the countries fighting alongside Britain was the United States of America. They joined the war after being attacked by the Japanese at Pearl Harbour.

There was fighting in North Africa, Asia, the Pacific and the Middle East – everyone was affected. The world seemed to be divided into two sides the Allies which included Britain and the Axis countries which were led by Nazi Germany

Option - Show a map of the world

Everywhere there was fighting normal people were affected as well. Villages, towns and cities were destroyed. Across Europe millions of people were injured, killed or made homeless.

The people in the British Armed Forces fighting for Britain and the Allies were mainly men and some women aged 17 into their forties (although some older men and women were involved in other roles). The women were not allowed to actually fight on the front line but were involved in many dangerous supporting roles such as nursing near the battle fronts and driving vehicles.

How many of you have relatives and friends who are that age or nearly that age?

Those who we say 'served' with the Armed Forces would have done very brave things. They fought all across the world and many were killed or injured. Those that served were often volunteers who did so because they believed that their country and those around them were being threatened by others. They didn't start out life wanting to be soldiers, or sailors or airmen they had normal jobs and lives until the war started.

Even normal jobs became more important because of what was happening – such as working in a factory. Because what was being made was needed urgently and factories now risked being bombed it meant those that didn't fight were still very important and contributed.

There was a lot of bombing across Britain and a full scale attack in July 1940 – the Battle of Britain - and in the English Channel, the Channel Islands were actually taken over by German forces. World War Two was a very dangerous and serious time.

By the time World War Two ended after 6 years of fighting, Europe would be completely changed. And those that served or were affected, which was nearly everyone across Britain and Europe, never forgot how difficult those times were.

Over the next few days we will learn more about the affects of the Second World War and why it is important to remember when the fighting ended.

Moment of reflection

Over the next few days we will learn about a terrible war but most importantly we will learn about the affects wars have on people and their lives. We will reflect on the horrors of war so that we may think about how we can work for a more peaceful world and remember those that are affected and killed when wars and battles do happen.

Poem

At A War Grave

by John Jarmain

No grave is rich, the dust that herein lies
Beneath this white cross mixing with the sand
Was vital once, with skill of eye and hand
And speed of brain. These will not re-arise
These riches, nor will they be replaced;
They are lost and nothing now, and here is left
Only a worthless corpse of sense bereft,
Symbol of death, and sacrifice and waste.

John Jarmain was killed during the Normandy landings in WWII at the age of 33. He left behind a wife, a daughter and a small book of poetry. Educated at Queen's College, Cambridge, Jarmain was trained as a mathematician.

Day two - Britain and World War Two

In preparation:

- Optional: The Royal British Legion's School's CD Rom
- Materials from The Royal British Legion website (www.britishlegion.org.uk)

Script: Yesterday we learnt about World War Two. What do you think about when you think about war?

Often we think about soldiers or those that fight. Men and women in uniform.

During World War Two you would see lots of people in military uniform everywhere. That was because it was a very serious war that affected many lives. Millions of people who would normally never join the Armed Forces volunteered to be able to do their bit.

(Select pictures from the education pack or CD Rom of the Home Front)

However it wasn't just people in the Armed forces that were affected. From the summer of 1940 British towns and cities were targeted by Nazi Germany in bombing raids. The aim was to drop bombs on places that contributed to the British war effort such as factories but also to target civilian sites, that is ordinary people, men and women, including children and the elderly. They targeted ordinary people to try and break their spirit so that they wouldn't be as good at supporting their troops.

Places all over the UK were hit by bombs dropped by planes.

The City of Coventry experienced some of the worst air raid attacks by the Nazis of any single British city. The attacks started in October 1940 with many small but intense raids which left 176 dead.

On the 14 November 1940 the worst attack came. The bombing began around 7.30pm in the evening and it didn't stop until after 5.00am the following morning. 500 German bombers dropped bombs for eleven long hours. The Cathedral was hit along with most of the centre of the city. 4,330 homes destroyed and three-quarters of the city's factories damaged. 554 men, women and children were killed and 865 injured.

London was another popular target and was bombed throughout the war leaving thousands homeless.

Children from big cities and towns were sent away to the countryside and in some cases they never saw their parents again or when they returned home they were nearly grown up.

When bombing raids happened people would have to hide in shelters or in safer places in their houses – it was frightening.

But it wasn't just the bombs that made people's lives difficult. The war meant shortages and everything was rationed – meaning you were only allowed to buy certain things and in certain amounts. Food was rationed; you were only allowed a certain amount of meat and cheese each week. Sweets were limited and so were clothes. At night, there were no street lights to try and stop the bombers from finding their targets. But it meant that

many people couldn't go out at night – especially children because they couldn't get around.

Life was very different and difficult for people during World War Two and no-one seemed untouched by it.

Moment of Reflection

When we think about World War Two we should remember the ways that it affected the lives of everyone that lived during that time. We remember the men and women who served in the Armed Forces and we also remember those whose lives were destroyed by bombs and who were separated from their families.

Poem

The Blitz In Ealing

From the collection: Nine Lessons from the Dark by Adam Thorpe

You crouched under the table as the ceiling
Rained down flour and the lights went out. Upstairs
Whole chunks played the devil with the bed
Still warm from your dreams
And the clues of hands and haunch and head.

But you weren't there, crushed
Beneath the latticework of laths,
Though the air's arch concussed you into dark
To bring you round to such amazing quiet
You were sure you were in Heaven, a graceful park

Coasting to a cry, which was yours, and then
The familiar kitchen was crawling out of dust
Into time you weren't, after all, denied...
The All Clear siren and the shrills of bells
And the neighbours unhooked from the brick slide

That was next door's up to minutes ago
Groaning on the sofa, bleeding in the hall -
And you knew now where you were, you said
(standing in the street by your own front door)
the fiery light dancing on the stockinged dead.

Day 3 - VE Day

This can also be used as a stand alone assembly

In preparation:

- Optional The Royal British Legion School's CD Rom
- Materials from The Royal British Legion website (www.britishlegion.org.uk)

Show a picture of crowds in the streets in London on VE Day 1945

Script : What do you think these people are doing?

Why are they celebrating and having a good time?

They're celebrating something call VE Day or Victory in Europe Day.

That day is 8 May 1945 – what might it be about?

VE Day was when Germany surrendered and World War Two ended in Europe. World War Two started in September 1939 when Nazi Germany invaded Poland. The war had spread and affected all the countries around the world. Fighting also took place around the world.

For much of the war, the countries and people that were most affected were in Europe. Many countries were invaded or bombed. British towns and cities were bombed from the summer of 1940 until 1945 that is five years killing and injuring thousands and making many more homeless. Most food and goods we take for granted such as meat, cheese, fruit, sweets, clothes and petrol were rationed – that means you could only have a certain amount and then only if you had the right tokens.

Millions of men and women from Britain and the British Empire and Commonwealth joined the Armed Services or took part in war work. They served and fought all across the world and risked their lives. Millions of lives were changed.

Can you imagine your life for five years and what five years of worrying about being hit by bombs or having to go into the Armed Services to fight or look after those who are injured would be like?

In May 1945 the War in Europe and North Africa and the Middle East came to an end. There were no more bombing raids and the threat of attack and injury went away.

As soon as the announcement was made that the war was over, people went to the streets to celebrate:

As a young man Royal British Legion member George Broomhead served in the Royal Navy, aboard HMS Partridge, which took part in the Malta convoys. His ship was continually under attack from all sides – bombarded by planes from above, by Italian ships on the sea and German U-Boats from below.

On 18 December 1944 HMS Partridge was torpedoed by U-565 while carrying out an anti-submarine sweep and went down off Oran on the North African coast. In peril from both the elements and the enemy, George spent hours floating in the sea. With a badly

injured shoulder and back, he was one of the last survivors to be picked up and was eventually transferred to HMS Oxfordshire, the hospital ship.

He was on his ship at Chatham when he heard the great news that the war in Europe was over.

"The skipper granted us all 24 hour leave," George remembers. "I caught the train to London and made my way to Trafalgar Square and after a while I climbed onto the lion and finished up perched on its head and someone passed me the Union Jack ... I was trying to conduct the singing in the crowds at the same time! Those were unforgettable scenes, dancing and singing – it went on all night."

People danced in the streets, bells across the country pealed, tugs on the Thames sounded their horns, planes roared overhead and flags appeared everywhere – finally it was over.

However thousands of miles away in South East Asia the war went on. British and Allied servicemen continued to fight and civilians or ordinary people in those areas continued to suffer bombing raids. The war for them didn't end until 15 August 1945.

Moment of Reflection

Today we remember all those whose lives were affected by World War Two. We remember those that were killed and injured and those that returned from battle with terrible injuries and memories. We remember the children whose lives were changed and those that people that carried out war work. We can reflect on how pleased they were in 1945 that the war was brought to an end and that peace had been won.

We can repeat the following lines from the Kohima epitaph from World War Two.

"When You Go Home, Tell Them Of Us And Say,
For Their Tomorrow, We Gave Our Today"

Prayer or poem – choose one of the poems below

At the British Way Cemetery, Bayeux by Charles Causley (1917 – 2003)

I walked where in their talking graves
And shirts of earth five thousand lay,
When history with ten feasts of fire
Had eaten the red air away.

'I am Christ's boy,' I cried. 'I bear
In iron hands the bread, the fishes.
I hang with honey and with rose
This tidy wreck of all your wishes.

'On your geometry of sleep
The chestnut and the fir-tree fly,
And lavender and marguerite
Forge with their flowers an English sky.

'Turn now towards the belling town
Your jigsaws of impossible bone,
And rising read your rank of snow
Accurate as death upon the stone.'

About your easy heads my prayers
I said with syllables of clay.
'What gift,' I asked, 'shall I bring now
Before I weep and walk away?'

*Take, they replied, the oak and laurel.
Take our fortune of tears and live
Like a spendthrift lover. All we ask
Is the one gift you cannot give.*

Charles Causley father was injured in the First World War and later after the war died as a result of his wounds. He also saw service as a young man in the Second World War.

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by John Jarmain

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And speed of brain. These will not re-arise
These riches, nor will they be replaced;
They are lost and nothing now, and here is left
Only a worthless corpse of sense bereft,
Symbol of death, and sacrifice and waste.

John Jarmain was killed during the Normandy landings in WWII at the age of 33. He left behind a wife, a daughter and a small book of poetry. Educated at Queen's College, Cambridge, Jarmain was trained as a mathematician.

Secondary assembly (Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4) - VE Day

In preparation:

- Optional the Legion's School's CD Rom
- Materials from The Royal British Legion website – education section

Show a picture of crowds in the streets in London

Script: What do you think these people are doing?

Why are they celebrating and having a good time?

They're celebrating something call VE Day or Victory in Europe Day.

That day is 8 May 1945 – what might it be about?

VE Day was when Germany surrendered and the end of World War Two in Europe. World War two started in September 1939 when Nazi Germany invaded Poland. The war had spread and affected all the countries around the world. Fighting also took place around the world.

The Second World War was a global conflict with fighting taking place in many countries and continents. It had started in Europe 1939 with Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland and then Western Europe, Soviet Russia, and through the Balkans. The collapse of the countries in Western Europe had also resulted in Nazi Germany and the Axis powers such as Italy and Japan moving into Africa and Asia.

By the end of 1940, the only European country not occupied but still fighting Germany was Britain. For the next three and a half years, Britain, the Empire and the Commonwealth fought with Germany around the globe - in North Africa, South East Asia and many other places.

In December 1941, the United States entered the war on the side of Britain and her Allies after it was attacked by Japanese forces.

For large parts of the war the countries and people that were most affected were in Europe. Many countries were invaded or bombed. British towns and cities were bombed from the summer of 1940 until 1945. That is five years of killing and injuring thousands and making many more homeless. Most food and goods we take for granted such as meat, cheese, fruit, sweets, clothes and petrol were rationed – that means you could only have a certain amount and then only if you had the right tokens.

Millions of men and women from Britain and the British Empire and Commonwealth joined the Armed Services or took part in war work. They served and fought all across the world and risked their lives. The ages of those that served in the forces were 17 years to their mid forties. Others carried out important war work such as mining or working in the factories which were always dangerous but also risked becoming targets for bombing. Millions of lives were changed.

Can you imagine your life for five years and what five years of worrying about being hit by bombs or having to go into the Armed Services to fight or look after those who are injured would be like?

In May 1945 the War in Europe and North Africa and the Middle East came to an end. There were no more bombing raids and the threat of attack and injury went away.

As soon as the announcement was made that the war was over people went to the streets to celebrate:

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However thousands of miles away in South East Asia the war went on. British and Allied servicemen continued to fight and civilians or ordinary people in those areas continued to suffer bombing raids. The war for them didn't end until 15 August 1945.

The VE Day celebrations went on for a couple of days before everyone went back to the reality of recovering from such a long and devastating conflict. For some the day brought out the sadness of all those that had been killed.

Moment of Reflection

Today we remember all those whose lives were affected by World War Two. We remember those that were killed and injured and those that returned from battle with terrible injuries and memories. We remember the children whose lives were changed and those that people that carried out war work. We can reflect on how war affects the lives of many ordinary people. We can contemplate how pleased they were in 1945 that the war was brought to an end and that peace had finally been won.

We can repeat the following lines from the Kohima epitaph from World War Two.

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For Their Tomorrow, We Gave Our Today"

Kohima Epitaph

Prayer or poem

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