

Battle of Britain

During the Second World War, the Royal Air Force (RAF) heroically and skilfully held off the German air force (the Luftwaffe) for several months. This conflict is known as the Battle of Britain.



The Beginning

On 10th July 1940, German fighter planes began bombing British convoy ships and ports in the English Channel. Germany's Chancellor and military leader at that time, Adolph Hitler, ordered his armed forces to bomb the United Kingdom to weaken its defences and enable the German armed forces to invade it by sea. Throughout July and early August, bombing raids began to include coastal RAF airfields and facilities that were further inland, such as the West Midlands.

Did You Know...?

Due to their small numbers, the RAF and allied pilots who flew in the Battle of Britain became known as 'The Few'. This name came from Winston Churchill's speech to Parliament on 20th August 1940, in which he said, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

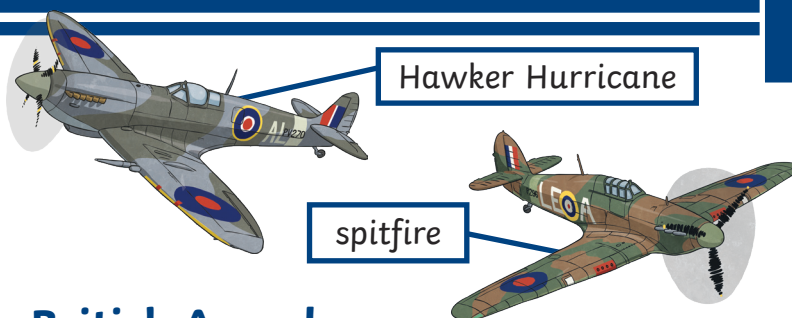
Defending Great Britain

The RAF had organised its **Fighter Command** into four groups based in different locations within Great Britain. Chain Home was another part of Britain's defence and included a series of radar stations along the south and east coasts. These stations sent early warnings about approaching raids to Fighter Command.

The **Observer Corps** and Chain Home were the first part of Britain's warning

and defence system, the Dowding System. It controlled the flow of information about Luftwaffe bombing raids nationwide.

Once an approaching raiding party was detected, messages were sent to the British Fighter Command group closest to them. Planes from that location would then take off and engage the incoming Luftwaffe aeroplanes.



British Aeroplanes

When the battle started, the Luftwaffe had more aeroplanes than the RAF but, over time, Great Britain began building more planes with better technology.

The Supermarine Spitfire Mark 1 and the Hawker Hurricane were two popular aeroplanes used during the Battle of Britain. The Spitfires fought German fighter planes, while the Hawker Hurricanes targeted German bombers.

The Blitz

On 7th September 1940, the Blitz began. It was a period of time when many Luftwaffe raids dropped hundreds of bombs over several major British cities, including London, Bristol and Coventry.

Glossary

Fighter Command: The branch of the RAF that specialised in fighter planes.

Observer Corps: A group of people who spotted and tracked approaching German army aircraft.

The Battle Continues

The German air force began bombing radar stations and airfields during the second half of August 1940. Many volunteers and people within the British armed forces repaired these facilities within hours. Numerous air battles occurred in late August but British pilots and pilots from over 15 allied countries were able to successfully hold off the Luftwaffe.

The Final Days

Many consider 15th September 1940 to be the last day of the Battle of Britain; it is also commonly referred to as Battle of Britain Day. Even though some bombing raids continued for several months after this date, Hitler eventually postponed his invasion of Great Britain.

Disclaimer: Sensitive and/or upsetting topics may emotionally impact your students due to past experiences. You should consider whether this content is appropriate and ensure adequate support is available for anyone affected.

Questions

1. How many allied countries also had pilots flying and fighting in the Battle of Britain?
Tick one.

- ☐ over 4
- ☐ over 5
- ☐ over 15
- ☐ over 50

2. What was Fighter Command? Tick one.

- ☐ the branch of the RAF that specialised in fighter planes
- ☐ a group of people who spotted and tracked German army aircraft
- ☐ a series of radar stations
- ☐ the British pilots who flew in the Battle of Britain

3. What was the German name for the German air force?

4. Fill in the missing words.

Many _____ and people within the British armed forces
_____ these facilities within hours.

5. Look at the section called **Defending Great Britain**.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'found' or 'identified'.

6. Summarise what you have learnt about the Battle of Britain in 25 words or fewer.

7. What part of the text was your favourite part and why?

8. If you could share this text with anyone you know, who would it be and why? Explain your answer.

Answers

1. How many allied countries also had pilots flying and fighting in the Battle of Britain?
Tick one.

- ☐ over 4
- ☐ over 5
- ☒ **over 15**
- ☐ over 50

2. What was Fighter Command? Tick one.

- ☒ **the branch of the RAF that specialised in fighter planes**
- ☐ a group of people who spotted and tracked German army aircraft
- ☐ a series of radar stations
- ☐ the British pilots who flew in the Battle of Britain

3. What was the German name for the German air force?

The German air force was called the Luftwaffe.

4. Fill in the missing words.

Many **volunteers** and people within the British armed forces **repaired** these facilities within hours.

5. Look at the section called **Defending Great Britain**.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'found' or 'identified'.

detected

6. Summarise what you have learnt about the Battle of Britain in 25 words or fewer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: The Battle of Britain was a months-long air battle that was fought during the Second World War between Great Britain and the German armed forces.

7. What part of the text was your favourite part and why?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think my favourite part of the text was where the author described the aeroplanes. I enjoy reading and learning about aeroplanes.

8. If you could share this text with anyone you know, who would it be and why? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I would like to share this text with my grandfather because he is interested in history.

Battle of Britain

The Battle of Britain was one of the most significant battles of the Second World War. For several months, the Royal Air Force (RAF) heroically and skilfully held off the German air force (the Luftwaffe) over British skies.



The Beginning

On 10th July 1940, German fighter planes began bombing British convoy ships and ports in the English Channel. Germany's Chancellor and military leader at that time, Adolph Hitler, ordered his German armed forces to bomb the United Kingdom and then invade it from the sea. Throughout July and early August, bombing raids began to include airfields along the south and east coasts as well as RAF facilities that were further inland, such as the West Midlands.



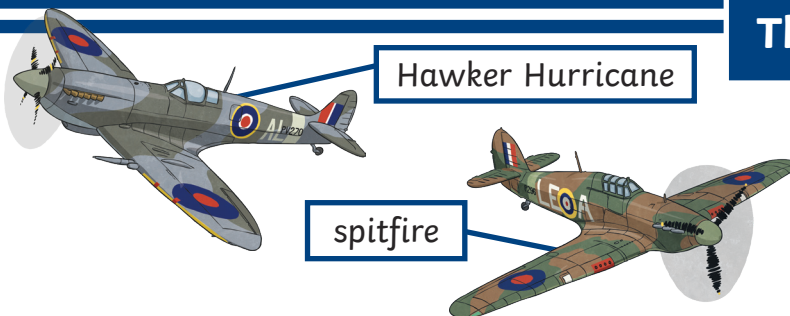
Defending Great Britain

During the battle, the RAF had organised its Fighter Command (the branch of the RAF that specialised in fighter planes) into four groups based in different locations within Great Britain. Chain Home, another part of Britain's defence, was a series of radar stations along the south and east coasts that sent early warnings about approaching raids to Fighter Command.

Along with the Observer Corps (a group of people who spotted and tracked approaching German army

aircraft), Chain Home was the first step in Britain's highly organised warning and defence system called the Dowding System. It controlled the flow of communications about Luftwaffe bombing raids nationwide.

Once warnings were received, messages were sent to the British Fighter Command location closest to the approaching raiding party. Planes from that location would then take off and engage the incoming Luftwaffe aeroplanes.



British Aeroplanes

When the battle started, the Luftwaffe had more aeroplanes than the RAF. As time passed, Great Britain began building more planes with better technology than the German army's aeroplanes.

Two of the most well-known British aeroplanes used during the Battle of Britain were the Supermarine Spitfire Mark 1 and the Hawker Hurricane. The Spitfires fought German fighter planes, while the Hawker Hurricanes targeted German bombers. The Spitfire was such a good fighter plane that it was used after the war ended: it was fast and pilots could manoeuvre it easily when fighting in the sky.

The Battle Continues

During the second half of August 1940, the German air force concentrated its raids on radar stations and airfields but many volunteers and people within the British armed forces repaired these facilities within hours. Some of the heaviest fighting took place in late August but British pilots and pilots from over 15 allied countries refused to back down from the incoming Luftwaffe raids.

The Blitz

During one raid, a German bomber formation accidentally dropped several bombs on London. In retaliation, the RAF sent their Bomber Command to attack Berlin. These acts partially contributed to the start of the Blitz.

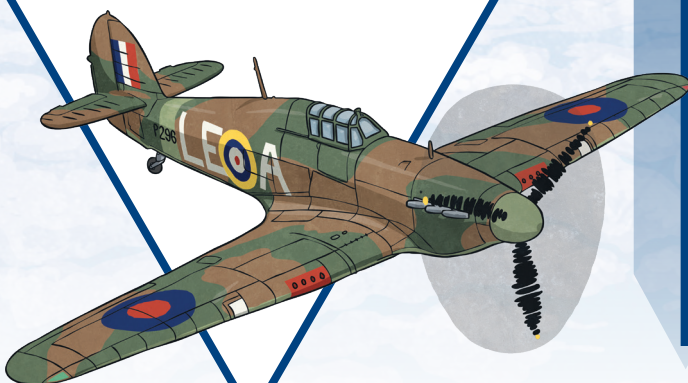
The Blitz (taken from the German word blitzkrieg or lightning war) was a period of time when many Luftwaffe raids dropped bombs over several major British cities, including London, Bristol and Coventry. It started on 7th September 1940 and ended around 11th May 1941 and destroyed thousands of homes and buildings.



The Final Days

Although the bombing continued for some time afterwards, 15th September 1940 is regarded by many as the end of the Battle of Britain and is commonly referred to as Battle of Britain Day. Hitler eventually postponed his invasion and ordered the Luftwaffe to attack Russia instead.

Due to their small numbers, the RAF and allied pilots who flew in the Battle of Britain became known as 'The Few'. This name came from Winston Churchill's speech to Parliament on 20th August 1940, in which he declared, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."



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Questions

1. What was the Observer Corps? Tick one.

- ☐ the branch of the RAF that specialised in fighter planes
- ☐ a group of people who spotted and tracked German army aircraft
- ☐ a series of radar stations
- ☐ the British pilots who flew in the Battle of Britain

2. Number the events from 1—4 to show the order in which they happened.

- ☐ A German bomber formation accidentally bombs London.
- ☐ The German air force begins attacking convoy ships and ports.
- ☐ The German air force focuses on radar stations and airfields.
- ☐ The German air force begins a series of bombing raids on major British cities.

3. Fill in the missing words.

Once warnings were _____, messages were sent to the British Fighter Command location closest to the _____ raiding party.

4. What was the name of Britain's highly organised warning and defence system?

5. Look at the first paragraph.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'important'.

6. Which part of the text surprised you the most? Explain your answer.

7. Why do you think the RAF was able to hold off the German air force successfully? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

8. Were the volunteers and people within the British armed forces who helped repair damaged buildings and stations important? Explain your answer.

9. Look at the section called **The Beginning**.

Summarise the main point of this section in 25 words or fewer.

Answers

1. What was the Observer Corps? Tick one.

- ☐ the branch of the RAF that specialised in fighter planes
- ☒ **a group of people who spotted and tracked German army aircraft**
- ☐ a series of radar stations
- ☐ the British pilots who flew in the Battle of Britain

2. Number the events from 1—4 to show the order in which they happened.

- 3** A German bomber formation accidentally bombs London.
- 1** The German air force begins attacking convoy ships and ports.
- 2** The German air force focuses on radar stations and airfields.
- 4** The German air force begins a series of bombing raids on major British cities.

3. Fill in the missing words.

Once warnings were **received**, messages were sent to the British Fighter Command location closest to the **approaching** raiding party.

4. What was the name of Britain's highly organised warning and defence system?

Britain's highly organised warning and defence system was called the Dowding System.

5. Look at the first paragraph.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'important'.

significant

6. Which part of the text surprised you the most? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I didn't realise that Great Britain had organised such a widespread and effective warning system with radar and spotters. It was amazing to learn about.

7. Why do you think the RAF was able to hold off the German air force successfully? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think they were able to hold off the German air force because they were able to make a large number of technologically advanced planes, they had a highly-organised defence and warning system and they had pilots from over 15 allied countries helping them.

8. Were the volunteers and people within the British armed forces who helped repair damaged buildings and stations important? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Yes, I think the people who helped repair the damaged buildings and stations were important because they kept the defence system and aeroplanes working.

9. Look at the section called **The Beginning**.

Summarise the main point of this section in 25 words or fewer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Adolph Hitler ordered the German air force to begin bombing British ship convoys and ports in order to invade Great Britain at a later date.

Battle of Britain

The Battle of Britain was one of the most significant and momentous campaigns of the Second World War. It was a long, fierce and strategic battle mostly fought above the skies of Great Britain. For several months, the Royal Air Force (RAF) heroically and skilfully held off the German air force (the Luftwaffe); they were attempting to weaken Great Britain in preparation for an invasion by German armed forces.



The Beginning

On 10th July 1940, German fighter planes began bombing British convoy ships and ports in the English Channel. After a successful invasion of France, Adolph Hitler (Germany's Chancellor and military leader at that time) announced his plan (code-named Operation Sea Lion) to bombard the United Kingdom from the skies and then raid it from the sea. Throughout July and early August, bombing raids became more ambitious and began to include airfields along the south and east coasts as well as RAF facilities in places further afield, such as the West Midlands.



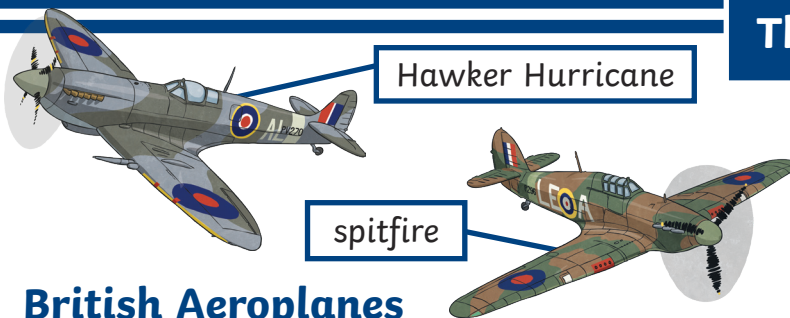
Defending Great Britain

At this time, the RAF had organised its Fighter Command (the branch of the RAF that specialised in fighter planes) into four groups based on geographical locations within Great Britain. There was also a series of radar stations along the south and east coasts called Chain Home that sent early warning signals to Fighter Command headquarters about the German army's bombing raids.

Along with the Observer Corps (a group of people who spotted and tracked approaching German army aircraft), Chain Home was the starting point

of Britain's highly organised warning and defence system called the Dowding System. This system controlled the flow of information and communication about Luftwaffe bombing raids nationwide.

Once warnings from Chain Home and the Observer Corps came in and the direction of the raid was established, messages would then be passed on to the closest Fighter Command location, where planes would take off to meet the raiding party.



British Aeroplanes

Initially, the Luftwaffe had more aeroplanes than the RAF. Soon, Great Britain began producing more planes with more superior technology than the German army's aeroplanes.

Two of the most popular British aeroplanes used during the Battle of Britain were the Supermarine Spitfire Mark 1 (more commonly known as the Spitfire) and the Hawker Hurricane. The Spitfires fought German fighter planes, while the Hawker Hurricanes targeted German bombers. The Spitfire was such a good fighter plane that it was used for several decades after the war ended: it was fast and agile, and pilots could manoeuvre it easily when fighting in the sky.

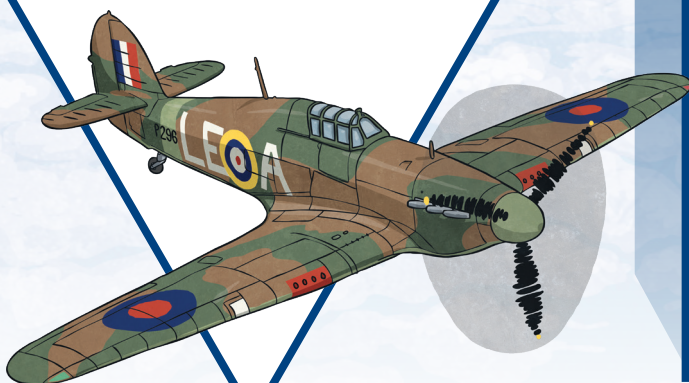
The Battle Continues

Throughout the latter half of August 1940, the German army's planes focused their bombing raids on radar stations and airfields after realising their importance in Great Britain's defence. However, many volunteers and people within the British armed forces worked tirelessly to ensure that most damaged facilities were back in working condition within hours. Some of the heaviest fighting took place in British skies during this time but British pilots and pilots from over 15 other allied countries successfully foiled the German army's plan for air supremacy over Great Britain.

The Blitz

During one raid, a German bomber formation accidentally dropped several bombs on London. As a result, the RAF sent their Bomber Command to attack Berlin in retaliation. These acts partially contributed to the start of the Blitz.

The Blitz (taken from the German word blitzkrieg or lightning war) was a series of Luftwaffe bombing raids over many British cities, including London, Bristol and Coventry that started on 7th September 1940 and ended around 11th May 1941. Over several months, thousands of British people lost their homes and lives due to nightly Luftwaffe bombing assaults.



The Final Days

Although the bombing continued for many more months, 15th September 1940 is regarded by many as the end of the Battle of Britain and is commonly referred to as Battle of Britain Day. Hitler eventually postponed Operation Sea Lion and ordered the Luftwaffe to attack Russia instead.

Due to their small numbers, the RAF and allied pilots who flew in the Battle of Britain came to be known as 'The Few'. This name came from Winston Churchill's speech to Parliament on 20th August 1940, in which he stated, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

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Questions

1. Which German city was bombed by Bomber Command? Tick one.

- ☐ Hamburg
☐ Berlin
☐ Munich
☐ Stuttgart

2. Draw **four** lines and match each date to its event.

10th July 1940 ●

7th September 1940 ●

15th September 1940 ●

20th August 1940 ●

● The Blitz begins.

● Commonly referred to as Battle of Britain Day.

● German fighter planes began bombing British convoy ships and ports.

● Winston Churchill speaks to Parliament.

3. What was the codename of Hitler's invasion plan?

4. Look at the section called **The Battle Continues**.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'thwarted' or 'impeded'.

5. Fill in the missing words.

Throughout July and early August, bombing raids became more

_____ and began to include airfields along the south and east coasts

as well as RAF _____ in places further afield, such as the West

Midlands.

6. Would you like to fly in a Spitfire? Explain your answer.

7. Do you think it is important to learn about the Battle of Britain? Explain your answer.

8. What impression do you think the author intended when they used the phrase **a long, fierce and strategic battle**?

9. Which section of the text do you think is the most important? Explain your answer.

10. Tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

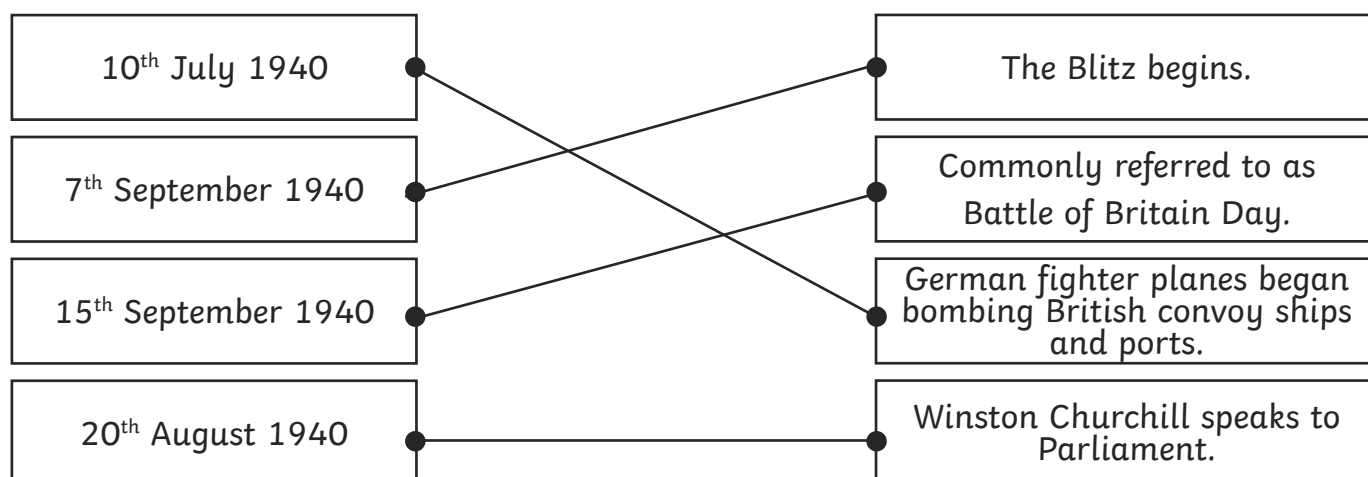
	True	False
Winston Churchill referred to the Battle of Britain pilots as 'The Many'.		
The Blitz ended around 11 th May 1941.		
After the Battle of Britain was over, Hitler ordered his aeroplanes to attack the United States instead.		
Blitzkrieg was the German word for lightning war.		
The Hawker Hurricane targeted German bomber planes.		

Answers

1. Which German city was bombed by Bomber Command? Tick one.

- ☐ Hamburg
☒ **Berlin**
☐ Munich
☐ Stuttgart

2. Draw **four** lines and match each date to its event.



3. What was the codename of Hitler's invasion plan?

Hitler's operation was code-named Operation Sea Lion.

4. Look at the section called **The Battle Continues**.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'thwarted' or 'impeded'.

foiled

5. Fill in the missing words.

Throughout July and early August, bombing raids became more **ambitious** and began to include airfields along the south and east coasts as well as RAF **facilities** in places further afield, such as the West Midlands.

6. Would you like to fly in a Spitfire? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Yes, I think I would like to fly a spitfire because it was easy to fly and fast. It would be fun to steer it all over the sky.

7. Do you think it is important to learn about the Battle of Britain? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Yes, I think it is very important to learn about the Battle of Britain because it was a long-term event that showed how capable the British were of defending themselves.

8. What impression do you think the author intended when they used the phrase **a long, fierce and strategic battle**?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think the author intended to show that the battle wasn't over in just an afternoon and it wasn't a battle where people just fought with swords or fists. It required organisation and resilience.

9. Which section of the text do you think is the most important? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think the most important part of the text was where the Dowding System was described because without that system, the British would not have been able to defend themselves as well as they did.

10. Tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

	True	False
Winston Churchill referred to the Battle of Britain pilots as 'The Many'.		✓
The Blitz ended around 11 th May 1941.	✓	
After the Battle of Britain was over, Hitler ordered his aeroplanes to attack the United States instead.		✓
Blitzkrieg was the German word for lightning war.	✓	
The Hawker Hurricane targeted German bomber planes.	✓	

Award 2 marks for all five correct.

Award 1 mark for four correct.