

Britain at War

What is war?

War is a period of intentional actions, including armed fighting, between two or more countries or groups to force the enemy to adhere to their will.

Second World War 1939–1945

Timeline of events

September 1939	Germany invades Poland, and Poland surrenders
April 1940	Germany invades neutral Norway
May 1940	Germany takes control of Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands
May–June 1940	Germany invades France and Operation Dynamo rescues Allied soldiers from Dunkirk
June 1940	France surrenders to Germany
July–Oct 1940	Battle of Britain
December 1941	Japan attacks Pearl Harbor, and the United States enters the war
July 1943	Allied forces invade Italy, and Italy later surrenders
June 1944	D-Day
May 1945	Germany surrenders (VE Day)
Aug–Sept 1945	The United States drops atomic bombs on Japan, Japan surrenders, and the war ends

Causes of the war

The Treaty of Versailles had devastated Germany. By the 1930s, unemployment and poverty in Germany were widespread. Adolf Hitler became Germany's leader in 1934 and claimed his Nazi Party would restore German pride and save the economy. He then invaded the surrounding countries.

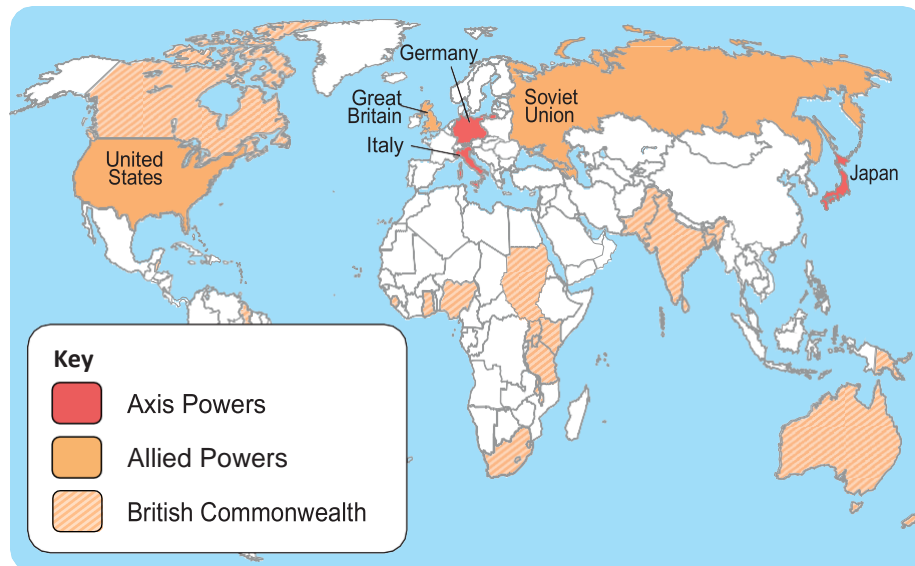
Britain and France tried appeasement rather than challenging this expansion. On 1st September 1939, German forces invaded Poland.



Britain and France declared war on Germany.

Warring nations

The major nations involved in the Second World War were the Axis Powers (Germany, Italy and Japan) and the Allied Powers (Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States). Germany was led by the fascist dictator Adolf Hitler, who wanted to expand German territory and create a pure German race. At the start of the war, Britain's prime minister was Neville Chamberlain. Winston Churchill replaced him in May 1940.



Preparation for war

Britain had learned lessons from the First World War. Barrage balloons were placed over London to stop low-flying bombers. Gas masks

were issued to the civilian population, and bomb shelters were built.

Blackouts were compulsory, and children were evacuated from cities. Conscription was introduced to increase numbers in the army. Food

rationing began, and ration cards were issued.

Weapons and technology

The Second World War was the most technologically advanced war in history, with many new weapons and technological innovations.

- Radar used radio waves to detect enemy positions.
- Codebreakers developed machines to intercept and decode enemy messages.
- The bouncing bomb was used to destroy German dams.
- German engineers made rocket missiles that damaged British cities.
- A new lightweight fighter plane, the Supermarine Spitfire, was developed.
- The United States used the atomic bomb on Japan.

Battle of Britain

The Battle of Britain took place in the skies above Britain from July to October 1940. Adolf Hitler was planning a land attack on Britain but first had to control the skies to prevent British air attacks. The superior British planes and their organised air-defence system overcame the German Luftwaffe. This was a turning point in the war as Adolf Hitler could not continue with his land invasion plan.



Civilian life

Civilians in Britain had to cope with frightening air raids and bombings in cities. Finding their way during the blackout was difficult and dangerous. Children were separated from their families in the evacuation, and many women joined the Women's Land Army or worked in factories. Rationing became normal, and people found ingenious ways to make food and clothing last longer.

End of the Second World War

The Second World War ended on 2nd September 1945, when Japan formally surrendered. Many factors brought about the end of the war.

The Allied Powers' D-Day invasion on 6th June 1944 resulted in Allied troops liberating Paris and Brussels. The Battle of the Bulge failed to break the Allied line. Adolf Hitler realised Germany had lost the war

and committed suicide on 30th April 1945. The war against Japan

Post-war world

After the Second World War, the Allied Powers split Germany into West and East Germany. International agreements were signed to ban chemical weapons, torture and genocide. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was approved, which still forms the basis of international human rights law. The welfare state and National Health Service were created in Britain. Many of the war's technological innovations were redeveloped for civilians.

Remembrance

Remembrance is the act of remembering and honouring the people who died as a result

of the conflict. The poppy is a symbol of remembrance after

poppies grew in the Western Front battlefields. Memorials, monuments and war cemeteries all serve to remind us of the sacrifice made by millions of people.



Glossary

alliance	A group of countries who have agreed to work together because of shared aims.
appeasement	Giving the opposing side something they have demanded to prevent further disagreement.
colony	A nation controlled by another country.
conscription	Forcing people by law to join the armed services.
genocide	The deliberate killing of large numbers of people from a particular nation or ethnic group, with the aim of destroying that nation or group.
imperialism	The desire to conquer and colonise other countries.
militarism	The belief that it is necessary to build up and use strong armed forces to gain power, money and land.
reparation	Payment made by a defeated country after a war to pay for damages it caused to another country.



ended after the United States dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

stalemate

A situation in which neither side can get an advantage, and no action can be taken.