

World War II

Why was the Royal Air Force (RAF) so important to the defence of Britain?



What was Nazi Germany like, and why did World War II begin?



Key question we will answer:

Why was the Royal Air Force (RAF) so important to the defence of Britain?

Key historical skills we will use:

Historical Significance

Key question we will answer:

What major victories led to Britain winning the war?

Key historical skills we will use:

Cause and Consequence



Key vocabulary for this lesson:

interception

– the act of catching and stopping something

air force

– armed forces that fight using aircraft

radar

– the use of radio waves to track the location, distance and speed of faraway objects



Recap activity

Match the **country** with its **leader** during World War II with your learning partner. Be ready to **share your feedback** with the class **before the answers are revealed**.



Adolf Hitler



Francisco Franco



Benito Mussolini



Joseph Stalin

Soviet Union

Italy

German Reich

Spain



Recap activity

answers



Adolf Hitler



Francisco Franco



Benito Mussolini



Joseph Stalin

Soviet Union

Italy

German Reich

Spain



Recap quiz

Answer the questions over the following slides with your learning partner. Be ready to **share your feedback** with the class **before the answers are revealed**.



1. Which of these invasions caused **Britain** and **France** to declare war on **Germany**?

Memel region

Sudetenland

Austria

Poland



Recap quiz

answers



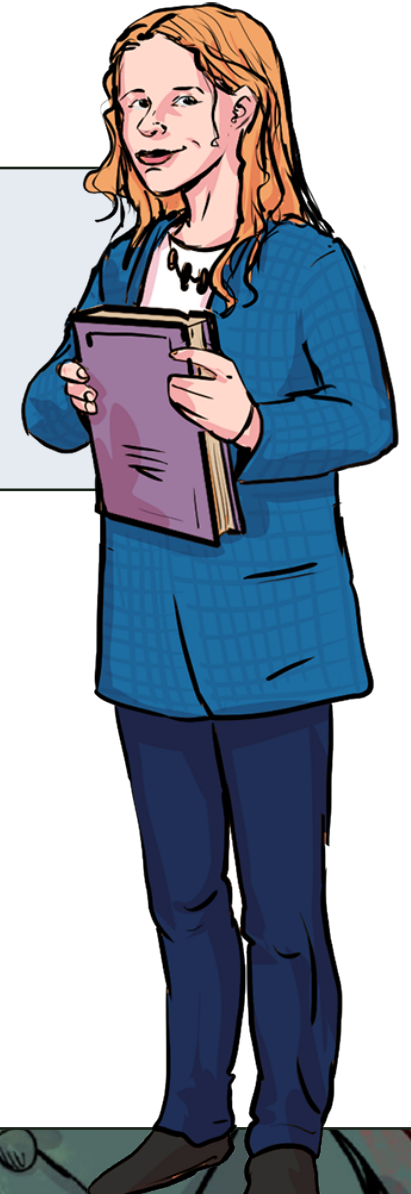
1. Which of these invasions caused **Britain** and **France** to declare war on **Germany**?

Memel region

Sudetenland

Austria

Poland



Recap quiz



3. On what date did **Hitler** invade **Poland**?



Recap quiz

answers



3. On what date did **Hitler invade Poland?**

1st September 1939.



The Luftwaffe

Hitler's **Nazi Germany** now dominated Europe; his armed forces had swept across the continent, crushing all opposition. Of his enemies, **only Britain remains undefeated**. The **Luftwaffe** was the **Nazi German Air Force** before and during **World War II**. The term is fitting given that 'Luftwaffe' means '**air weapon**' in German.

Guten Tag! I am **Reichsmarschall Hermann Goering** – the Supreme Commander of the German Luftwaffe (air force).

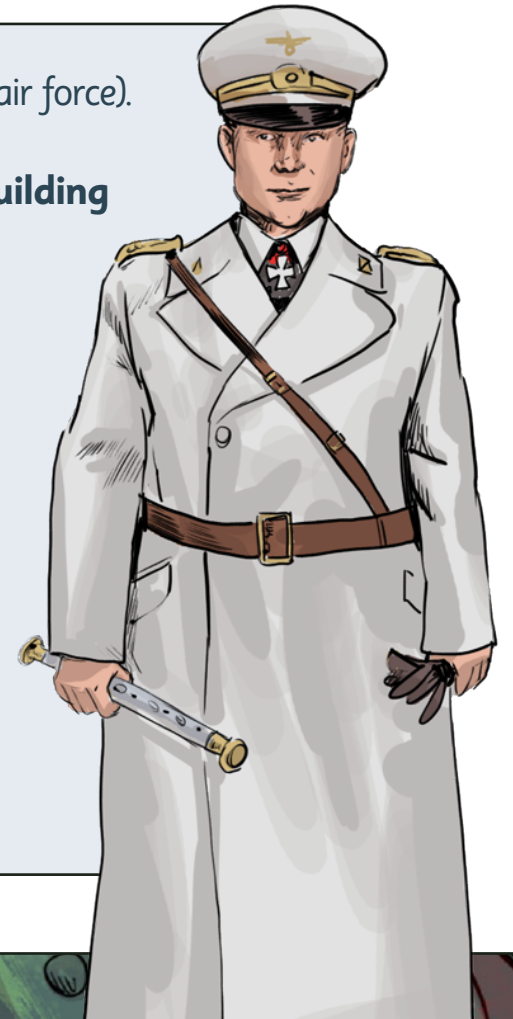
The **Treaty of Versailles** stated that the Reich could not have an air force. For years, we have been **secretly building fighter planes** and **bomber planes** to command **air superiority** over our enemies when we finally invaded.

The German Luftwaffe is now the strongest air force in the world!

When we **invaded Poland** in 1939, our **superior aircraft** obliterated the Polish air force, and in 1940, we did the same with **France**.

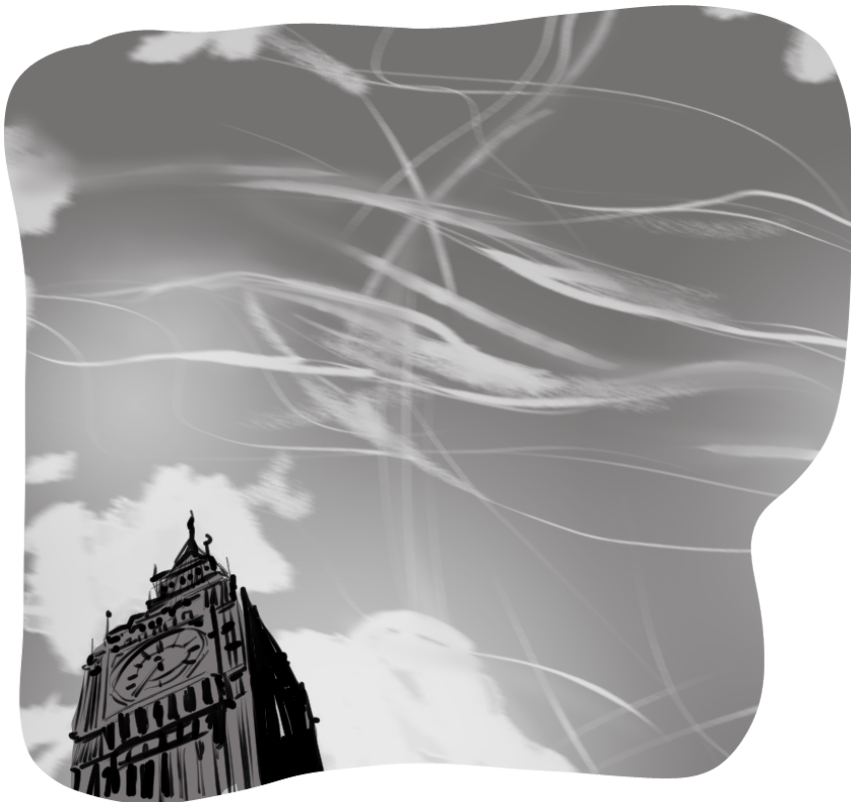
The only enemy we have left is the **British**. It is an island nation, so before we can land troops on its soil, we must weaken it from the air. I believe the mighty Luftwaffe alone can **bring Britain to its knees!**

I promised the Fuhrer that **Britain's Royal Air Force (RAF)** will be swept from the skies!



The Luftwaffe

By September 1940, the **people of Britain had lived in fear** for months that the **German invasion** would soon land on their shores.



Britain's Air Defence Network

Despite the **fear of an invasion** that gripped the population, the **British army** had developed an **air defence network** that gave them a **critical advantage over the Luftwaffe**. Germany had no idea how advanced the **British communications** were as they prepared air attacks across the **English Channel**.

The ingenuity of **Air Chief Marshal Hugh Dowding**, who oversaw the **air defence of Britain**, ensured that the **Royal Air Force** had the world's first wide-area **ground-controlled interception network**, which controlled the air space of the United Kingdom. It used a widespread, dedicated **telephone network** to rapidly collect information from **radar stations** and observation personnel across the nation. This meant that **anti-aircraft guns** and **interceptor aircraft** could be quickly assembled to fight against the German Luftwaffe (Air Force).



Artist's impression of WAAF plotters tracking movement across the English Channel and southern England.



Sir Hugh Dowding

Hello! **I am Sir Hugh Dowding.** I was the **Air Chief Marshal of the Royal Air Force.**

When I took over the **RAF**, I introduced **modern aircraft** like the **Spitfire** and the **Hurricane** and reorganised the location of stationed aircraft across the country.

I organised the RAF into **four fighter groups** covering four geographical areas across Great Britain. No. 10 Group covered the south-west of England and southern Wales, No. 11 Group covered London and the south-east, No. 12 Group the Midlands and east coast, and No. 13 Group protected the north-east, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The **Germans had no idea how well-prepared and organised we were.** As our prime minister, **Winston Churchill**, said, '**We shall never surrender!**'



Britain's Air Defence Network

On 15th September 1940, at around 9 am, the **German Luftwaffe** started to prepare for what it thought would be a **major victory** over the **British Royal Air Force** and a step closer to the **fall of Britain** in the war. It **mistakenly believed** that the **RAF was in a weakened state** and **not prepared enough** to fight off the overwhelming German force. Coincidentally, Prime Minister **Winston Churchill** was visiting the **RAF Operations Room** and witnessed the plotters receiving information from radar operatives the day the **German Luftwaffe** (Air Force) deployed en masse over the **English Channel**. Never before had **such a large force** been plotted in the Operations Room.



This artist's impression is of a Women's Auxiliary Air Force radar operative identifying German aircraft and alerting the network to mobilise defence forces.



Women's Auxiliary Air Force

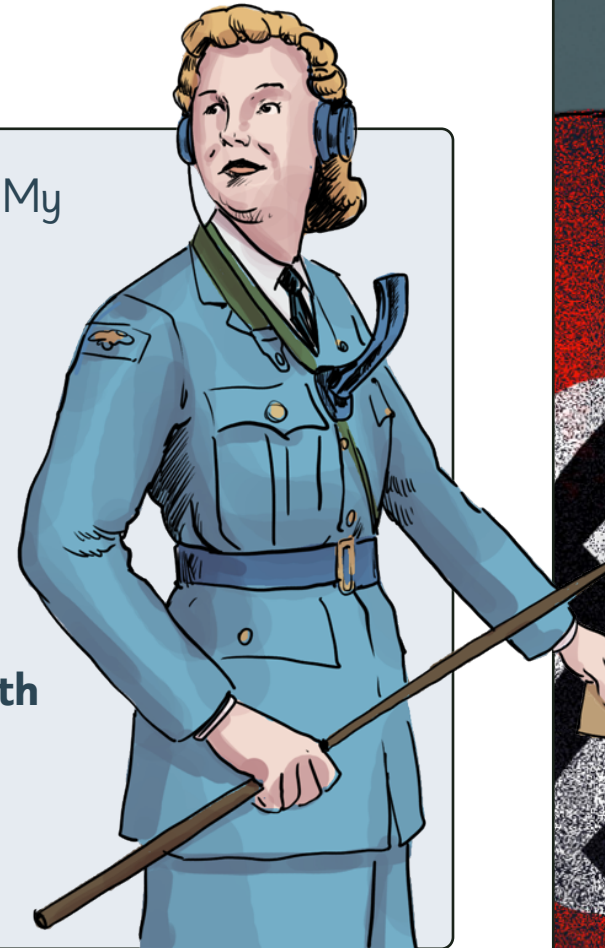
Hello! **I am Joan Farrow**, working for the **Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF)** as a plotter. My job is to listen to the **incoming communication** from the operators who tell me where **enemy aircraft** have been spotted on radar.

The details of the **number of aircraft and their position** are then transferred onto counters and moved around the map.

The **Group controllers** in the gallery above the **plotting table** have an **overall picture of the situation** to decide how to combat the **enemy attack**.

I'm used to plotting a handful of aircraft on the map, but on September 15th, 1940, **I was filled with fear** as the operatives informed me of what to plot – **hundreds of aircraft were approaching Britain**.

I questioned whether we were going to survive.



True or false activity

Read the statements below with your learning partner and decide whether they are **true** or **false**.
Take **feedback from the class** before the answers are revealed.

True

False

1) The UK's advanced telecommunications system aided in protecting British airspace from the Luftwaffe.

2) The RAF was organised into five groups across the UK.

3) Hermann Goering was the Commander of the Luftwaffe.



True or false activity

answers

- | | True | False |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1) The UK's advanced telecommunications system aided in protecting British airspace from the Luftwaffe. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2) The RAF was organised into five groups across the UK. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3) Hermann Goering was the Commander of the Luftwaffe. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



Protecting the skies

When it was discovered that the **Luftwaffe** (Air Force) was sending **hundreds of aircraft to attack Britain**, plotters mobilised **squadrons** across the nation to **defend Britain's skies** against the Luftwaffe, and **anti-aircraft guns** were prepped, ready to **shoot down the German aircraft**.

Auxiliary Territory Service (ATS) spotters worked across the south-east to spot and locate the Luftwaffe as its attack drew closer to London. The enemy's location would be immediately fed back to the **operations centre** by telephone so that the operations centre could mount a **defensive attack**.

The **precise information** about the enemy was then relayed to the **RAF fighter squadrons**, who began their journey to fight the enemy head-on.



This artist's impression is of an Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) spotter with a 3.7-inch anti-aircraft gun battery.



Activity 1

Using your learned information, **explain how Britain defended itself from the Luftwaffe** on your **activity 1 worksheet**.

Why was the Royal Air Force (RAF) so important to the defence of Britain? ★★
Historical Skill: Historical Significance

Why was the Royal Air Force (RAF) so important to the defence of Britain? ★
Historical Skill: Historical Significance

Why was the Royal Air Force (RAF) so important to the defence of Britain? ★★★
Historical Skill: Historical Significance

What was the Luftwaffe?

the Luftwaffe?

the Luftwaffe?

How did Britain protect its skies against the Luftwaffe?

the significance of the British Air Defence Network?

the significance of the British Air Defence Network?

Word bank

Auxiliary Territory Service (ATS)	RAF	
anti-aircraft guns	operations	squadron

Britain protect its skies against the Luftwaffe?

Britain protect its skies against the Luftwaffe?



Challenge



Imagine you are an RAF pilot and have just been told you need to intercept the Luftwaffe flying towards London. Write a paragraph about how you may feel and what may be running through your mind on your challenge worksheet.

Challenge

Imagine you are a pilot in the RAF and you have just been told you need to intercept the Luftwaffe flying towards London. Write a paragraph about how you may be feeling and what may be running through your mind.