



# THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER



The Battle of Britain was fought in the skies above Britain and the English Channel between July and October 1940.

Hitler's Germany had conquered most of Europe and Britain had just evacuated its troops from Dunkirk. Britain was now an island standing alone against Nazi Germany.

Hitler wanted to invade Britain (Operation Sealion). For his troops to succeed in crossing the Channel, he knew that the Luftwaffe would need to defeat the RAF and achieve air superiority. So began the Battle of Britain ...

## Key People and Forces

### Adolf Hitler

Hitler was the leader of the Nazi party and Chancellor of Germany from 1933-1945, and the Fuhrer of Germany from 1934-1945. Hitler's Germany invaded Poland in Sep 1939; this was the catalyst for the start of World War II. In 1940, at the start of the Battle of Britain, Germany was winning the war, having just conquered France. Hitler decided to invade Britain: Operation Sealion. However, he knew that Britain's powerful air force would sink the boats carrying his men across the channel. Therefore, he knew he had to defeat the Royal Air Force before invading.



### Sir Winston Churchill



Churchill was the British Prime Minister between 1940 and 1945. He is famous for his moral boosting and rallying speeches in defiance of Adolf Hitler. He is often characterised for his extraordinary leadership throughout World War II: he was bold, brave and tireless in his resolve to take on the might of Nazi Germany, refusing to surrender or make peace. As the Battle of Britain loomed, he made one of his most famous speeches: "...the Battle of France is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin ..." Winston Churchill, 18 June 1940.

### Royal Air Force (RAF)



The RAF fighter pilots in the Battle of Britain became known as 'The Few'.  
 "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few." Winston Churchill, 20 August 1940.  
 Around 15% of the RAF pilots were not British, but came from the Commonwealth and British allied countries.  
 The most successful pilot was reported to be Eric Stanley Lock, who destroyed over 20.

**Sir Hugh Dowding - Head of Fighter Command** (the RAF air defence forces)

**Keith Park - Head of 11 Group** (forces defending south east England)

### Luftwaffe



The Luftwaffe was widely feared, had played vital role in the German invasion and defeat of Poland and western mainland Europe. At the start of the Battle it outnumbered the RAF.

**Herman Goering - Head of the Luftwaffe** (the German air force)

**Albert Kesselring - Head of Luftflotte 2** (forces attacking south east England)

<p><b>'Eagle Day' 'Adlertag'</b></p>		<p>'Eagle Day' - 13 August 1940 - was the name given by the Germans to the first waves of strong attacks on the RAF. They attempted to destroy the RAF airfields and radar stations. The Luftwaffe failed to wipe them out.</p>	<p><b>Key Vocabulary</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nazi Germany</li> <li>Operation Sealion</li> <li>Luftwaffe</li> <li>Royal Air Force (RAF)</li> <li>invasion</li> <li>air superiority</li> <li>aircraft</li> <li>fighter</li> <li>scramble</li> <li>aerial</li> <li>dogfight</li> <li>Chain Home Radar</li> <li>Royal Observer Corps</li> <li>Group Operations</li> <li>Sector Operations</li> <li>barrage balloon</li> <li>anti-aircraft guns</li> <li>searchlight batteries</li> <li>Spitfire</li> <li>Hurricane</li> <li>Me109</li> <li>Me110</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Hardest Day</b></p>		<p>On this day (18th August 1940) both sides suffered huge losses. The Germans had attempted to launch another big attack. Whilst twice as many Luftwaffe aircraft were shot down as RAF aircraft, many RAF bases suffered heavy losses too.</p>	
<p><b>Battle of Britain Day</b></p>		<p>Battle of Britain Day is the name given to the large aerial battle that took place on the 15th September 1940. The Germans, feeling that they were closing in on victory, launched a huge attack on London. However, it became clear to the Germans that the RAF was not defeated. The German leadership realised that before they invaded Britain they would need to change their tactics in order to demoralize the British people.</p>	
<p><b>The Blitz</b></p>		<p>After the Germans were unable to destroy the RAF they pursued the major bombing campaign known as the Blitz. The German tactic was now to bomb British cities and towns at night. The term 'Blitz' was first used by the British press, and is the German word for lightning.</p>	

