

National  
Literacy  
Trust

Changing life stories

THE ROYAL BRITISH  
LEGION



# VE DAY

8th May 1945

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ASSEMBLY



VE DAY  
8th May 1945





# A National Holiday



“Hostilities will end officially at one minute after midnight tonight, but in the interests of saving lives the “Cease fire” began yesterday to be sounded all along the front, and our dear Channel Islands are also to be freed today.”

Winston Churchill

How do you think people felt hearing those words?



# 8th May 2020 75th Anniversary of Victory in Europe



Why do you think it is  
important that together we  
remember VE Day?






←  
Crowds gathered  
to celebrate

# A veteran's experience of VE Day




 **Veteran:** a person who served in the Armed Forces

# Triumph and Sorrow on VE Day

“ Let us turn our thoughts to this day of ... triumph and ... sorrow.”

Winston Churchill

 **Triumph:** a great victory or achievement

 **Sorrow:** a feeling of great sadness





“ Let us remember those who will not come back...let us remember the men in all the services, and the women in all the services, who have laid down their lives. We have come to end of our tribulation and they are not with us at the moment of our rejoicing.”

King George VI



There was a lot of work still to do

What might they  
be thinking or  
feeling?



What do you  
notice in the  
background of  
this picture?



# Millions of people lost their lives

18,000,000

18 million service personnel killed

45,000,000

45 million civilians killed

67,000

67 thousand killed in air raids in the UK



**Civilian:** a person who served on the Home Front



**Service personnel:** people serving in the armed forces

# Soldiers returned home with memories of war and conflict

How do you think  
returning soldiers felt  
about coming home?



# Geoffrey Hather's Story: A Prisoner of War

Geoffrey was 16 years old when the war started. In 1941, aged 18, he enlisted in the RAF.

3 years later, when he was flying over Germany, his plane was shot down. He survived but was captured and spent the next year in a Prisoner of War camp.

One morning in 1945, an American Jeep came to the camp and the soldiers were told that they were freed. They were flown back home, and Geoffrey was treated in hospital for many injuries.





Geoffrey felt scared about returning home. He dreaded having to face big celebratory banners and large crowds of people.

He found coming home difficult. So much had changed. His family couldn't understand what he had been through – and he had no idea what they had suffered in the air raids.

“

“I don't think anybody who has been a prisoner of war has ever become normal again... You can't go through an experience like that and be the same again.”

Geoffrey Hather

# Many people hadn't returned home yet

There were 40 million refugees scattered across Europe



This picture shows a large group of Polish refugees in Germany, waiting to be returned to Poland



**Refugees:** people who have been forced to leave their country due to war, violence, conflict or persecution.

# Michael Wetton's Story: A Child Evacuee



In 1939, Michael, aged 6, and his two older siblings were evacuated from London to the Essex coast.

For the first 2 years, he was moved from home to home and he found it very hard being away from his family and home in London.

To begin with, Michael was kept together with one of his brothers. But after a while they were separated and were sent to live with different families.

In 1941, he finally found a family to live with, where he felt happy. Aunty Rhoda and Uncle Tom looked after him well for the next four years.

Sadly, during the air raids, Michael's home in London was bombed. His mum survived, but they lost all of their possessions and no longer had a house to live in.

On VE Day, when others were celebrating the end of the war, Michael was still an evacuee, unable to return home to be with his family.



Evacuees were sent to live with other families in safe areas of the country whilst London was being bombed.



# VE Day Reflection

On the 75th anniversary of VE day, let us:

- Give thanks to the Second World War generation for protecting the freedoms, democracy and ways of life we enjoy today
- Remember the bravery, service and sacrifice of the British and Commonwealth Armed forces who fought in the war; those who lost their lives, those who were still trying get home, and those who didn't have a home to return to
- Remember those who contributed to the war effort, including emergency services, families and civilians

## Thought of the day

Do we know anybody in our communities or families who remembers WW2 and could share their stories with us?

[www.rbl.org.uk/remembrance](http://www.rbl.org.uk/remembrance)