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Second World War Learning Resource Teacher Notes KS2



Overview

A great topic for **local history** and as **an aspect or theme in British history that extends pupils' chronological knowledge beyond 1066**, the Second World War affected many people as it ravaged the world.

The Royal Armouries collection houses many objects that illustrate the impact the war had on the lives of the people of Britain. Below are notes intended to help you use our online resources and collection to bring this topic to life for your pupils.

General information about the Second World War

The Second World War was declared in 1939 when Germany (led by Adolf Hitler) invaded Poland. The war lasted until 1945 and was fought between many countries, often summarised into two groups - Axis and Allies. The Axis countries were; Germany, Italy, Japan, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. The Allied countries were more numerous, including: UK, USA, France, South Africa, India, Greece, France, China, Yugoslavia, Australia, Belgium and many more.

At the outbreak of war, the British Prime Minister was Neville Chamberlain but he resigned and was replaced by Winston Churchill in 1940.

Other key leaders during this conflict include:

- Joseph Stalin (Premier of Russia)
- Benito Mussolini (Italian Prime Minister)
- F D Roosevelt (USA President)
- Harry Truman (USA politician)
- Charles de Gaulle (French military leader)

The UK's war effort was not confined to the battlefield; the 'Home Front' mobilised too. Organisations such as the Home Guard, Air Raid Precaution services (ARP), and the Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS), protected the UK against potential invasion, and the very real consequences of air raids. Other more clandestine organisations also fought the enemy in less conventional ways, such as the Secret Operations Executive (SOE).

Weapons and armour created during this time were key to the country's ability to defend itself and fight in the war. It also had a huge impact on those at home who were designing and building the weapons. Production of the Sten submachine gun was in part completed by factories owned by the Lines Bros, who made Tri-ang Toys. Many factories were repurposed to support the war effort. The Sten submachine gun was issued to British troops, SOE agents and resistance organisations in occupied countries. It was designed to be light and easy to use in combat.

SOE: Churchill's secret army

Video

This performance is based on the experiences of real SOE (Special Operations Executive) agents. It is a fictional account, but works well for your pupils **historical knowledge** and can also be used to inspire **creative writing**.

Recruited from all backgrounds, SOE agents put themselves in danger by infiltrating behind enemy lines. Because of this, persons with dual-nationality and the ability to speak another language fluently were valuable recruits. A knowledge of the culture and customs of the country to which the agent was assigned were essential to ensure his or her success in the field. Female SOE agents are particularly recognised for their bravery, and for breaking down preconceptions that war was a man's work. They were often officially recruited through those parts of the army in which women served, including the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS). Famous female SOE agents include:

- Odette Sansom Hollowes
- Violette Szabo
- Noor Inayat Khan

SOE agents were sent on all kinds of mission, which could include destroying enemy train lines and factories, gathering information about the enemy, and helping people to fight back against occupying forces. Once deployed, the average lifespan of an SOE agent was a matter of weeks. Agents faced the possibility of capture, torture and death if caught. For this reason they underwent a rigorous training regime in order to prepare. The first round of training included; physical fitness, morse code, parachuting, weapons training, unarmed combat, map reading, demolition with explosives and more. Further training included burglary and how to pick locks.

As a Sten submachine gun could be taken apart in just seconds, they were particularly used by SOEs. However, they could malfunction in use. SOE agents were also issued with a knife designed by Fairbairn and Sykes, which was designed to be used to deadly effect. Many other weapons were used by SOE agents, but their main weapons were often quick-wittedness and courage.

Morse code message

Audio file

Morse code had been used for nearly 100 years by the outbreak of the Second World War. Since morse required only the simplest of signals, was easy to generate, and could be transmitted over long distances it was particularly useful for sending messages of all kinds and from any location. However, it did take some training to understand and a very keen ear to ensure that the correct message got through.

Great game to instil fun into **spelling lessons** and other English based tasks.

The morse code message for the audio files is : 'Beware of double agents'

This reads as follows:

-... . .- - .- .- . / --- ..- / -.. --- ..- -... -... . / .- -
- . - . - ...

International Morse Code

1. The length of a dot is one unit.
2. A dash is three units.
3. The space between parts of the same letter is one unit.
4. The space between letters is three units.
5. The space between words is seven units.

A • —
 B — • • •
 C — • — •
 D — • •
 E •
 F • • — •
 G — — •
 H • • • •
 I • •
 J • — — —
 K — • —
 L • — • •
 M — —
 N — •
 O — — —
 P • — — •
 Q — — • —
 R • — •
 S • • •
 T —

U • • —
 V • • • —
 W • — —
 X — • • —
 Y — • — —
 Z — — • •

1 • — — —
 2 • • — — —
 3 • • • — —
 4 • • • • —
 5 • • • • •
 6 — • • • •
 7 — — • • •
 8 — — — • •
 9 — — — — •
 0 — — — — —

Photo Bank

The photo bank has been compiled to assist your lessons in any way that you see fit. They are all original photographs or images of items in our collection. Please download them for educational use only. They would be great for increasing historical knowledge, building evidentially supported enquiries and historical source work.

Images will be added and updated on a regular basis.

We have added notes to each image; collections items are hyperlinked in the descriptions to our Collections Online, where you can get more images and technical information; and the asset numbers for our Image Library are given where relevant. If you would like any more information about any image, please contact educate.leeds@armouries.org.uk and we would be happy to assist.