

# VE Day – Remembering the end of World War Two 75 years later



## VE Day - 8th May 1945: A National Holiday



“ Hostilities will end officially at one minute after midnight to-night...  
...the German war is therefore at an end.

Winston Churchill



How do you think people felt hearing those words?



Was the war over for everyone?



### Key things to remember:

- World War two had been going on for 6 years
- 85 million people, worldwide had died as a consequence of World War Two
- In the UK alone, 450,900 died as a consequence of World War Two – this figure includes civilians and the military
- Rationing had been introduced – people had not been able to buy their normal food since 1940. Butter, eggs, meat, sweets, chocolate, and even clothes had been rationed.
- Children had been separated from their parents if they lived in large cities and sent to live with strangers in the countryside or even overseas.
- Bombing of cities (and even areas like Haverhill) meant that people lived in constant fear of attack.
- Soldiers were separated from their families for months at a time, never knowing if they would return.
- Prisoners of war had been captured and in many cases had been tortured whilst imprisoned.



←  
*Crowds gathered  
to celebrate*

- On the first VE Day in 1945, people held big celebrations across the country.
- Crowds gathered in public spaces for parades or street parties to celebrate together.
- The largest crowds were in London with one crowd reaching up to 50,000 people celebrating into the night.

### Activity

Look at the image. Close your eyes and imagine what it might have felt like to be at the celebrations on VE Day.

1. What would it have felt like to be in the parade in the picture?
2. Can you think of sensory words (how we feel, see, move, hear, taste and smell something) to describe the atmosphere?
3. Write a short description of what is happening in the picture and what you imagine it would have felt like to be there.

If you would like to see some more images of celebrations, have a look at the images on the IWM website <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/10-photos-of-ve-day-celebrations>

or some videos on these YouTube links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-CdpqhxD8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EFaMjmBt2JU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEavcsrMoMw>



# Soldiers returned home with memories of war and conflict

- For those soldiers who survived and returned home at the end of the war, it wasn't all about celebration.
- Many were very distressed about what they had seen and experienced during the war.
- Those returning home included surviving Prisoners of War (POWs) – soldiers who had been captured by enemies (135,000 POWs returned home to the UK from Europe) .
- Soldiers from all of the allied countries were returning home to their home countries as well.

## Activity:


1. How do you think returning soldiers felt about coming home?



# Many people hadn't returned home yet

There were 40 million refugees scattered across Europe



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

- On V.E Day, although some were at home taking part in the celebrations, there were still many people who had not made it home yet.
- There were approximately 40 million refugees scattered across Europe.
- In Germany there were around 17 million displaced people including approximately 300,000 Jews
- Millions of people never even returned home at all and some had to find new homes in different countries.
- Many prisoners of war were still imprisoned.

## Activity:

1. What does displaced mean? Look it up in the dictionary or Google it.
2. How would it feel to not be able to go back to your home?



# There was a lot of work still to do



How might it have felt to be faced with the task of physically rebuilding the UK?

In which other ways did the country need to be rebuilt?

- For those who had made it back to the UK, the country was very different to the one they knew before the war.
- Homes, buildings and streets had been damaged across the UK during the war.
- Everyone had worked hard to achieve victory and end the war but there was still a lot more work to do – the country needed to be rebuilt.

## Activity:

1. How might it have felt to be faced with the task of physically rebuilding the UK?
2. People living in countries who had fought on the other side of the war also had a lot of rebuilding to do – how might they have felt?
3. What kinds of challenges might people have had to face during this time trying to rebuild their lives?

Finish today's lesson by listening to some of these veteran's stories about their time in the war and their journey home. Choose as many as you would like to fill the remaining time of your 50 minute lesson.

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/6966586>