

D Day / VE Day

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VE Day

Purpose

To understand the events leading up to the end of the Second World War in Europe.

To understand that there was a Jewish Holocaust.

Entrance of Pupils

A thought provoking slideshow introducing the theme of VE Day for the pupils to enter assembly to (10 minutes)

Introduction

D Day To VE Day

At St. Mere English, the American paratroopers found they were dropped directly into a German Battalion. As they parachuted down to the ground - they were easily picked off by the German soldiers with rifle fire.

One soldier got caught up with his parachute in the church tower. There is, to this day, a dummy with parachute hung at the church to remember this event.



Over the following hours the Allied troops made slow and steady progress. They were met with a fierce and tough German defence and many more casualties were experienced on both sides. The Allied troops pushed on and more and more troops landed behind them.

Any army going to war like this needed to be supplied with food, water, transport, supplies, ammunition and back up troops.

Ideally, the Allies would have liked to have landed at a Cherbourg, a nearby harbour, but their spies had detected that the harbours were particularly well defended. That wasn't an option that would work.

With no way of getting thousands of tons of equipment to the fighting men, the leaders knew that the invasion would come to an abrupt end very quickly.

The British Prime Minister - Winston Churchill - had commissioned a brilliant invention which had never ever been used in battle before. It was a floatable ready made harbour which had been constructed in blocks in the UK and towed across the English Channel to Normandy.

A few days after the landing. The army engineers positioned the pieces of the two ready made harbours - called Mulberry Harbours and assembled them in place. All the time they were at risk from enemy gunfire.



From that time, thousands of tons of equipment and jeeps and tanks were able



to drive securely on to the beaches and keep the advancing troops equipped the way they needed.

Europe was on the way to being freed from the rule of the man the world came to understand was an evil leader - Adolf Hitler.

Mulberry had been a huge structure - and at Arromanche in France today - it's still possible to see large sections of the old harbour lying on the beach and out at sea.

Numbers

On D day 156,000 troops landed on the beach over the first day. They in turn had been supported by no fewer than 195,000 naval personnel. The Allied troops experienced approximately 10,000 casualties of which about 4,400 people were tragically killed.

It is estimated that on that day, the Germans had about 50,000 troops on defence duty in the region. Of these, it is believed that 4,000 to 9,000 became casualties.

The defences at the beaches included a huge 170 large coastal artillery guns - on top of the individual weapons each army member held.



Over the next year, the Allied troops would work their way steadily through Europe freeing the different countries as they moved along.

The 6th of June 1944 - is still within living memory for some of our citizens who are now in their 90s. It will forever go down as D-Day. The day when men of the Allied forces showed outstanding courage and bravery.



The freedom that the people of Europe have today - to make individual choices and come and go as we please was bought by these incredibly brave men who fought for that liberty. Very many of them never got to experience that freedom and paid the ultimate price. Their bravery, courage and fortitude should never be allowed to be forgotten.

In Normandy, gravestones of the Allied troops go on as far as the eye can see at the military graveyards. It's a sobering picture to remind us of how vast the loss of life was.

St. Lo A City Devastated By War

The city of St. Lo lies just about 30 miles away from the Normandy landing beaches. It was a vitally important city for the Allied forces to capture. It was considered so important that if the Allies weren't able to capture the city - the whole beach landing would have been for nothing.

The battle to free the city started on July 7th 1944 - just about a month after the Normandy landings. It had taken the Allies that long to cover the ground to get



there.



The city became a victim of the fierce battle that took place there. The fighting was brutal. There is nothing gentle about war. A proud city that had stood for hundreds of years was devastated by the armies, scrapping to take control. It took 12 long days for the Allies to seize the city. When this was done 95% of the buildings were in complete ruins.

One of the few buildings that remained still stands there today. The Cathedral used to stand, majestic and ornate. It was grand, impressive and with beautiful carvings.

Although still standing at the end of the battle, a large amount of the cathedral was destroyed or badly damaged. It now stands as a statue in itself. A statue which represents the ugly truth of war. There are many signs of the violence that had occurred still visible from bullets, missiles and shrapnel. It's imperfections stand now as a visual reminder of the devastation that took place. The elegance of the original structure is lost forever - though it is now watertight and usable again.

The city has been rebuilt now. Though many ancient and beautiful buildings will never be seen again.

The freedom from the Nazis came, as always, at a very high price.



On 30th April 1945, it is understood that Hitler and his wife Eva Braun took to a bunker in Berlin, Germany and took their own lives. Hitler was dead.

Jewish Holocaust.

This film tracking the journey from D Day to V.E. Day cannot be complete without covering something so hideous, so evil that the pictures from the scenes are too awful to be shown. They are devastating and deeply upsetting.

As the Allied troops pressed through Europe racing towards Berlin, which when taken was thought to represent the end of the war, they battled their way through towns and cities. They fought street to street, building to building. Bombs, bullets, machine guns, tanks and the fabric of the towns and cities streets , roads and bridges suffered horrendously, just like at St. Lo.

During the last days and weeks of the war, the troops came across a number of camps - which came to be known as concentration camps - that soberly focussed their attention on the evil and brutality of Hitler's rule.

Hitler and his Generals despised the Jews. They blamed them, very unfairly, for all the bad things in Europe from before the war.

The majority of the German people were unaware of what the German leaders had done. They rounded up Jewish people. They took the families away from their lives, their businesses, their homes and moved them into dreadful, stark camps.

In these hideous camps, the families were separated. Wives from husbands, children from parents. Their dignity was totally taken. As a symbol of this they were made to wear a dreadful uniform made of striped cloth as a symbol of their humiliation.

The Jews were made to work as slave labour in these camps for as long as their bodies held out.

They were terribly under fed and looked more like living skeletons than living people.



When they were no longer of any use to the camps, they were gathered and brutally murdered.

The scale of what the Nazis had done was unknown until well after the war, but the truth is that a total of more than 6 million Jewish people were snatched from their lives and killed in this way. That's right! 6 million! That's the equivalent of killing every single person in Denmark today.

The Nazis didn't believe that Jewish lives had any value.

When the advancing Allied soldiers stumbled across these terrible places, it affected the men who witnessed them for the rest of their lives. They couldn't believe or remotely understand - what they had seen.

Anne Frank

The story of how one Jewish family tried to hide from capture has become very famous. It's the story of a quite incredible girl called Anne Frank, who kept a diary of her days, weeks and months hiding away in a secret annex above a factory in Amsterdam where she had lived.

In total, she stayed in those rooms for just over two years.



The entrance to the annex was behind a false bookcase which covered the wall and hid the entrance doorway. Several times the building was searched by soldiers - but the Nazis never guessed the way through.

During the daytime while the factory was at work, they had to remain in perfect silence. If they made a noise, someone in the factory might tell the authorities.



They couldn't even use the toilet during these times.

In Anne's diary, she kept an account of how she was growing up in these rooms, trapped with another family who also took refuge there. The diary was found after the war and was published into a best selling book.

It's a remarkable story. Sadly in August 1944, Anne was eventually caught. Somebody - nobody knows who - did tell the authorities and this time the soldier's search found them. They were bundled away into the concentration camps.

Anne didn't survive the camps. She died some time between February and March 1945 at Bergen Belsen Concentration Camp. She was just 15 years old.

Miraculously her father did survive the camps. When the Allied soldiers reached his camp he was freed.

VE Day

Just about 11 months after D-Day, the German army, who had been fighting against the allied troops to their west and the Russian army to their East were defeated. On 8th May 1945, the German army signed an unconditional surrender. The day was determined as Victory in Europe Day. For the people of Europe, desperate and battered by six terrifying years of war - the war was over and they had a chance to start rebuilding their lives and their homes again.



The Second World War had been the deadliest in history. Some 75 million people lost their lives. This was about 3% of the total number of people on planet earth at that time. A shudderingly awful number.

Had it not been for the bravery of all the Allied troops throughout the war, very many more people could have been killed or injured and countless more would have lost their homes. The people of Europe set about rebuilding their lives and determined there would never be another war like it - ever!

The Bible Says

John 15: 13 : Great love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Let's Pray

Loving Father. We pray for all people who are caught up in conflict. We ask that they may find a way which brings true peace.

Putting It Into Practice

Discuss with the people close to you. Was it necessary to go to war with Hitler. Explain your reasons to each other.

Exit of Pupils

A thought provoking slideshow of the key issues raised in the assembly about the theme of VE Day for the pupils to exit assembly to (10 minutes)



Collective Worship and Putting it into Practice for the Rest of the Week

Day 2

Dear God. We pray with gratitude for people who have paid the ultimate price in the Second World War and across other conflicts that others can live in freedom and happiness.

You need to let the Free French army know that the Allied Invasion of Europe to free them from Hitler is about to begin. Create a code and send them a message to inform them when it will start. Try out your code on a friend to see if they can unravel it.

Day 3

Loving Father. We pray for all people in important positions of power across the world. People such as Presidents and Prime Ministers. Let them always find just and peaceful solutions to world problems.

You have been enlisted into the armed forces. You have received your “call up” papers. You can choose from:

- **The Air Force**
- **The Army**
- **The Navy.**

Which group would you join? Give reasons for your decisions



Day 4

Dear God. We pray that we may start world peace with a peaceful attitude and kind heart in our dealings with those around us. Help us to truly forgive those who have offended us.

War happens when people are unhappy with each other and “at odds.”

Individuals can be “at war” with others around them. Design and create a poster to persuade people to be kinder and more thoughtful to others around them.

Day 5

Dear God. We pray for countries where there is conflict today. Please let the people involved accept peace and compromise to bring the violence and fighting to an end.

Research: Why is there a poppy collection every November? Why is the symbol of the poppy chosen? What is the money raised used for?

