

**WORLD WAR II
(1939-1945): ENGLAND:
WINSTON CHURCHILL'S
SPEECHES DURING THE
BLITZ**



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Description

Students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain how Winston Churchill, through his speeches in 1940-1941, contributed to the formation of a collective British resolve to continue fighting during the Blitz, a critical time period when Britain was alone in fighting Germany.

Subjects

English / Language Arts, European History, World History, World Geography, Speech

Grade Level

11-12

Duration

90 minutes

Tour Links

- Windsor
- Houses of Parliament
- Westminster Abbey
- Churchill War Rooms
- Imperial War Museum, London

Essential Questions

- What were the reasons why Britain's refusal to accommodate Hitler, either by surrender or armistice, was significant in the war?
- How did Winston Churchill, through his speeches in 1940-1941, contribute to the formation of a collective British resolve to continue fighting during the critical time period when Britain was alone in fighting Germany?

Academic Summary

Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom for most of the Second World War and its aftermath, inspired many of his countrymen who were then in the darkest days of the war against Germany. In his speech before the House of Commons in June 1940 he uttered one of his most famous quotations...

... we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender...

In doing so, Churchill set the tone for the entire population to follow, one of defiance and self-sacrifice in the face of what seemed like overwhelming odds. Over the course of the war and its aftermath, Churchill time and time again used his office and his oratory powers to inspire and encourage the British public as the war against Germany dragged on and the dead piled up. Students here will understand the basic ideas behind England's decisions in the days before the war (including Parliament's foreign policy decisions that some historians believe may have stopped Hitler before 1939), Britain's decision in 1940 to hold out against the Luftwaffe in the face of overwhelming odds, and finally how Churchill's speeches before Parliament and his radio addresses helped contribute to the formation of a collective resolve strong enough to help the UK through its darkest times of the war.

By an in-depth analysis of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain how Winston Churchill, through his speeches in 1940-1941, contributed to the formation of a collective British resolve to continue fighting during the Blitz, a critical time period when Britain was alone in fighting Germany.

Objectives

1. Students will be able to identify the policies by which the British Government attempted to pursue peace in the 1930s, the leaders who advocated these policies, and the reasons for the failure of these policies.
2. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain the reasons why Britain's refusal to accommodate Hitler, either by surrender or armistice, was significant in the war.
3. Students will be able to display and demonstrate a fundamental knowledge and understanding of the following events of 1940-1941: the evacuation of Dunkirk, the fall of France, the Battle of the Atlantic, the Battle of Britain and the Blitz.
4. Students will be able to discuss the significance of these events, including their impact on British public opinion about their role in the war.
5. Students will be able to identify, understand and explain how Parliament functioned during the Second World War, and how it rallied the British public behind Winston Churchill- in particular how the prime minister's subject, word choice, and tone of his speeches strengthened British resolve and willingness to continue the fight in the dark early days of WWII.

Procedure

I. Anticipatory Set

- Writing / Question: How and why do government leaders use word choice and tone in their speeches to influence and rally citizens, especially during a time of war? (10 min)
- Handouts – images of London during the Blitz and British troops fighting in WWII (5 min)

II. Body of Lesson

- Lecture / PPT – Churchill and WWII (20 min)
- Video – Chamberlain and Appeasement (5 min)
- Group Activity – class discussion on Daily Mail article listed below (10 min)
- Audio recordings – excerpts from Churchill’s speeches (35 min) – students should have printed transcripts of the speeches and should take notes on Churchill’s voice inflection, tone and word choice, paying careful attention to how he uses those devices to motivate and move his audience
- Video – “London can take it” (10 min)
- Group Activity – Discussion on the use of tone and word choice by Churchill to rally the British public during WWII (5 min)

III. Closure

- Assessment – Essay / DBQ: How did Winston Churchill, through his speeches in 1940-1941, contribute to the formation of a collective British resolve to continue fighting during the critical time period when Britain was alone in fighting Germany? Be sure to give examples from the texts.
- Homework Assignment: Identify speeches used by American presidents to rally our country after major wartime events such as Pearl Harbor and 9/11 – Did those men use the same ideas as Churchill? Give examples and be prepared to discuss in class.

Extension

On tour: Imperial War Museum (London) - Churchill War Rooms

While on tour, students can visit the Imperial War Museum on King Charles St. in London (a couple of blocks from Parliament in the basement of a Whitehall building) to see for themselves the Churchill War Rooms Museum. Here they can see for themselves the actual rooms that the British War Cabinet worked and lived in during the Second World War. The museum contains many artifacts and has been restored to as it was during the Second World War. It’s almost as though Churchill himself should be around every other corner. Highly recommended for Churchill fans or anyone who wants to know more about the British government during the war. Adults 16 and over are £17.50 each, but children under 16 are free. Special group rates and private tours are available.

Web Links

Lesson Plan Websites

- nationalchurchillmuseum.org/winston-churchills-speeches.html
Winston Churchill speeches and transcripts (organized by date) at the National Churchill Museum.
- iwm.org.uk/visits/churchill-war-rooms
Imperial War Museums: Churchill War Rooms
- passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/the_united_kingdom/london
On the Road: London – city facts on London from Passports Educational Travel
- dailymail.co.uk/home/books/article-1018121/Propaganda-thats-akin-Goebbels.html
“Propaganda that’s akin to Goebbels” by Peter Lewis. Daily Mail book review of Human Smoke by Nicholson Baker about Churchill’s use of Propaganda.
- teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1
Reading Like a Historian: Primary Source Documents (video) – great 2 minute video on how to incorporate primary sources into the Common Core and history classes – from Shilpa Duvor of Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City, CA – highly recommended for teachers.
- youtube.com/watch?v=FO725Hbzfls
“Peace in our Time” – newsreel of Neville Chamberlain, prime minister of Great Britain, 30 Sep 1938.
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=oilSJ1Z40Y4
Winston Churchill’s “Never has so much been owed by so many to so few” speech (audio recording with video images), 16 Aug 1940.
- youtube.com/watch?v=bfQTCcbb8kU
Winston Churchill’s “Their Finest Hour” speech before Parliament (audio recording), 18 Jun 1940.
- youtube.com/watch?v=0d7rOgWzo4s
Winston Churchill’s “Every Man to his Post” speech (audio recording), 11 Sep 1940.
- youtube.com/watch?v=MkTw3_PmKtc
Winston Churchill’s “We Shall Never Surrender” speech before Parliament (audio recording), 04 Jun 1940.

Other Relevant Passports Lesson Plans

- www.passports.com/lesson_plan/england/second-world-war-st-paul-stands
England and WWII – St. Paul’s Stands against the Blitz
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/miracle-at-dunkirk-1940
World War II (1939-1945) – Miracle at Dunkirk
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/france/world-war-ii-fall-of-france-1940
World War II (1939-1945) – Fall of France

Key Terms

- Battle of Britain
- BBC – British Broadcasting Company
- The London Blitz of 1940-41
- Maginot Line
- Miracle of Dunkirk
- Parliament
- Propaganda
- Royal Air Force
- Winston Churchill

