

Battling for the Skies: Key Facts

The Start of the Battle of Britain

The Battle of Britain was a very important battle that took place during the Second World War. Germany had just invaded many countries in Europe and now wanted to defeat Great Britain. So, in July 1940, they began bombing British airfields, harbours and factories. The bombing went on for many months but due to the heroic efforts of the Royal Air Force, Germany did not manage to defeat Great Britain.

Hitler, Germany's leader, became increasingly frustrated at how long it was taking the Luftwaffe to defeat Great Britain. Therefore, in September, German planes began bombing British towns and cities instead. London was heavily affected by the bombs and this period is famously referred to as the blitz. Despite having fewer planes and pilots, the RAF successfully fought back against the Luftwaffe and protected Britain from a German invasion.



Did You Know...?

The German air force that attacked Great Britain during the battle was known as the Luftwaffe.

The Luftwaffe planes heavily outnumbered those of the Royal Air Force throughout the battle.

Aircraft

The most popular British plane flown during the Battle of Britain was the Supermarine Spitfire Mark 1 (famously known as the Spitfire). Both sides lost large numbers of aircraft and pilots during the Battle of Britain. It is thought that around 1000 British planes were shot down whereas over 1800 German planes are believed to have been destroyed.

The End of the Battle of Britain

Although the bombing of cities continued for many more months, 15th September is regarded as the end of the Battle of Britain. It was on this day that the RAF finally took advantage over the Luftwaffe and it became clear to them that they could not win. This date is commemorated every year as a result.

The Royal Air Force

The British Armed Forces is made up of the Royal Navy, the British Army and The Royal Air Force (RAF for short). The RAF was formed on 1st April 1918 towards the end of the First World War and is the youngest of the three services.

Questions

1. In what year did Germany's planes begin bombing British airfields? Tick **one**.

- 1939
- 1945
- 1940

2. Find and copy a word that shows that the RAF pilots were brave.

3. What was the name of the German air force?

4. When was the RAF formed?

- 1st July 1940
- 1st April 1940
- 1st April 1918

5. Number the events below to show the order in which they happened. The first one has been done for you.

- German planes begin to bomb towns and cities.
- ① The RAF is formed.
- German planes begin to bomb British airfields and factories.
- The RAF take control of the skies on the 15th September.

6. How many German planes are believed to have been shot down during the Battle of Britain? Tick **one**.

- 1800
- 1000
- 180,000

7. Why do you think the Germans thought that they would have been able to defeat the RAF at the start of the Battle of Britain? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
