



The Second World War

THE VOICE OF HISTORY

“Today we may say aloud before an awe-struck world: ‘We are still masters of our fate. We are still captain of our souls’.”

Winston Churchill

THE WORDS YOU NEED

Unisci con una freccia il termine alla sua definizione.

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|---------------|---|
| a. Occupation | 1. Killing of a large number of people |
| b. Massacre | 2. Building or place which is made to protect people from bad weather or danger |
| c. Lack | 3. A room underneath a building where things are stored |
| d. Shelter | 4. When a country is entered and controlled by a foreign army |
| e. Cellar | 5. An insufficiency or absence of something |

READ AND LISTEN

The most destructive war

The Second World War (2WW) was **the most destructive war**. Between **1939** and **1945** many countries experienced the horrors of **air raids**, military occupations, massacres and persecutions. Moreover, some governments were openly **racist**: they wanted the moral and physical destruction of some ethnic groups. Japan opposed other Asian populations, while Nazi in Germany persecuted Jews, Gypsies and Slavic populations. The German army, in particular, committed horrible crimes in **Italy** (after 1943) and in **Eastern Europe**.

The ruins of Earl Street in Coventry during the devastating Coventry Blitz in November 1940.



War strategy: the air raids

The main causes for the high number of deaths were three: lack of food, racial persecutions and the massive bombardment of enemy cities. At first it was strategic bombing (on military and industrial **targets**). Then, all the countries at war started the so-called **indiscriminate bombing** of cities, mainly at night: bombs were intentionally dropped on **civilians** at home or at work. Humiliating and destroying the spirit of the enemy was the main objective. The number of victims was **too high to be calculated**: around 60,000,000 people in six years.



A reading session in an air raid shelter in Bermondsey, South London (March 1941).

Children wearing gas masks.



AIR RAID: an attack by military planes in which bombs are dropped.

PERSECUTION: bad treatment of a person or group because of their religious or political ideas or their race.

ARMY: group of people trained to fight in a war.

TARGET: a person or thing you want to attack.

CIVILIAN: people or things which are not military.

Living in time of war

The life of civilians was **hard**, especially at night, when the air raids started. During the attacks, houses were not safe. Some people left the cities and moved to the countryside. Most of the population had to use **raid shelters**. They were refuges like cellars, spaces under stairs, or underground stations where people could find protection. Shelters were not very big and always full of people: they became the real home of many families who had lost their own houses. These terrible experiences created a **community spirit**: all people lived together like a family and helped each other.

PRACTICE YOUR ENGLISH

1. Indica se le seguenti affermazioni sono vere o false.

- The Jews were persecuted by Japan.
- Indiscriminate bombing means that bombs were dropped without a plan.
- Strategic bombing means that bombs were used to destroy military and industrial targets.
- Air raids were very common at night.
- At wartime people did not help each other.

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- TO KNOW MORE** Nell'agosto 1945, il presidente degli Stati Uniti Harry Truman diede l'ordine di sganciare due bombe atomiche su Hiroshima e Nagasaki (nella foto). In seguito dichiarò: «The atom bomb was no "great decision". It was merely another powerful weapon in the arsenal of righteousness». Provatelo a tradurre la frase e a spiegarne il significato. Siete d'accordo con la posizione di Truman? Come considerate il ricorso alla bomba atomica?

