



Lesson Title:

The Battle of Britain

Subjects

U. S. History, World History

Suggested time

One 50-minute class period

Grade Level

7-12

Essential Questions

Why and how did the Battle of Britain take place? Why did Germany consider Great Britain to be a threat?

Objective

To illustrate how the advancement of technology played a significant part - along with the British Prime Minister's leadership - in the Battle of Britain during World War II.

Overview

This lesson provides an overview of the German territorial expansion that happened in Europe during the 1930's leading up to the onset of World War II along with a review of key leaders. Students will watch two short videos that focus on the key technologies that were developed to help the British military defend their homeland against Germany during the Battle of Britain. After viewing both videos, students will work with a partner to discuss and answer specific questions related to the videos. The focus will be on the importance of technology in winning the Battle of Britain tied in with the leadership of Winston Churchill. The students will be assigned a RAFT writing assignment to be completed individually.

Materials

- *Chronicles of Courage: Stories of Wartime and Innovation* videos
 - ["The Hurricane and the Battle of Britain"](#)
 - ["The Spitfire"](#)
- Winston Churchill Quotes/Speeches
 - ["Evacuation of Dunkirk"](#) Referencing the evacuation at Dunkirk

- [“Never in the field of human conflict”](#) (the quote is the first sentence in the second to last paragraph) Referencing the Royal Air Force during the Battle of Britain
- [“Finest Hour”](#) Referencing the need for support for all British citizens
- [Map of Europe](#)
- Royal Air Force (RAF) Pilots Information
 - Tom Neil –
 - [News Article](#)
 - [Flying Heritage Collection Interview](#)
 - Ken Wilkinson –
 - [News Article](#)
 - [Flying Heritage Collection Interview](#)
- [Lesson](#)
- [RAFT Assignment to project](#)
- [Rubric](#)
- [Extension Activity](#)
- [Standards](#)
- [NCSS C3 Framework](#)

Procedure

Prepare the classroom by arranging desks where students may easily work with a partner.

Warm-Up Activity:

Tell the students –

“Today we are going to learn more about the Battle of Britain, but first let’s review the key leaders in Europe and what has happened so far in Europe since 1930.”

Call on multiple students, but one student at a time to answer each of the following questions -

Who is the leader of -

- Italy? (*Benito Mussolini*)
- Germany? (*Adolph Hitler*)
- The Soviet Union? (*Joseph Stalin*)
- France? (*Charles de Gaulle*)
- Great Britain? (*Neville Chamberlain for this section of the lesson, Winston Churchill will be elected in 1940*)

Tell the students -

“Although the focus of today’s lesson is on what is happening in Europe,”

And, then continue to ask the full class, but select one student for each question,

- Who can tell me what is happening in the United States? (*The Great Depression*)

- Who is the president of the United States? (*Franklin D. Roosevelt*)

“Now that they we have reviewed the key leaders, let’s review key terms and dates:”

- Axis Powers (*what begins as the Berlin – Rome Axis when Hitler and Mussolini agree to a military alliance, it later becomes the Axis Powers, when Japan joins the alliance.*)
- Allied Powers (*Great Britain, France, Soviet Union – for this lesson*)
- Appeasement (*diplomatic policy set forth by Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain by offering concessions to the land taken by Hitler*)
- The Munich Pact or The Munich Agreement (*Hitler will keep the land in which he has already proclaimed, but will not take any further steps to acquire additional land.*)
- German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact (*Signed on August 23, 1939, the two countries agreed not to take military action on each other for the next 10 years*)
- September 1, 1939 (*Germany invaded Poland which is considered the official beginning of World War II*)
- Blitzkrieg (*“lightning war” an innovative and intense military campaign*)

Tell the students (while projecting a map of Europe) -

“Hitler, Chancellor and president of Germany, takes over the Rhineland, then Austria. Neville Chamberlain meets with Hitler which is known as the Munich Agreement, but it does not have any significance - Chamberlain just appeased Hitler - so Germany occupies the Sudetenland, followed by Czechoslovakia. Although Hitler signs the Warsaw Pact with Stalin, which was a political and military alliance established between the Soviet Union and several Eastern European countries, Germany invades Poland on September 1, 1939 marking the official beginning of World War II. Because France and Great Britain have an alliance with Poland, they declare war on Germany.”

Continue to show the map. And illustrate how over the next nine months Germany will take over Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and then move into France.

“The German Army enters France and quickly forces a retreat of the Allied forces which includes the French and British armies. Miraculously, 330,000 men will be evacuated from Dunkirk in a matter of days because Hitler stalled his army.”

Ask the students -

“So, in looking at the map, where do you think the next battle of World War II will occur?”

Explore the Videos:

The Eyewitnesses Tell the Story:

By interviewing people who have experienced harrowing events, the *Chronicles of Courage: Stories of Wartime and Innovation* series keeps history alive for current generations to explore. Oral history lets the audience hear history directly from those that experienced it and can bring the past to life with

powerful information that print resources may miss. The technologies and solutions presented are information few today have and are contextualized by experts that continue to work with and preserve this classic technology.

[“The Hurricane and the Battle of Britain”](#)

About the Video:

“The Hurricane and the Battle of Britain” is one of 20 short videos in the series *Chronicles of Courage: Stories of Wartime and Innovation*. It tells the story of the intense fighting during the Battle of Britain and details the unique and sometimes deadly characteristics of the Hawker Hurricane aircraft.

Video Voices:

Tom Neil

Neil was just 19 years old and a brand new pilot when he joined the Royal Air Force (RAF). He became an ace (a pilot who typically shoots down 5 or more enemy aircraft) during World War II and has remained active with reunions of the RAF. He has been interviewed by various media outlets and has given speeches on his critical role during the Battle of Britain.

Cory Graff

Graff is the Military Aviation Curator at Flying Heritage Collection – a military aviation and tank museum located near Seattle, Washington.

Language Support

To aid those with limited English proficiency or others who need help focusing on the video, make available the transcript for the video. Click the transcript tab on the side of the video window, then copy and paste into a document for student reference.

[“The Spitfire”](#)

About the Video:

“The Spitfire” is one of 20 short videos in the series *Chronicles of Courage: Stories of Wartime and Innovation*. It details the characteristics of the Supermarine Spitfire aircraft and how its pilots used the newly developed RADAR technology to help the British military win the Battle of Britain.

Video Voices:

Ken Wilkinson

Wilkinson was 22 years old when he became a flying officer in the Royal Air Force (RAF). Along with his squadron, he fought day and night to defend Great Britain from the German Luftwaffe attack on England. He has stayed active with reunions of the RAF including one at Buckingham Palace which included watching a “flyover” with Queen Elizabeth and discussing his role in the war with Prince Philip and Prince William.

Cory Graff

Graff is the Military Aviation Curator at Flying Heritage Collection – a military aviation and tank museum located near Seattle, Washington.

Language Support

To aid those with limited English proficiency or others who need help focusing on the video, make available the transcript for the video. Click the transcript tab on the side of the video window, then copy and paste into a document for student reference.

Lesson

Watch the video [“The Hurricane and the Battle of Britain”](#)

Divide students into pairs. Ask the students to discuss each of the questions below. Give them 1-3 minutes of discussion time per question.

- One of the pilots interviewed, Tom Neil, was 19 years old, not much older than all of you, and had just learned how to pilot a plane, but was expected to fight a war. How would you react in the same situation?
- Again, putting yourself in Tom Neil’s place, and needing to fly so often, no matter what time of day, how would you feel with such little sleep? Do you think you would be able to remain focused on the task at hand?
- Although the Hurricane was quick and stable, yet maneuverable, what do you think of the “negatives” of the plane –
 - Being made of wood and fabric?
 - Easily caught on fire?

Bring the class back together, then review the following as a class:

Tell/show the students -

"To keep up morale for the soldiers and the British citizens, Prime Minister Winston Churchill said this (*Project this quote for the students to see*) – ‘Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. Upon it depends our own British life and the long continuity of our institutions, and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler know that he will try to break us in this Island, or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be freed, and the life of this world may move forward into broad and sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, and all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister and perhaps more prolonged by the lights of perverted Science. Let us therefore brace ourselves that if the British Empire and Commonwealth lasts for a thousand years, men will still say, ‘This was their finest hour.’”

Watch the video [“The Spitfire”](#)

Divide students into pairs (*they can remain with the same partner, or work with a new partner*) Ask the students to discuss each of the questions below. Give them 1 – 3 minutes of discussion time per question.

Ask the students -

“According to the story, what is happening to London? What would you be thinking if you were the same age you are now, but living in London during the Battle of Britain?”

- How did the Spitfire help the RAF during this battle?
- Even though the Spitfire was fast and had firepower, what other technology was needed to help the RAF?
- In simple terms, how does RADAR work?
- How is RADAR technology helpful to the RAF?
- Do you consider this technology crucial to winning the battle? Why or why not?

Bring the class back together, to review the following as a class:

Tell the students -

“During the battle, Prime Minister Winston Churchill said this:” (*Project this quote for the students to see*) – ‘Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.’”

Ask the students -

“Using your knowledge and the information from the story, why would Prime Minister Churchill say this to the British citizens?”

Tell the students -

“For the assignment today, you are going to complete a RAFT writing assignment. The acronym RAFT, stands for Role, Audience, Format and Topic. You will choose a role from the chart. Once you decide on your role, follow the chart to the right so you will see your audience (who you will be writing to), the format you will use, and the topic you will address in your writing.”

Alternative plan – count off students 1 – 4 to assign the role to them. For example RAF pilot will be 1, PM Communication Specialist will be 2, etc.

Individual Assignment

RAFT Writing Assignment

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
RAF Pilot	Your future self and to share with your future children and	Journal Entry	Explain your role in the RAF and what you and your fellow RAF members did to save Great Britain.

	grandchildren.		
Prime Minister Communication Specialist	The British Public	News Article	The battle has been won! You need to provide a recap on how it happened to send to the American newspapers.
Parent	Your children (who had been sent to the English countryside)*	Letter	Letting your children know what is happening in London and how the military is doing in the war.
German Spy	German Generals	A series of telegraphs	How are the British pilots able to fend off the Luftwaffe?

Rubric

	Proficient (25 points)	Developing (20 points)	Not Proficient (15 points)
Content	Student's writing clearly shows understanding of the content by using multiple relevant examples and cited events from the videos, primary resources and textbook information.	Student's writing shows some understanding by providing examples from the videos and speeches, but not fully developed.	Writing shows little understanding by not providing examples from the videos and speeches.
RAFT Format	Student follows RAFT by staying within the role chosen, speaks to the correct audience, stays in the proper format	Student follows RAFT by identifying all parts, but does not develop the topic fully.	Student does not clearly identify the role, audience or topic.
Organization and Neatness	Student provides accurate information in a logical order.	Student does not organize the content well, but is somewhat neat.	Student does not develop the format correctly and does not organize it well.
All topics addressed	Student addresses all topics related to character's topics.	Student does not address all topics related to the character.	Student does not cover any of the topics correctly.

*For more information on evacuating the children to the English country side during the Battle of Britain, <http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-evacuated-children-of-the-second-world-war>

Extension Activity

In the Spitfire story, a specific technology, RADAR, was developed during the Battle of Britain, but improvements were made on this technology throughout World War II and even to today. In a short essay, 250 – 300 words, write how this technology helped the Allies throughout the war and one way it is still used today.

Standards

11.8. WORLD WAR II (1935 – 1945): The participation of the United States in World War II was a transformative event for the nation and its role in the world. (Standards: 1, 2; Themes: TCC, GOV, CIV, TECH)

Students will examine how technological advancements altered the nature of war and the extent of its devastation, including the use of air power over civilian targets and President Truman’s decision to use the atomic bomb against the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Build Social Studies Literacy through Reading and Writing Common Core State Standard for ELA & Literacy in Social Studies Grades 9-10

Edies » Grade 9-10

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RH/9-10/>

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.3

Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.5

Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6

Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.7](#)

Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.8](#)

Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.9](#)

Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

Build Social Studies Literacy through Reading and Writing Common Core State Standard for ELA & Literacy in Social Studies Grades 11-12

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RH/11-12/>

Key Ideas and Details:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1](#)

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2](#)

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.3](#)

Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Craft and Structure:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4](#)

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in *Federalist* No. 10).

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.5](#)

Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6

Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.8

Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.10

By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

NCSS C3 Framework

Dimension 1: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries

Dimension 2: Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools

Dimension 3: Argument Writing

Dimension 4: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action