

Knowledge Organiser: Depression, war and recovery 1930-1951 (Unit 1)

Key Question 5: How important was it to maintain people's morale during the war?

Timeline of events

1939: Emergency Powers Defence Act

10 May 1940: Winston Churchill becomes Prime Minister

Important concept

In order to keep morale high during the war years the government used propaganda and censorship. The Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, gave regular radio broadcasts where he spoke of British victories and resilience. The 'bulldog' spirit convinced people that the war would be won and ensured that morale remained high.

Key words

Propaganda	Information used to promote a particular message or product.
Censorship	Stopping the release of certain information, such as battle losses and deaths, which would lead to the lowering of morale.
Rationing	A specific amount of food given to individuals during a time of shortage.
Black market	Illegal buying or selling of officially controlled goods.

The role of radio and cinema during the war

- Most families had access to a radio. They could be used to share information and important messages with the British public.
- Radio broadcasts spoke of the key successes, such as the Battle of Britain, to spread positive messages, and they preached about the bravery and determination of people during the Blitz.
- Radio broadcasters became well known in people's homes, and a form of continuity and comfort. Programmes such as Tommy Handley's *'It's That Man Again'* and *'Music while you work'* became very popular.
- The Government used the cinema to help promote the war effort, raise people's spirits and share victories.
- People were shown newsreels before the main feature film which informed them about the events of the war.
- The Ministry of Information produced many short films about coping with problems created by war.
- The most popular and powerful films about the war were *'Went the Day Well?'* and *'The Day Will Dawn'* in 1942, and *'Tomorrow We Live'* in 1943.
- Radio and cinema were used to ensure morale did not fall.

Propaganda posters and censorship

- The government set up a new Ministry of Information, propaganda and censorship at the beginning of the war.
- It was vital for the government to keep morale high throughout the war years so that the public supported the war, and propaganda and censorship were used effectively in order to achieve this.
- Propaganda posters gave people information on the war and provided advice, such as how to grow vegetables.
- The posters also encouraged men to sign up to fight and women to join the war effort by working in the munition factories and the land army.
- Winston Churchill gave regular speeches which helped to keep morale high.
- Censorship was used to control the messages people saw. Radio, newspapers, magazines, cinema films and newsreels were all censored. Military disasters were made to sound less serious in order to avoid damaging morale, while military successes were exaggerated.
- Civilians were told not to speak about their work in case of German Spies - *'Careless Talk Costs Lives'*.

Campaigns and appeals such as Dig for Victory and the Spitfire Fund

- The Ministry of Agriculture set up the 'Dig For Victory' campaign at the beginning of the war. It aimed to ensure that the British people, where possible, could grow their own food to supplement rationed goods. People started growing food in their gardens, and open spaces in many towns and villages were turned into allotments.
- People also began to keep animals, such as hens, pigs and rabbits.
- By 1943, there were 3.5 million allotments in Britain and over a million tonnes of vegetables were produced.
- The Spitfire Fund was a government-backed scheme led by Lord Beaverbrook to encourage people to give money towards the production of Spitfire planes.
- It made people feel like they were part of the war effort.

The importance of Churchill as war leader

- Churchill embodied the bulldog spirit which was needed if Britain was going to win the war.
- He was an outstanding wartime leader. He delivered stirring speeches and visited areas that had been bombed during the Blitz to provide moral support. His messages were always positive and spoke about victory; there was no talk of surrender.
- Churchill worked closely with Roosevelt, the American President, and was able to secure American money and support, particularly through the lend lease scheme. They became Allies when the USA entered the war in December 1941. He also put aside personal distrust to work with Stalin during the war as defeating Nazism was the most important thing.
- To many British people, the Allied victory in 1945 was due largely to Churchill's inspired leadership. He symbolised defiance, a fighting spirit and a stubborn refusal to surrender.

