

# **The Life and Legacy of Sir Winston Churchill**

## **How did World War II change Britain?**

### **Guidance notes and Lesson Plan**

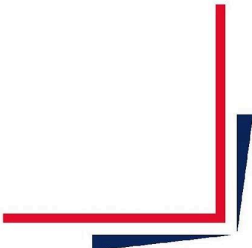
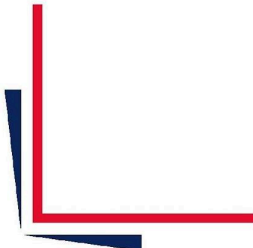
#### **Lesson Objectives:**

- To assess the role of Churchill and Britain over the course of World War II
- To understand how Britain's position in the world changed as a result of World War II

#### **Introduction**

World War II cemented a shift in global power, securing the United States and Soviet Union as the two global superpowers by its conclusion. For Britain, the war solidified the shift away from being the world's largest empire and economy which it had enjoyed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During the war Britain's position also changed. Until mid-1941 and the invasion of the Soviet Union by Germany, then later that year with the Pearl Harbour attack on the USA by Japan, Britain had been the last major power freely standing against the Axis in Europe. As such Britain has often been characterised as being considered 'alone' in its resistance to Hitler's Germany. As a war leader Churchill was able to keep morale high in the country through his use of speeches and visits to affected areas. His never say die attitude, refusal to consider anything but victory and boisterous humour and rhetoric was instrumental in maintaining the British public's support for the war. Indeed it has been argued that this 'island spirit' has been maintained since the war in the public imagination. However, the evidence shows us that whilst Britain was the only major European power standing against Hitler until 1941, the involvement of colonial troops and resources as well as airmen from such countries as Poland was fundamental to Britain's war effort. Once the USA and USSR had joined the war, military strategy and post war planning depended more greatly on the wishes of these superpowers than Britain's priorities due to its limited strength both economically and militarily.

This lesson aims to help students understand how Britain's position in the world changed as a result of World War II. By looking at different aspects of the conflict – at home, in the field of battle, and through alliances formed – students will be able to analyse the different ways in which Britain's role did change. Students will be able to identify the possible differences between the perception of Britain's position (picking up on the Britain alone idea) in relation



to the reality of global power in the post war world. This could challenge ideas which still remain today about Britain's global influence and identity.

## **Key Information**

This lesson is designed for students aged 12 and above. It is devised for History classes.

Timings are suggested on the basis of a one hour lesson, and may need adapting based on circumstances.

Prior knowledge is not needed. However, recognising that students may arrive with knowledge, ideas and preconceptions is embraced and should be utilised to explore and resolve misconceptions.

This lesson can be taught in isolation as a study of Churchill's leadership in World War II, or as part of a study of World War Two, but it's recommended that this follows the first three lessons of the Churchill Scheme of Work. Utilising the prior learning and understanding of Churchill and British history gained from these lessons will assist student understanding and enable them to reach more nuanced judgements and reflect on the question of Britain's changing state, with links to the present day.

## **Resources**

- Guidance Notes and Lesson Plan
- PowerPoint
  - Information packs (Slides 7, 8 & 9)
  - Note taking sheets (Slides 5 & 10)
- [Film](#)
- Audio clip

## **Lesson Plan**

### **Starter: The power of words? (5 minutes)**

Begin the lesson by playing the short clip of Churchill speaking to civil authorities in London in 1941 (Slide 1). As students to listen carefully and be ready to respond to the questions on the board:

- What is his message?
- How do you think he wants the listener to feel after hearing his words?
- What impact might this speech have on the people who hear it?
- What impression does it give about the British people?

Explain that this lesson is about World War II, understanding Britain's role in the war and how far Churchill shaped our thinking about this and how Britain changed as a result of the conflict.

### **Activity: Introduction and bringing out prior knowledge (5 minutes)**

Share the title (Slide 2)– Churchill's leadership in World War II,

Give students 30 seconds to consider anything they know about the war, to provide some context and give you an understanding of the prior knowledge in the room. Ask for students to share their knowledge and add key details to a whiteboard as a means of holding the information. You may wish to encourage thinking by asking prompt questions such as:

- Consider the: who? what? when? where? why? how?
- What do you know about the role Britain played in the war?
- What do you know about what Churchill did in the war?

N.B. Prior knowledge is not essential for this lesson, but it is helpful to the teacher to know where you may need to clarify points of detail or areas of misunderstanding. It can also empower students who have prior knowledge to help them confidently go into the main part of the lesson, as well as supporting students who do not by holding a discussion and noting key information on the board that will give them some facts and details to work with through the lesson.

### **Activity: World War II overview (12 minutes)**

(Slide 3) Provide students with the question handout and introduce the [film 'World War II'](#). Ask students to watch the film and complete the questions as they do so (it's helpful to read through the questions first to indicate what students should look out for). You may wish to stop the film to check learning periodically, or wait until the end to hold a discussion and go through the questions, adding answers to the board so students can share their learning and complete their question sheet (Slide 5).

Finish the task with a discussion on the challenge question: What does the film suggest about Britain's role in WWII? Do not expect fully formed answers to this question, but encourage students to begin to share their suggestions on what the film suggests about Britain's role. You may wish to prompt responses with questions such as:

- Was Britain alone fighting World War II?
- Did Britain's role stay the same throughout the war?
- What events or factors helped to change Britain's situation?
- What did Churchill do to affect Britain's position (and how we see it today)?

Having taken some feedback and begun to deduce that Britain's role was not static, explain that the next task will look at three areas of the war to understand this in more detail and with evidence.

**Activity: Churchill's wartime leadership (25 minutes)**

Introduce this activity by outlining the three areas that students will look at to further understand how Churchill led Britain through the war and to discover how far Britain's role changed over the course of the war.

Explain that by looking at Churchill's leadership at home, the way military campaigns unfolded and the alliances that Britain made we can see different narratives for Britain's role in the war. The task will draw these together to help students take a balanced view of the significance of Churchill's leadership and Britain's role in the war, and its effect on Britain's global status at the time and after the conflict.

Arrange the class into three groups and provide each group information sheets on one of the three factors and a note taking sheet:

- The People's Prime Minister
- Military Campaigns
- Building Alliances

Give each group 7-10 minutes to read through their handout and complete the relevant row on their note taking sheet. Circulate around the room to support students as they do this.

Once students have completed their own factors, bring the group together to collect feedback on each factor and ask students to complete their note taking sheet as they hear from other groups. Make summary notes to model this on the whiteboard (Slide 10) and enable all students to note essential information.

Spend a little extra time on the final column of the note taking sheet. Encourage students to consider how the events and actions of Churchill and the British impacted Britain's status – for example, Churchill's speeches elevated public opinion and helped grow a sense of strength, whilst the alliances with the USA and USSR placed Britain in a less powerful position due to their inferior economic and military position.

### **Activity: How did World War II change Britain? (10 minutes)**

To prepare students for writing a summary paragraph answering the question, *How did World War II change Britain?*, allow students to consider the questions on screen for two minutes:

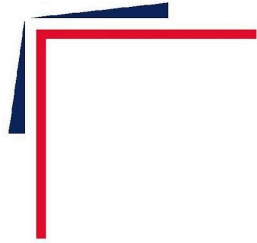
- To what extent was Britain 'alone' in WWII?
- How did Britain's role change during WWII?
- What was the significance of British leadership in WWII?
- What was the impact of Churchill during WWII?

Encourage students to use their notes and discuss with each other the questions which they feel most comfortable answering, then bring the group together for a short feedback and discussion. Having discussed the questions briefly, give students a few minutes to write their response.

You may wish to help students by drawing their attention back to the question of perspective – that through speeches and visits, Churchill was able to raise morale and possibly even inflate public opinion of Britain's role in leading the war effort, whilst evidence from the military campaigns and alliances shows Britain's role becoming more of a junior partner as the war progressed.

### **Activity: How did Churchill shape modern Britain in World War Two (3 minutes)**

Finish the lesson by bringing students attention back to the enquiry question and holding a brief discussion to ask how we can answer it using today's lesson. Remind students that in the last lesson of the Scheme of Work they will reflect on this question further, and consider the impact of the past on the present and that they might want to note down their initial thoughts on this question ready to come back to later.



If time allows you may wish to ask which of the three factors studied in this lesson has had the greatest impact in shaping Britain since the war.

