

VE Day

On Monday 7th May 1945 at 2:41 a.m., German General Jodl signed the unconditional surrender document that ended the Second World War in Europe. VE Day is the historic day that marks this important event. Short for 'Victory in Europe Day', the first VE Day was held on 8th May 1945, the day after Germany surrendered to the Allied forces. Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister for Britain, declared the day a national holiday.

What Happened on the First VE Day?

Winston Churchill officially announced the end of the war over the wireless, an old-fashioned type of radio, at 3 p.m. Millions of people were waiting for the fighting to stop and there were many celebrations. People held street parties across Britain where they shared food and danced in the streets. Bells rang out from churches across the country and around 20,000 people gathered at Buckingham Palace, waiting to catch a glimpse of the King. Lots of people were dressed in red, white and blue. King George VI and his daughters, Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret, came out on the balcony to greet the crowds. It is believed that the Princesses were allowed to secretly leave the palace and celebrate with the people outside. Princess Elizabeth, now the current Queen, often says that VE Day 1945 was one of the "most memorable days of her life."

How Do People Celebrate VE Day?

VE Day is an important celebration. On this day, we take the opportunity to remember the people that sacrificed their lives or were badly injured during the war. It is also a chance for us to celebrate the day that brought peace to Europe after a long and difficult six-year conflict. All over the country, people hang up red, white and blue bunting and hold street parties and parades to mark the event. VE Day is recognised and celebrated in other countries, including Belgium and France, with church services, processions and parties.

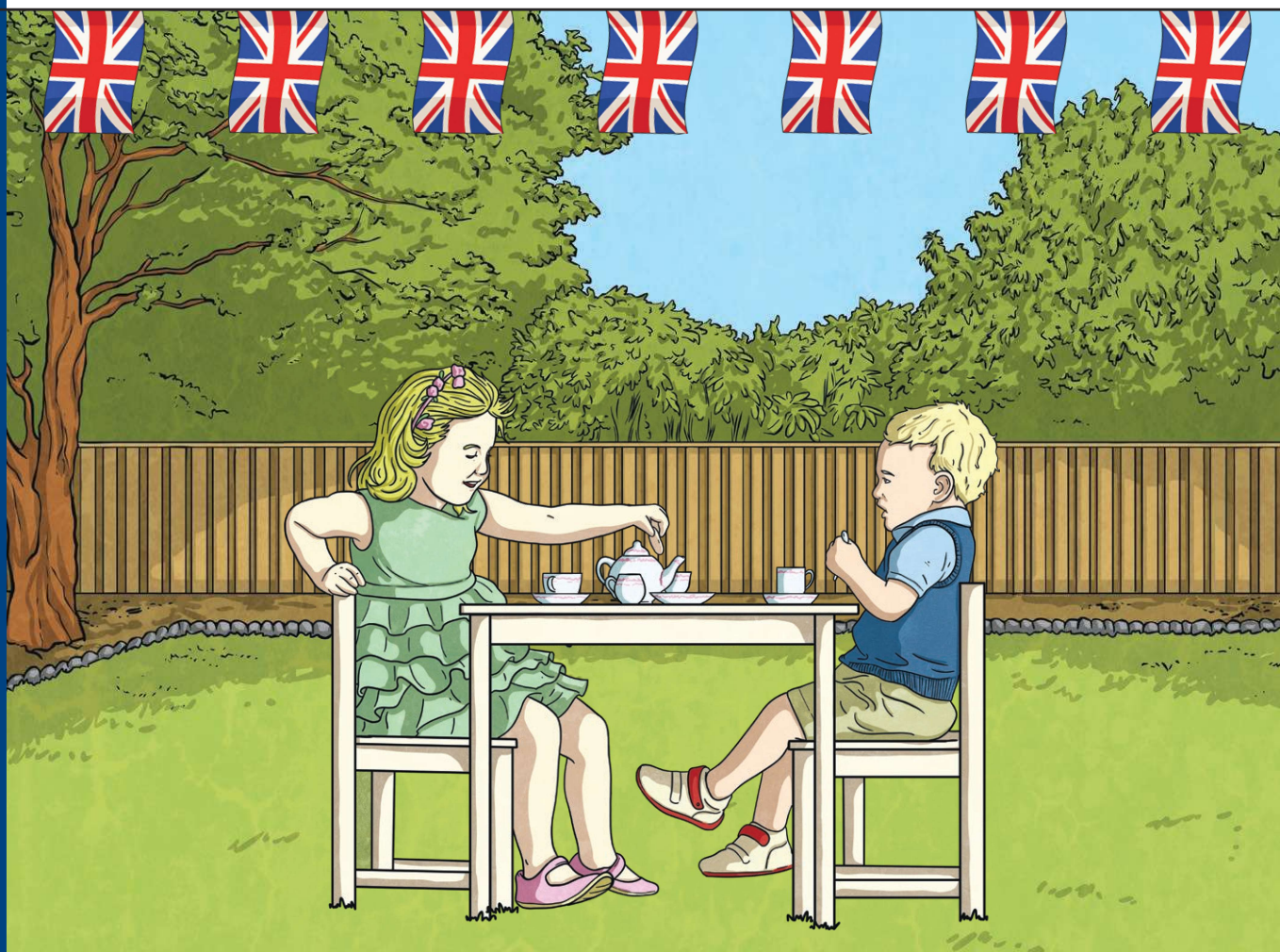


What Happened after VE Day?

Although VE Day meant peace in Europe, it was not the end of the war around the world. Many people were still sent to fight in Japan, where the conflict continued until August. The day that Japan surrendered is marked by VJ Day, short for 'Victory in Japan'. It is celebrated on 15th August in the UK. Even after the war, life continued to be a struggle in Britain. Many people were deeply affected by the terrible loss of life. The war was also very expensive so the country had to rebuild and recover slowly.

What Can You Do This VE Day?

There are lots of things that you can do to celebrate VE Day while at home with your family. Decorate your house with Britain-themed bunting and flags – don't forget to use red, white and blue! Or, try to plan a VE Day party using the foods that people would have had available after the war. It might be harder than you think!



Questions

1. Who signed the document for unconditional surrender? Tick one.

- ☐ Winston Churchill
- ☐ King George VI
- ☐ General Jodl
- ☐ Queen Elizabeth II

2. Where did approximately 20,000 people gather on the first VE Day? Tick one.

- ☐ Elizabeth Tower
- ☐ Buckingham Palace
- ☐ Kensington Palace
- ☐ Houses of Parliament

3. Look at the first section of the text. Find and copy a word which means **gave up**.

4. Why do you think VE Day 1945 was one of the most memorable days of The Queen's life?

5. Give the name of another country mentioned in the text where VE Day is celebrated.

6. **'It might be harder than you think!'**

Why might it be difficult to plan a party using only the foods available after the war?

7. Do you think you would have liked to take part in the VE Day celebrations after the Second World War? Explain why.

8. Summarise what life was like right after the first VE Day.
