



Battle Of Britain

The Battle of Britain was one of one of the key battles in World War 2. It began on July 10th, 1940 and continued for months. Germany was at the peak of its power and had swept across mainland Europe, invading everybody in its path. France had fallen, and Hitler hoped that Britain would follow soon after. When he launched the Battle of Britain, the idea was to break British spirits and force a surrender.

At that time, the Royal Air Force of Britain was very powerful. In order to attack mainland Britain, Hitler knew that he had to take out the RAF first. The Battle of Britain was an air battle that took place in the skies above France, England, and the English Channel.

The German equivalent of the RAF was the Luftwaffe. Their first missions involved trying to bomb British airfields. They knew that if they destroyed enough planes on the ground, the RAF wouldn't be able to fight back.

Unfortunately for the Germans, the British had a new technology called radar. This was a system that could detect objects that were far away by bouncing radio waves off them. They could see German planes before they were visible to human spotters. This early warning was enough for RAF Command to respond much more effectively.

Ironically, radar had actually been invented in Germany. They hadn't realised how effective it could be for defence, though, so Britain had a huge upper hand. The Germans tried to attack some of the radar stations but were largely ineffective. They spent most of their energy trying to attack airfields, only to be thwarted by attacks that they never saw coming.

It wasn't just radar that won the Battle of Britain. Over 1000 observer posts were built and manned by volunteers. These brave souls stood watch and alerted the commanders to any incoming planes. This added an extra layer of detail to the radar picture, making it even more efficient and deadly. Anti-aircraft guns were situated in places where they would be able to shoot down German planes before they got close enough to do any damage.

By the end of October, the German attacks were reducing. They weren't running out of planes, but they realised that the battle wasn't going according to plan.

Eventually, Hitler realised that his plan to destroy the RAF wasn't going to work, and they stopped trying. However, that wasn't the end of the German attacks on British soil. Instead, they changed their targets to large cities and important civilian buildings. This was one of the first times in modern history that an army had deliberately attacked civilians.

This onslaught of bombing raids became known as the Blitz, which was short for Blitzkrieg - German for *Lightning War*. In retaliation, the RAF flew over to Germany and started to bomb their large cities and towns. These bombing raids killed tens of thousands of civilians.

RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. When did the Battle of Britain begin?
2. What event followed after it ended?
3. What was the German equivalent of the RAF?
4. How many observer posts were built?
5. When did the Germans start to pull out of the Battle of Britain?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

S

Why was it ironic that radar was invented in Germany?

S

Why did the Germans try to attack British air bases?

V

Which word means "spot" or "locate"?

V

If something is "ineffective", what does it mean?

I

How did "spotters" help?