10 FACTS ABOUT WORLD WAR 2

Learn about this hugely important event in British history…

In September 1939, Britain entered into what would become the world's most devastating war to date. Learn all about the events that changed the lives of millions in our World War 2 facts….

World War 2 facts

1. **World War 2** was a battle between two groups of countries

– the "**Allies**" and the "**Axis**". The major Allied Powers were Britain, France, Russia, China and the United States. The major Axis Powers were Germany, Italy and Japan.

Adolf Hitler with Benito Mussolini, prime minister of Itlay during World War II

2. Before World War 2 began, Germany was ruled by a man named **Adolf Hitler**

Together with the **Nazi Party**, he wanted Germany to rule Europe. To gain more land and power, on 1 September 1939 German troops invaded Poland. After Hitler refused to stop the invasion, Britain and France declared war on Germany – World War II had begun.

3. During the course of the war, German forces advanced through Europe

By the summer of **1941** they had invaded **France**, **Belgium**, **Holland**, **Luxembourg**, **Denmark**, **Norway**, **Greece**, **Yugoslavia*** and the **USSR***.

4. Millions of Germans were imprisoned and killed because they didn't fit the image of the 'perfect' German

Hitler wanted to create what he thought was the "best" and strongest race – and to the Nazi Party, this excluded certain groups, such as **Jews**, **Gypsies** and those with **physical** and **mental disabilities**. In an attempt to eliminate a "racial enemy" outside of Germany, such groups were also persecuted in the countries invaded by German forces.

"LET US GO FORWARD TOGETHER"

5. The group most heavily targeted by the Nazis were the Jews

Around **six million** Jewish people were killed during World War 2 in one of history's most terrible events – the **Holocaust.** Racist in his views, Hitler blamed Jewish people for Germany losing **World War I** and claimed they were dangerous to German people and society.

The Supermarine Spitfire was a British fighter aircraft used by the Allied Powers during World War II

6. Around the same time that Germany fought for power in Europe, Japan wanted to control Asia and the Pacific

In **1937** (before World War 2 had officially begun) under **Emperor Hirohito**, Japan attacked China, bringing the two nations into years of conflict.

7. The US didn't join the war until 1941, when Japan attacked the United States

– at their Naval Base at **Pearl Harbor** in **Hawaii**. On **8 December 1941** (the very next day), the US declared War on Japan and, in turn, its German allies.

8. Some countries remained 'neutral' in World War 2

Such countries were **Spain**, **Sweden** and **Switzerland** – who chose not to join either side.

Big tanks were used in the battles of World War II

9. The Germans surrendered on **8 May 1945**

In 1944, an Allied army crossed from Britain to free France from Nazi rule. One year later, Allied armies invaded Germany, forcing the Germans to surrender. After **nuclear** attacks on Japan's major cities **Hiroshima** and **Nagasaki**, Japan also surrendered to Allied forces in August the same year. World War 2 had ended.

The Normandy American Cemetery, France, honours the American soldiers who fought and died during World War II

10. Around **64 million people** died in World War 2

– that's more than the *entire* population of the United Kingdom.