

Celebrating Victory in Europe (VE day)

We've all heard about the horrors of the Second World War and how millions of young men gave their lives fighting to save their country and ensure peace and freedom for future generations. The UK and other European countries recently celebrated 70 years since the end of the Second World War.

A three-day weekend jam-packed with events to pay tribute to all those who defended Britain and ensured victory in Europe was planned.

The celebrations took place across the UK beginning on VE Day, Friday 8th May, when a remembrance service was held at The Cenotaph. A two-minute silence was observed at 3 pm, which was the time at which Winston Churchill announced the end of the war 70 years previously.

On the same day, school children also commemorated the end of the war by taking part in various activities and events in their schools. In the evening over 100 beacons were lit across the country.

At 11 am on Saturday 9th May, cathedrals across the country rang their bells in celebration and in the evening a concert was held on Horse Guard Parade, which featured music from the 1940s, performed by different stars and celebrities.

A thanksgiving service was held in the morning on Sunday 10th May in Westminster Abbey, for soldiers and their families. Members of the government and the Royal Family attended the service to show their respect. In the afternoon there was a flypast of a group of aircraft from the RAF, including the Spitfire, the Hurricane and the Lancaster, which all played a very important role in winning the battle.

Our lives were changed forever by this great conflict and we should never forget those who fought so valiantly for peace and freedom. Maybe in 30 years' time, the celebrations will be bigger still.

1 Are the following statements true (T) or false (F)? Use the exact words from the text to justify your answers.

- 1 Celebrations for VE Day only took place in the UK. ____

- 2 At 3 pm on 8th May, 70 years ago, Winston Churchill addressed the nation to report the end of the war. ____

- 3 Three planes took part in the flypast. ____

2 Answer the following questions in your own words, relating to the ideas from the passage.

- 1 What did the soldiers who fought in the Second World War achieve for future generations?

- 2 What happened on the evening of 9th May?

3 Use of English

Rephrase the following sentences so that their meaning is as similar to the original as possible.

- 1 *Millions of young men gave their lives to ensure peace for future generations.*

If _____

- 2 *A two-minute silence was observed at 3 pm by the people.*

The people _____

- 3 *Many of the soldiers who fought in the war had already died, but their families went to the remembrance service.*

Although many _____

4 Match the words 1–5 with the meanings a–e.

- 1 ensure ____

- 2 jam-packed ____

- 3 pay tribute ____

- 4 beacon ____

- 5 flypast ____

- a an occasion when a group of aircraft flies in a special pattern as part of a ceremony

- b full of people or things that are pushed closely together

- c a light or fire on the top of a hill that acts as a warning or signal

- d to make something certain to happen

- e to praise someone or something

5 Write a composition of 120–150 words on the following:

Traditions and celebrations are very closely related to our culture. Discuss.