

# The Battle of Dunkirk

## The Start of the War

- 1st September 1939 – The Second World War began.
- 10th May 1940 – Winston Churchill became the British prime minister.

## The Germans Advance on France

Nazi Germany moved their army towards France. Allied troops, including the British Expeditionary Forces (BEF), moved to the eastern side of France.



When German troops moved into Belgium, Allied troops did as well.

## The Germans Break Through

On 14th May, the German army broke through a weak spot in the allied line and were able to surround the British and French Troops on the coast near Dunkirk. Fortunately, on 24th May Hitler unexpectedly ordered his troops to retreat. This gave the allies time to organise their evacuation.

## Operation Dynamo

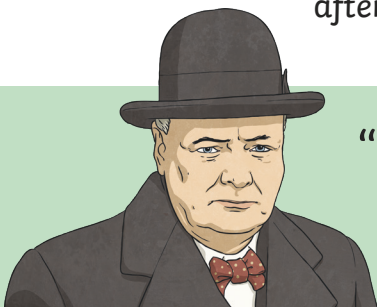
Churchill evacuated all troops stranded at Dunkirk. This was called Operation Dynamo. Over nine days, more than 300,000 soldiers were returned home.

## The Dunkirk Spirit

People still use the term 'Dunkirk spirit'. Having Dunkirk spirit means:

- showing determination in the face of difficulty or danger;
- people working together.

Winston Churchill made one of his most famous speeches after the Dunkirk evacuation:



“We shall fight them on the beaches...  
we shall never surrender.”

Winston Churchill, 4<sup>th</sup> June 1940

# Questions

1. Which two armies were surrounded by German troops?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

2. What does 'BEF' stand for?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. In the text the author uses the word **surrounded**.

Which word most closely matches the word **surrounded**? Tick one.

escaped ☐

sailed ☐

encircled ☐

fought ☐

4. How many days did it take to evacuate 300,000 soldiers back to Britain?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. In the text the author uses the phrase **Dunkirk spirit**.

If you are showing 'Dunkirk spirit', which two of these would you be? Tick two.

lazy ☐

determined ☐

injured ☐

a team player ☐

6. Who said 'we shall fight them on the beaches...'?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. How many little boats helped with the evacuation?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Think of a time when you showed 'Dunkirk spirit'. Explain what happened.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Answers

1. Which two armies were surrounded by German troops?

1. **British**

2. **French**

2. What does 'BEF' stand for?

**'BEF' stands for 'British Expeditionary Forces'.**

3. In the text the author uses the word **surrounded**.

Which word most closely matches the word **surrounded**? Tick one.

escaped ☐

sailed ☐

**encircled** ☒

fought ☐

4. How many days did it take to evacuate 300,000 soldiers back to Britain?

**It took nine days to evacuate over 300,000 troops.**

5. In the text the author uses the phrase **Dunkirk spirit**.

If you are showing 'Dunkirk spirit', which two of these would you be? Tick two.

lazy ☐

**determined** ☒

injured ☐

**a team player** ☒

6. Who said 'we shall fight them on the beaches...'?

**Winston Churchill said 'we shall fight them on the beaches...'**

7. How many little boats helped with the evacuation?

**Over 700 little boats helped with the evacuation.**

8. Think of a time when you showed 'Dunkirk spirit'. Explain what happened.

**Answers will vary. Children should explain about a time when they showed determination in the face of difficulty or danger or when they worked together with others to overcome a problem.**

# The Battle of Dunkirk

On 1st September 1939, the Second World War began after Germany invaded Poland. Winston Churchill became the British prime minister during the war, on 10th May 1940.



## The Germans Advance on France

Nazi Germany moved their army towards France, along the western side of Germany, bordering France, Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands. Allied troops, including the British Expeditionary Forces (BEF), lined up along the eastern side of France. German troops then moved into Belgium, meaning that the Allied troops were clear to move into Belgium too.

## The Germans Break Through

On 14th May, the German army broke through a weak spot in the allied line and were able to surround the British and French Troops on the coast near Dunkirk. However, on 24th May Hitler ordered his troops to retreat in an unexpected move. This gave the allies time to organise their evacuation.

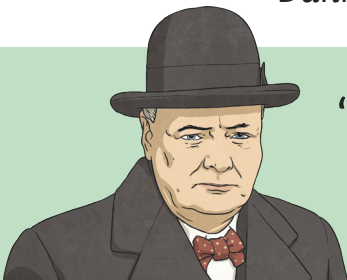
## Operation Dynamo

Churchill ordered an evacuation of all troops stranded at Dunkirk. This was called Operation Dynamo. Many army vessels and over 700 little boats and ships came from England to collect soldiers and bring them home. Between 27th May and 4th June, over 300,000 soldiers were returned to Britain.



## The Dunkirk Spirit

People still use the term 'Dunkirk spirit'. Having Dunkirk spirit means showing determination in the face of adversity or danger and involves people working together. Winston Churchill made one of his most famous speeches after the Dunkirk evacuation:



“We shall fight them on the beaches...  
we shall never surrender.”

Winston Churchill, 4<sup>th</sup> June 1940

# Questions

1. In which year did the Second World War start?

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2. Which of these countries was not an Allied force: Britain, Germany or France?

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3. In the text, the author uses the word **retreat**.

Which word most closely matches the word **retreat**? Tick one.

strong ☐

win ☐

turn back ☐

fight ☐

4. How many days did it take to evacuate over three hundred thousand soldiers?

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5. In the text, the author uses the phrase **Dunkirk spirit**.

If you are showing 'Dunkirk spirit', which of these words would you be? Tick all that apply.

scared ☐

determined ☐

injured ☐

never giving up ☐

6. Who said 'we shall fight them on the beaches...'?

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7. Which country is Dunkirk in?

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8. What was Operation Dynamo?

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9. Is France to the east or west of Germany?

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10. Some people cannot agree whether the Battle of Dunkirk was a victory or a defeat. What do you think? Explain your reasons.

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# Answers

1. In which year did the Second World War start?

**The Second World War started in 1939.**

2. Which of these countries was not an Allied force: Britain, Germany or France?

**Germany was not an allied force.**

3. In the text, the author uses the word **retreat**.

Which word most closely matches the word **retreat**? Tick one.

strong ☐

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**turn back** ☒

fight ☐

4. How many days did it take to evacuate over 300,000 soldiers?

**It took nine days to evacuate over 300,000 troops.**

5. In the text, the author uses the phrase **Dunkirk spirit**.

If you are showing 'Dunkirk spirit', which of these words would you be? Tick all that apply.

scared ☐

**determined** ☒

injured ☐

**never giving up** ☒

6. Who said 'we shall fight them on the beaches...'?

**Winston Churchill said 'we shall fight them on the beaches...'**

7. Which country is Dunkirk in?

**Dunkirk is in France.**

8. What was Operation Dynamo?

**Operation Dynamo was the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk back to Britain.**

9. Is France to the east or west of Germany?

**France is to the west of Germany.**

10. Some people cannot agree whether the Battle of Dunkirk was a victory or a defeat. What do you think? Explain your reasons.

**Answers will vary. Opinions must be backed up with reasons linked to the battle itself being a defeat but the evacuation being a success.**

**There is general public opinion that the Battle was a defeat because the troops were surrounded and had to retreat and go home.**

**However, the evacuation was a great success and was a victory in itself.**



# The Battle of Dunkirk

On 1st September 1939, the Second World War began after Germany invaded Poland. The British prime minister at the start of the war was Neville Chamberlain. However, Winston Churchill replaced Chamberlain on 10th May 1940.

## The Germans Advance on France

Nazi Germany advanced their army towards France and lined up their troops along the western side of Germany, bordering France, Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands. Allied troops, including the British Expeditionary Forces (BEF) commanded by Lord Gort, lined up along the eastern side of France. German troops then advanced into Belgium, meaning that the Allied troops were clear to advance into Belgium too.



## The Germans Break Through

On 14th May, the German army broke through a weak spot in the allied line and were able to surround the British and French Troops on the coast near Dunkirk. Fortunately, on 24th May Hitler unexpectedly ordered his troops to retreat. This gave the allies time to organise their evacuation.

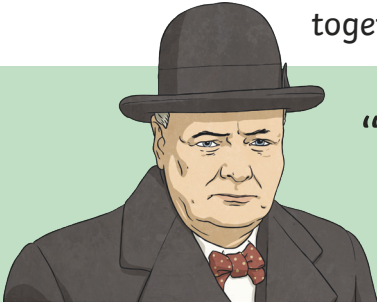
## Operation Dynamo

Churchill ordered an evacuation via sea of all the British and French troops stranded at Dunkirk. This was called Operation Dynamo. Many army vessels and over 700 little boats and ships came from England to collect soldiers and bring them home. Between 27th May and 4th June, over 300,000 soldiers were returned to Britain, only 22 miles from where they had been in Dunkirk.



### The Dunkirk Spirit

People use the term 'Dunkirk spirit' today and the origin of the phrase is in the Dunkirk evacuation. Dunkirk spirit shows determination in the face of adversity or danger and often incorporates people working together. Winston Churchill made one of his most famous speeches after the Dunkirk evacuation, showing determination and sending the message that we will come together to protect our country and never give in.



**"We shall fight them on the beaches...  
we shall never surrender."**

**Winston Churchill, 4<sup>th</sup> June 1940**

# Questions

1. In which year did the Second World War start?

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2. Who replaced Neville Chamberlain as the British prime minister?

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3. In the text, the author uses the word **advanced**.

Which word most closely matches the word **advanced**? Tick one.

go forward ☐

higher ☐

gathered ☐

fighting ☐

4. How many days did it take to evacuate over 300,000 soldiers?

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5. Give two characteristics that describe the 'Dunkirk spirit'.

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6. Whose speech included the words 'we shall fight them on the beaches...'?

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7. How far is Dunkirk from England?

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8. Number these events in the order they took place:

Germany invade Poland.	
Churchill orders the evacuation of stranded troops.	
The Second World War begins.	
German troops surround British and French troops in Dunkirk.	

9. Why do you think so many little boats and ships decided to help the evacuation?

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10. There is debate as to whether the Battle of Dunkirk was a victory or a defeat. What do you think? Explain your reasons.

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# Answers

1. In which year did the Second World War start?

**The Second World War started in 1939.**

2. Who replaced Neville Chamberlain as the British prime minister?

**Winston Churchill replaced Neville Chamberlain as British prime minister.**

3. In the text, the author uses the word **advanced**.

Which word most closely matches the word **advanced**? Tick one.

go forward ☒

higher ☐

gathered ☐

fighting ☐

4. How many days did it take to evacuate over 300,000 soldiers?

**It took nine days to evacuate over 300,000 troops.**

5. Give two characteristics that describe the 'Dunkirk spirit'.

**Two characteristics that describe the 'Dunkirk spirit' are determination in the face of adversity or danger and working together with other people.**

6. Whose speech included the words 'we shall fight them on the beaches...'?

**Winston Churchill's speech included 'we shall fight them on the beaches...'**

7. How far is Dunkirk from England?

**Dunkirk is 22 miles from England.**

8. Number these events in the order they took place:

Germany invade Poland.	<b>1</b>
Churchill orders the evacuation of stranded troops.	<b>4</b>
The Second World War begins.	<b>2</b>
German troops surround British and French troops in Dunkirk.	<b>3</b>

9. Why do you think so many little boats and ships decided to help the evacuation?

**Little boats and ships decided to help the evacuation to rescue as many of the trapped troops as possible. They were also able to get nearer to the beaches as they were smaller.**

10. There is debate as to whether the Battle of Dunkirk was a victory or a defeat. What do you think? Explain your reasons.

**Answers will vary. Opinions must be backed up with reasons linked to the battle itself being a defeat but the evacuation being a success.**

**There is general public opinion that the battle was a defeat because the troops were surrounded and had to retreat and go home.**

**However, the evacuation was a great success and was a victory in itself.**