

## BIG NEWS



The Red Arrows flew over London on Friday 8 May

## FRIDAY 8 May marked 75 years since VE Day, the end of World War Two in Europe.

Plans for street parties, parades and concerts had to be put on hold because of the coronavirus, but it was still possible to celebrate in lockdown.

### What is VE Day?

VE Day – Victory in Europe Day – 8 May 1945 was the day the Allied forces announced the surrender of Germany, which ended the Second World War in Europe. The big four Allied powers were Britain, the USA, France and the Soviet Union (Russia).

Celebrations began straight away throughout Britain, with more than one million people partying in the streets. King George VI appeared on the Buckingham Palace balcony with Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Princess Elizabeth (now the UK's Queen), her mum Queen Elizabeth and her sister Princess Margaret joined them.

VE Day is recognised every year with street parties and community gatherings, and commemorates the millions of civilians and millions in the armed forces who lost their lives in battle.

In 2015, you might remember the 70th anniversary of VE Day was marked with three days of celebrations. The Queen joined 1,000 veterans and their families in a service of thanksgiving at Westminster Abbey.

Lockdown means things had to be different this time. The Queen delivered a special television message from Windsor Castle at 9pm – at the moment that her father, King George VI, gave a radio address back in 1945.

Although social distancing means gatherings and parties were cancelled, there were still other ways to mark the day during lockdown.

A two-minute silence took place at 11am. Then, at 3pm, there was The Nation's Toast to the Heroes of WW2, with people across the UK standing up and raising a glass of their favourite drink while saying the following toast: "To those who gave so much, we thank you." The Red Arrows and the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight performed a flypast over Buckingham Palace in London.

Many people decorated their homes in red, white and blue, and held 'stay-at-home street parties'. Neighbours hung bunting over their homes, had picnics in their back or front gardens, while remembering social distancing and keeping at least 2m apart from others.

# VE DAY

## CELEBRATING IN LOCKDOWN



Getty

Getty



Jubilant public, 1945

## VE DAY STAMP SURPRISE

A 90-year-old woman was shocked to see herself on a stamp celebrating 75 years since the end of World War Two! The stamps all feature old photos from 1945 – the year the war ended in Europe. Bette Williamson can be seen on the VE Day stamp, on the right, behind the US flag. She was just 14 at the time. Describing the historic day, Bette told the BBC: "The atmosphere was electric, you kissed and hugged everyone, it was wonderful. We're in a similar war spirit now, everyone coming together to help one another. It's lovely to see."

**GLOSSARY**

**toast** – To raise a glass of your favourite drink for a given cause

**atmosphere** – The feeling or mood of a place or situation

**radio address** – To give a speech on the radio

**bunting** – A decoration used at parties and celebrations made from triangles

**VE DAY CELEBRATIONS**

1. Explain what VE Day is. Why is it celebrated?
2. How was VE Day celebrated in 1945? Give two examples.
3. The Queen delivered a television message at 9pm on 8 May 2020. How was the delivery of King George VI's speech different?
4. How do you think the people would have felt on VE Day in 1945? Explain why you think this.
5. What events took place to celebrate VE Day this year (2020)? Give three examples.
6. How do you think the 75th VE Day celebrations would have been different if we were not in lockdown?
7. Did you celebrate VE Day? If you did, what did you enjoy most? How did it make you feel and why? If you didn't, what would have been a good way to celebrate it?
8. Who is Bette Williamson? Explain why she is pictured on the stamp.
9. Why do you think Bette said "we're in a similar war spirit now"?
10. Do you think it is important to celebrate VE Day? Explain why/why not.

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## TEACHER ANSWERS

**AIM OF THE NEWS COMPREHENSIONS:** News reports are unique non-fiction texts. Being real, they naturally engage students, and with the range of topics that are covered, help to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider world outside the classroom. The reports are ideal for short, focused comprehension or discussion activities. Along with the opportunity to find fascinating facts and appreciate the opinions of those involved, there is plenty to be inferred and deduced to understand in more depth what is being reported. Like authors, journalists play with language, so news 'stories' are rich nuggets of text to investigate and provide the opportunity for literacy programmes.

**TEACHER ANSWER GUIDE:** The teacher answers are intended to provide a quick reference guide. Suggestions are given for the 'Expected response' or starting point that pupils could give. The 'Development' then gives more in-depth ideas that students can work towards as they develop their reading comprehension skills.

For a list of the reading skills used, please email [schools@firstnews.co.uk](mailto:schools@firstnews.co.uk).

**1. Explain what VE Day is. Why is it celebrated?**

READING SKILL: Summarise information (NC2e)

**Expected answer**

Victory in Europe Day. It is celebrated as it was the day the Allied forces announced the surrender of Germany, which ended the Second World War in Europe.

**Developed answer**

VE Day stands for Victory in Europe Day. Seventy five years ago, this was the day people celebrated the announcement that Germany had surrendered, which would end the Second World War in Europe. Celebrations started straight away. The war had lasted six years.

**2. How was VE Day celebrated in 1945? Give two examples.**

READING SKILL: Summarise information (NC2e)

**Expected answer**

Two of the following:

- More than one million people partied in the streets.
- King George VI and his family appeared on the Buckingham Palace balcony with Prime Minister Winston Churchill.
- The King made a speech on the radio.

**Developed answer**

Celebrations began straight away with people partying in the streets. King George, Queen Elizabeth and the Princesses stood on the Buckingham Palace balcony with the prime minister, Winston Churchill. At 9pm that evening, the King addressed the nation on the radio.

**3. The Queen delivered a television message at 9pm on 8 May 2020. How was the delivery of King George VI's speech different?**

READING SKILL: Find and explain information (NC2a)

**Expected answer**

The King's speech was on the radio.

**Developed answer**

The King's speech was over the radio, so the public would have only listened to the King's words, whereas the Queen's speech was on the TV and the public would have watched her give her speech. They were both at 9pm in the evening.

**4. How do you think the people would have felt on VE Day in 1945? Explain why.**

READING SKILL: Infer information based on own knowledge (non-text based inference) (NC 6, 7 & 8)

**Expected answer**

I think they would have felt happy and pleased the war was over.

**Developed answer**

In the news story Bette, a 90-year-old lady who was present at the celebrations says: "The atmosphere was electric, you kissed and hugged everyone, it was wonderful." This shows how happy, pleased and excited the public were that the war was ending.

**5. What events took place to celebrate VE Day this year (2020)? Give three examples.**

READING SKILL: Summarise information (NC2e)

**Expected answer**

Three of the following:

- A two-minute silence at 11am.
- The Nation's Toast at 3pm.
- The Queen's speech at 9pm.
- People had picnics and BBQs in their gardens.
- The Red Arrows and the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight performed a flypast over Buckingham Palace in London.

**Developed answer**

Three of the following:

- At 11am people were asked to take part in a two-minute silence to remember all the people who fought and died in the war.
- At 3pm in the afternoon, people were asked to raise a glass and thank the people who fought and died in the war, standing on their doorstep or in their gardens.
- At 9pm the Queen made a speech that was broadcast on the TV. This was the exact time that her father King George VI made a speech 75 years ago.
- Families and households had picnics and BBQs in their gardens and decorated their houses.

**6. How do you think the 75th VE Day celebrations would have been different if we were not in lockdown?**

READING SKILL: Infer information and justify with evidence from the text (NC 2c and 8)

**Expected answer**

People would have been able to celebrate together with friends and family.

**Developed answer**

There were street parties, parades and concerts planned. Events would have been celebrated in large groups and with crowds of people. The Queen might have gone to Westminster Abbey for a church service like she did in 2015.

**7. Did you celebrate VE Day? If you did, what did you enjoy most? How did it make you feel and why?**

**If you didn't, what would have been a good way to celebrate it?**

READING SKILL: Develop personal ideas from reading news stories (NC 6, 7 & 8)

**Expected answer**

Answers will be personal to individual children but may include: taking part in a two-minute silence, watching programmes on the TV about VE Day, picnics and BBQs in the garden, completing school work about VE Day, making bunting and decorations, watching the Queen's speech, making a toast at 3pm on the doorstep and singing.

They may say that they didn't celebrate it because they didn't want or weren't able to because of the lockdown.

**8. Who is Bette Williamson? Explain why she is pictured on the stamp.**

READING SKILL: Summarise information (NC2e)

**Expected answer**

A lady who was part of the VE Day celebrations in 1945.

**Developed answer**

Bette Williamson is 90-year-old lady who celebrated VE Day as a 14-year-old girl in 1945. She is in a photograph that has been used on special stamps to celebrate 75 years since the announcement of Germany's surrender.

**9. Why do you think Bette said "we're in a similar war spirit now"?**

READING SKILL: Infer information and justify with evidence from the text (NC 2c and 8)

**Expected answer**

Because we are currently in lockdown, which has raised a community spirit with neighbours supporting each other through strange times.

**Developed answer**

Bette refers to the community spirit and how people are working together, and how neighbours and friends are helping each other through these strange times during the lockdown and fight against COVID-19.

**10. Do you think it is important to celebrate VE Day? Explain why/why not.**

READING SKILL: Develop opinions and provide justification of viewpoints (NC 6, 7 & 8)

**Expected answer**

Answers will be personal to individuals.

An example: Yes, I do think it is important to celebrate Victory in Europe Day. It is important to remember the people who gave their lives and struggled through difficult times. We should remember those people and be proud of them. It is important to learn from history, too. I think this year it has been especially important as we are in lockdown, so it is nice to have a celebration and something else to focus on.