

Depression, War and Recovery

1930 - 1951



GCSE History Revision Guide

Key Words

Use this page to note down key words from the unit.

Word	Meaning
Depression	
Wall Street Crash	
Inflation	
Exports	
Phoney war	

1. The Coming of Depression

Britain the “super power”

In the 19th century, Britain led the world in industrialisation. Towards the end of the century Germany, France, Japan and the USA had all caught up, and by the beginning of the 20th century were beginning to overtake and challenge Britain’s industrial dominance.

They used new methods of production and competed for international markets. British coal, iron, steel, shipbuilding and textiles industries relied heavily on selling to worldwide markets. The increased competition from the other countries meant that the 1920s were not comfortable times for British heavy industry.

The Wall Street Crash

On Black Tuesday, 29 October, 16 million shares were sold on the stock market in Wall Street and the economy collapsed completely. By 1930, America was in the Great Depression. The Wall Street Crash caused enormous concern to the US president, Herbert Hoover, and resulted in a dramatic period called the Great Depression. This had a knock on effect for Britain also.

How did this lead to a depression in Britain?

The Depression in the USA also had a major impact on the UK economy. American economic policies resulted in numerous other countries, including Britain and Germany, sliding into an economic slump. At the time, the US was the largest, richest and most powerful economic country in the world. A financial impact in the US was definitely going to impact on other countries around the world. Many worldwide countries relied heavily on US loans and trade. During the Wall Street Crash, the US had no other option but to recall many of their loans. This led to a world slump.

President Hoover used high tariffs to try to stop American consumers buying goods from other nations. These tariffs made these non-US goods more expensive, and thus led to a decline in demand and profits.

This led to the very accurate phrase: “When America sneezes, the rest of the world catches cold.”

The main trigger of the Depression was the Wall Street Crash, but other factors also helped to create the Depression in Britain. Perhaps it deserves to be called a catalyst, as it speeded up the impact of the other causes and speeded up the economic downturn. This led to companies collapsing, especially as the heavy industries in particular had been struggling since 1918. Companies closing or reducing their workforce led to severe unemployment.

What were the other causes of the depression?

There had been a steady decline in heavy industry in the UK as it faced increased competition from abroad. Following the upheaval of the Great War, many traditional markets for British heavy goods sourced cheaper supplies elsewhere.

This caused a fall in demand in the British mining and steel industries and weakened the British economy. The General Strike of 1926 actually made the decline faster, as the new markets became even more appealing.

Therefore, it seems reasonable to say that the crisis of 1929 simply made an already bad situation worse.

Other causes of the Depression included:

- 1) Competition from abroad
- 2) Obsolete methods (outdated, labour-intensive)
- 3) Import duties
- 4) Unemployment (15% by 1932)
- 5) Savings

2. Life during the Depression

How did the government respond?

The government responded by introducing the dole and the means test.

The payments made to an unemployed worker under the Unemployment Insurance Act of 1920 were also referred to as 'the dole'. It was a bit of financial stability while a job was found. As unemployment increased, some people believed the dole would become too expensive and that it would actually encourage people to remain 'out of work'. This issue divided the Labour government, the Prime Minister at the time, Ramsay MacDonald, resigned.

The amount of dole money being paid had to decrease. This led to the introduction of the 'means test'. Before an unemployed worker could receive the dole, their houses were inspected to check all of their possessions, belongings and savings. Families could be forced to sell their possessions if they wanted to receive the dole. This led to a dramatic fall in the living conditions for many families of the unemployed. Deductions of weekly dole payments were made if a family had any other source of income such as a part time job or the pension of an elderly relative. The inspections or means testing of houses were carried out by inspectors from the local Public Assistance Committee (PAC).

The means test proved to be very unpopular for many reasons:

- 1) Caused strain on family life
- 2) There was a belief that the government cared more about saving money rather than helping the unemployed.
- 3) The inspector was hated and seen as an invasion of privacy.
- 4) Relatives were made to go and live elsewhere.

- 5) Revealing possessions and earnings was seen as humiliating.
- 6) If officials thought there was enough money in the house, they would stop dole payments
- 7) There was no consistency across areas (some officials were harsh).

Hunger Marches

Hunger marches became a traditional way for working people to express their concerns about living and working conditions in Britain. The first hunger march took place on 1905. This type of protest drew the wider public attention towards the sufferings of people who lived in areas that politicians seemed to ignore.

The Jarrow March

<p>CAUSES</p> <p>Jarrow was the worst effected town during the Depression.</p> <p>Many people relied heavily on the employment of one firm, Palmers Shipyard.</p> <p>The shipyard began to decline after WWI.</p> <p>Unemployment rose to 7178 in 1933.</p> <p>The end for Palmers came when a company called National Shipbuilders' Securities was set up in 1934. It was announced that no ships were to be built on Palmers Shipyard for 40 years.</p> <p>Unemployment in Jarrow reached 80%</p> <p>Death rates and infant mortality rates rose to above the national average in Jarrow.</p> <p>A march from Jarrow to London was planned.</p> <p>A petition was to be taken to the doors of parliament.</p> <p>Marches like this often led to clashes with the police.</p> <p>The Labour party did not support marches like this one.</p>	<p>WHAT HAPPENED?</p> <p>The Jarrow March was carefully planned and prepared and the final route decided.</p> <p>200 men marched from Jarrow to London. They were led by the mayor, the MP Ellen Wilkinson and town councillors.</p> <p>They wore their best clothes so that they would have a large impact.</p> <p>The men looked their best and were also clean shaven.</p> <p>The route took the marches 8 months.</p> <p>They covered over 450 kilometres in 22 stages. Through each stage they were greeted with great support and a warm reception.</p> <p>They were put up in church halls, given free meals and had their tired shoes repaired for free.</p> <p>The Bishop of Ripon spoke out in support for the marchers.</p> <p>Newspapers published accounts of their progress.</p> <p>However, on arrival in London they received little support or sympathy from the government.</p>
<p>CONSEQUENCES/IMPACTS</p> <p>The march provided publicity for the unemployed.</p> <p>The Jarrow petition was presented to the House of Commons.</p> <p>The men were painted as heroes. The marchers were praised by the police for being well organised and disciplined.</p> <p>The Jarrow March improved the public perception of hunger marches as there were no clashes with the authorities. The public gave a lot of support to the marchers.</p> <p>The petition mentioned the closure of the shipyard and the high number of unemployment in Jarrow. It went on to demand work for the town.</p> <p>However, the petition and the march did nothing to gain support from the government.</p> <p>It is said that any acknowledgement of the petition was rejected by members of parliament. It was basically ignored.</p>	

Hunger marches from the Rhondda valley

There were protests, similar to those in England, in South Wales. The Rhondda was an area of 16 mining communities built around the River Rhondda. Even before the Depression started, this area suffered economic problems. Several marches were arranged and the destination was to be London.

- ❖ Autumn 1927 - the first hunger march took place. Two years before the Wall Street Crash, the Rhondda was already struggling with high poverty levels. On Sunday 18 September, a meeting named the 'Red Sunday in Rhondda' called for a march to London to raise awareness of the economic difficulties. Due to disagreements between different organisations the march never took place. The planned march highlighted both the poverty in the Rhondda, and the feeling that politicians in London did not understand the area.
- ❖ 5 September 1931 - 112 people, including 12 women, took part in a march to Bristol, with a third of the marchers from the Rhondda. Under the slogan 'Struggle or Starve', the march was broken up by the police in Bristol.
- ❖ 14 October 1932 – there was a nationwide hunger march to London. 2,500 marchers from all over Britain participated, including 375 from south Wales.

'Making ends meet' and 'self help'

The Depression led to high levels of unemployment (sometimes over 50 per cent) and it lasted a long time. This long-term unemployment often led to a fall in the standard of living and health of families of those out of work.

Poverty and diet

In 1936 it was found that 30% of people in York were unemployed and that 72% of unemployed workers lived below the poverty line. 'Making ends meet', meant that families could only spend what money they now had. One way of doing this was to buy cheaper food but cheaper food could lead to malnutrition. Families of the unemployed ate a lot of bread, margarine, sugar etc but not enough fruit and meat etc.

Women

Women were the first to lose their job, especially in the cotton industry. The number of women in domestic service rose in the 1930s. Women were not covered for medical treatment due to not being covered by National Insurance. Many women made sacrifices to make sure that their children survived.

Children	Poor diet led to a higher infant mortality rate and poorer health of children in depressed areas. There was a difference between rich and poor. Studies showed that poor children were more likely to catch bronchitis or pneumonia and five times more likely to suffer from rickets.
Self help	Unemployed people helped themselves, their families, others and their communities in different ways. Women operated credit systems so that rent was payed, this sometimes meant borrowing money. Neighbours rallied during times of crisis. In many parts of the country, clubs for the unemployed were set up by the church and Mayor's funds.

Emigration from Wales

Thousands of unemployed workers and their families moved from Wales to the more prosperous or less affected areas, such as the Midlands and south-east England. In their search for work and a new hope, some took up the government scheme which was arranged to find work and accommodation in England for unemployed Welsh workers. Due to the war, there was no census taken in 1941 but approximately:

- 430,000 left Wales during the 1920s and 1930s
- Merthyr Tydfil lost 10,000 people during the 1930s

The Importance of radio and cinema

Radio	The radio, or wireless, appeared in 1922, but soon they were cheaper to purchase as they were mass produced. By 1937, half the households in Britain, even in the poorer areas of Wales, had a radio. The establishment of a Welsh region of the BBC in 1937 gave radio in Wales a further boost with local programmes being made in both Welsh and English. The BBC was able to offer a great variety, including live theatre, news, music, plays and comedy.
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<p>Cinema</p>	<p>The cinema was probably the most popular form of entertainment in the 1930s. Silent films had been shown since the beginning of the century, but from the end of the 1920s people were attracted to the new talkies.</p> <p>The attraction of seeing Hollywood film stars such as Errol Flynn, Greta Garbo and Clark Gable, low admission prices, and the growth of new luxury cinemas meant that the cinema was a great attraction.</p> <p>By 1934, Cardiff had over 20 cinemas and there were over 320 in the whole of Wales. It became a place for young people to meet, children to watch action-packed matinees, and for adults to briefly escape the reality of the Depression. The first Welsh language talkie was screened in 1935.</p>
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Benefits of life during the Depression

The Special Areas Act - This was a key approach introduced by the government to provide help for the areas worst hit by the Depression. The Act appointed two commissioners to oversee grants of £2 million (worth approximately £130 million today) to encourage companies to move into special areas. By 1938, over £8 million had been spent, but only an estimated 14,900 new jobs had been created. The act also encouraged retraining and supported workers moving to other towns. The idea was that factories would be located together to form a trading estate. The largest of these, built in June 1936, was the Trefforest Industrial Estate located between Pontypridd and Cardiff. By 1939, only 2,500 workers were employed there. The new light industries on these estates could not absorb all the unemployed from the coal mining and ship building areas. However, the government continued to invest in the industrial estate, and by 1945 there were 16,000 people working in the Trefforest Industrial Estate. There were some positive changes made for some British people during this tough era. Local councils built 500,000 council houses which pumped money into the economy. However, only people who were middle or upper class benefitted, or areas that were not significantly affected by the Depression. Some people, especially in the south of England, become more affluent during the Depression.

Contrasts of old industrial regions with areas of greater employment

The Depression had a massive impact on Britain, both negative and positive, but those impacts were not evenly spread across regions of Britain. Some observers at the time, and since, have suggested that during the Depression there were 'two Britains: the old and the new'. It was dependent on where you lived as to which one you experienced.

3. The Coming of War



The threat from Germany

In 'Mein Kampf' (My Struggle), Hitler set out his aims very clearly. He repeated these aims during his speeches and at rallies. These included:

- To unite all German-speaking people
- To gain more 'living space' (Lebensraum) for the German people
- To make Germany a 'Great Power' again.

In order to achieve these aims Hitler would have to reject the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. A lot of Germans hated the harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles. The financial, territorial and military terms broke Germany. One term reduced the army to no more than 100,000 and Germany was not allowed tanks. The worst of all was the war guilt clause, where Germany had to take full responsibility for the war.

Foreign policy under Hitler

Hitler made himself Fuhrer in 1934. This meant that he had full control over Germany.

- In 1934, Germany signed a Non-Aggression Pact with Poland. This was supposed to last for 10 years.
- In 1934 the Anschluss failed (the union of Germany and Austria).
- In 1935, Germany signed the Anglo-German Naval Agreement.
- In 1935, an area of Germany called the Saar voted to return to German control.
- In 1935, Hitler began his rearmament programme. At first he did this secretly.
- In 1936 re-militarised the Rhineland.

Britain's Policy of Appeasement

Appeasement = Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, was keen to avoid war. He believed this could be achieved through the use of negotiation, agreements and diplomacy. His policy was to appease Hitler, which usually meant giving in to Hitler's territorial demands.

Arguments for Appeasement	Arguments against Appeasement
Germany felt that it was being listened to regarding its grievances in relation to the Treaty of Versailles.	It made Britain look weak. Britain always looked like the country that 'gave in'.
Negotiation was used to avoid war rather than action.	It suggested that Britain was prepared to betray other countries or reverse decisions.
People wanted another war to be avoided.	It undermined Britain's role as a permanent member of the League of Nations.
After the Depression, Britain was still recovering which was another reason to avoid a costly war.	It allowed Hitler to become stronger politically, economically and territorially which could encourage war.
This policy seemed better than relying on the League of Nations.	
People feared communism, which was now active in the USSR. They saw this as more of a threat than Hitler.	

The outbreak of war

Due to the Nazi-Soviet Pact, Hitler knew that the Soviet Union would not stand in his way over Poland. German forces crossed into Poland on 1 September 1939. Britain had earlier given assurances to Poland and so sent an ultimatum that stated that Germany had to withdraw from Poland. Britain received no reply and so on 3 September 1939 Chamberlain declared that Britain was at war with Germany. Appeasement had failed.

How did Britain prepare for war?

Britain was determined to be more prepared for war than they had been during WWI. Preparations for WWII began in 1938 and continued into 1939. By the time Britain declared war on Germany, the following were already in place:

- ✓ Britain planned for a war that could possibly last three years
- ✓ There was a programme to build new warships for the navy
- ✓ People were educated in how to use their food rations and stay healthy
- ✓ People were informed about the dangers of possible gas attacks

- ✓ A Ministry of Supply was set up to oversee preparations for war
- ✓ Wartime working regulations and wages were negotiated with trade unions
- ✓ 'Blackouts' were to be used in all homes
- ✓ Everyone had to carry a gas mask.

Another way to prepare for war was to recruit people to serve as air raid wardens. By September 1939, 1.5 million people were in the newly named APR (Air Raid Precautions). This later became known as the Civil Defence. One in six of the wardens were women.

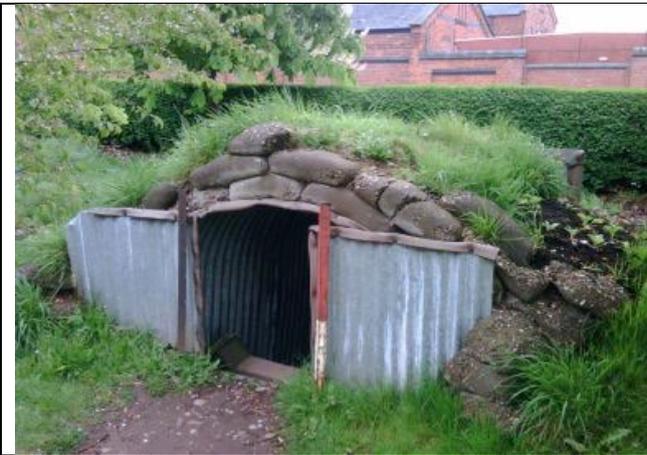
Job Description:

- To work from home, a shop or an office.
- To register all people in their sector.
- To enforce the 'blackout'. This was where all windows were covered so that no light could be seen on the outside.
- To sound sirens during an air attack.
- To help people to communal shelters.
- To check on people who had their own shelter.
- To carry out first aid.
- To put out small fires.
- To co-ordinate other emergency services once a bombing raid was over.

Another attempt at keeping British people safe was the introduction of air raid shelters. The government supplied its citizens, particularly those living in major cities, with air raid shelters. However some people moved in with friends or relatives during raids and others moved to the ground floor. There, or sometimes in a cellar, they constructed a safe house. At first the government did not allow the Underground stations to be used as shelters but the early attacks were so severe and damaging to morale that the decision was reversed.

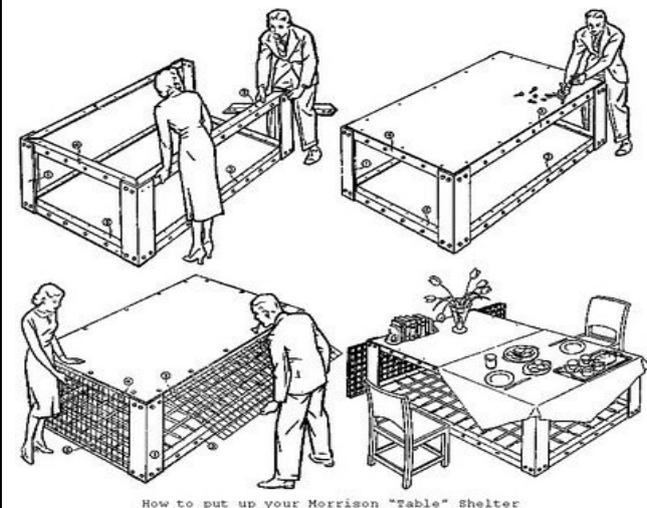
There were two types of air raid shelters that were supplied to people in their homes.

Anderson Shelter	People were instructed to dig a hole in their garden and put the shelter in then
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cover it with earth. They were designed to protect people against falling brickwork if the houses were bombed. In areas where it was impossible to use Anderson shelters, large concrete shelters with curved roofs were constructed. They were not popular because they meant sleeping outside.

Morrison Shelter



These were given out in 1941. They were steel cages, which fitted under a dining table with enough room for two adults and two small children. They were useful for families that did not have a garden.

Other forms of preparation were:

- 1) Radar – made it possible to track German plans and so concentrate the defence where it was needed.
- 2) Barrage balloons – these were used to force enemy aircrafts to fly at higher altitudes making their bombing targets less accurate.
- 3) Anti-aircraft guns – capable of rapid high-rate fire and could fire at high angles.
- 4) Conscription – introduced in April 1939. In September 1939 it was compulsory for all men aged 18 to 41 to join the armed forces.
- 5) Reserved occupations – men could avoid fighting at the frontline if they had skills that were better suited to staying at home. Jobs such as farmers, teachers and dock workers etc.

4. Life during wartime

The experience of war varied depending on where you lived in Britain, who you were and the part you played in the war. Some people found that the war changed their lives

for the better, while others found their lives changed in ways that were difficult to come to terms with.

Why did Hitler bomb British cities?

From September 1940, Hitler decided to bomb Britain into submission. His main aim was to force Britain to surrender. He also hoped that by bombing key British cities he would break the morale of the British people. Finally, he wanted to destroy industry, shipyards and railways that helped to support the British war effort. To achieve this he used his revenge weapons, the V-1 and V-2 bombs, these were used in 1944-45.

Which cities were the main target?

London was the primary target for the German bombings:

- The East End was targeted due to its docks and factories.
- London was bombed every night between 2nd September and 2nd November 1940.
- Over 15,000 people were killed.
- 250,000 Londoners were made homeless.
- On 10th May 1941, thousands were left without gas, electricity and water.

Other highly populated British areas suffered the Nazi bombing campaign:

- Coventry – worst attack was 14th November 1940
- Liverpool – 3rd May 1941 saw the biggest single raid on a mainland city. It involved over 600 bombers.
- Belfast – four German bombing raids took place during April and May 1941.
- Glasgow – hit hard in the spring of 1941. The shipbuilding areas were a main target.

The bombardment of Swansea

Swansea was a major target due to its ports and docks. It was a vital area in the import and export of coal. The Swansea Council recognised the likelihood and implemented strategies in order to prepare the town for future bombardments.

On 27th June 1940, at 3.30am the Luftwaffe began dropping bombs on the Danygraig area of Swansea. Few casualties were reported. The Luftwaffe returned 8 months later. This time Swansea experienced 3 days worth of bombings. This occurred from the 19th to the 21st February 1941. This bombardment is also known as 'The Three Nights Blitz'. This resulted in 230 deaths, 397 injured and around 7,000 homes destroyed.

Overall, Swansea suffered 44 air bombardments, which result in a total of 340 deaths and thousands of injuries.

Evacuation during WWII

The evacuation of children from the cities to the countryside began on 1st September 1939. During 1939 to 1940, a total of 1.5 million children, pregnant women and women nursing babies were evacuated. As a result, many city schools closed and teachers were able to follow the evacuees in order to continue their education. At first parents were reluctant to follow the programme but they soon accepted the fact that their children would be safer in the countryside.

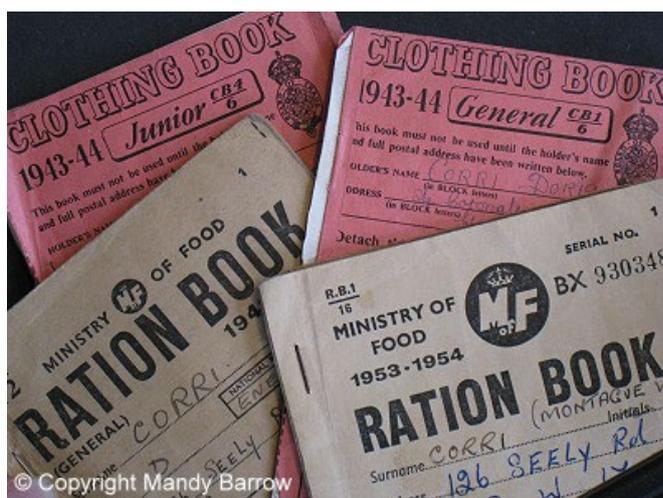
Once at their destination, evacuees were piled into village and school halls and chosen by their foster families. During what became known as the 'Phoney War', some evacuees went back to their home cities during the Christmas of 1939. However, a second evacuation process began during the Blitz. There were further evacuations during 1944 when Germany sent their V-1 and V-2 bombs to Britain.

Wales was a popular evacuation destination, especially of those sent from areas like Liverpool. The Welsh countryside was considered safe from Germany bombs. During the bombings in Swansea, many families sought refuge in the Welsh countryside. The Gower seemed like the safest place, as it was very remote. This evacuation process was not organised by authorities and was very chaotic.

Rationing

During wartime, it was important to bring in price controls to prevent profiteering, but also to ensure that Britain did not run out of the necessary items. Britain's supplies, many of which were transported by merchant ships, were also at risk from German U-boat attacks. In March 1942 alone, the Germans sank 275 ships.

Basic food items, eg meat, butter and sugar were rationed from January 1940. People could not purchase goods without the rations coupons.



Shopping list:

2oz loose tea.
4oz margarine
1oz cheese
2oz butter
One fresh egg
8oz sugar

Many people resented having restrictions on the amount they could purchase. Some manual labourers, including miners were given extra rations, and care was taken to ensure that items such as milk and cod liver oil were offered to children and the elderly.

Rationing of some food items actually lasted for 14 years. Interestingly, rationing improved the diets of many people as rationing listed a weekly list of specified food items and some people actually ate healthier food as a result.

Rationing made way for the black market. This became a problem as some sellers sold these rationed items at much higher prices. These people exploited rationing. It was almost impossible to get hold of fruit like bananas, oranges and lemons, except on the black market.

The role of women during the war

At first the government told women to stick to their original jobs or stay at home. However, in April 1941, all women were forced to register for work as the Ministry of Labour needed two million more workers for the armed forces and war industries. In December 1941, conscription for war work of women aged 19 to 30 was introduced. By 1943, 17 million women aged between 14 to 64 were either in the forces or in essential war work.

There were opportunities for women within the armed forces. These included:

- ❖ The Women's Royal Naval Services (WRNS) – This was the most popular service.
- ❖ The Women's Auxiliary Force (WAAF) – This was also very popular
- ❖ The Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) – by 1944 there were 212,000 women recruited.

The main reason for the employment of women was to replace the men that were recruited to fight during the war. They worked as:

- Mechanics
- Welders
- Pilots
- Carpenters
- Gunners on anti-aircraft guns

They also:

- Carried out administrative tasks
- Drove convoys
- Acted as dispatch riders
- Worked in intelligence
- Worked in civil medical centres

The types of industries they worked in were:

- Aircraft factories
- Munitions factories
- As engineers, mechanics and lorry, train and bus drivers.

The Government also introduced the Women's Land army:

- Started in June 1939
- Purpose was to boost the amount of food grown in Britain
- Often referred to as 'Land Girls'
- The women were mainly from the countryside
- Some came from London and the cities of the north
- It was voluntary at the beginning
- Conscription was introduced

- By 1944 it had 80,000 members.

Women proved that they were just as capable as the men and sometimes showed that they could do better. By 1943, 57% of jobs in factories were occupied by women. However, women were faced with 12 hour working days and having to travel long distances to the work place. Their working conditions and poor pay didn't make their jobs any easier. When doing the same job as men, it was often the case that women were paid less (around 75% of a man's wage).

5. Keeping up morale

Not only was it important to encourage the citizens to actively participate in the war effort, but it was vital to keep up the morale of the people so that the government maintained full support for the war.

Radio and Cinema during the war

Radio:

- BBC broadcasted programmes to a large audience.
- There were 9 million licence holders
- Almost every family had access to a radio
- It was a way of keeping people informed.
- The Ministry of Information had control of the BBC
- The Ministry of Information rarely interfered
- The BBC was good at censoring itself
- Richard Dimbleby and Frank Gillard were BBC newsreaders.
- Their vivid accounts of British forces in action attracted huge audiences.
- Some popular radio shows were 'It's that man again' and 'Music while you work'

Cinema:

- Before the war, cinema was cheap.
- It was also a popular form of entertainment.
- In 1938, 980 million cinema tickets were sold.
- In 1945 more than 1,500 million were sold.
- The Ministry of Information produced short films.
- These short films would be based on coping with the problems caused by the war.
- One documentary was called 'Fires were started'
- The British cinema industry continued to produce films during the war.
- A lot of the films were very patriotic.
- They were very biased
- One of the most famous films was called 'Henry V'.

The use of propaganda and censorship

Propaganda was used to:

- Encourage support for the war
- Convince people to act and think in a particular way

- Appeal to people's sense of patriotism
- Educate people about issues during the war.
- Promote campaigns like the 'Dig for Victory'.

Censorship was used to:

- Make sure sensitive information was kept from the enemy
- Make sure that sensitive information was not given to the British public. This could decrease the amount of support for the war and damage morale.

Censorship was imposed upon:

- Mail and letters going abroad
- Letters to home from fighting soldiers
- Telephone calls
- News
- Photographs

The 'Dig for Victory' Campaign

Due to rationing, times became very difficult. The government introduced a way to help people to cope with rationing and to become more efficient. Men and women were encouraged to grow their own food. Gardens and lawns were turned into vegetable patches and open spaces were transformed into allotments, even the lawns by the Tower of London became a vegetable garden. People didn't just own their very own vegetable garden but they also began to keep hens, rabbits and pigs to supplement their ration allowances.

The Spitfire Fund

Lord Beaverbrook began a scheme in 1940. This scheme was backed by the government. The idea was that if an individual or business raised £5,000 then they could have a Spitfire fighter aircraft named after them with their name painted in yellow on the fuselage. The £5,000 was enough to build the frame of one Spitfire. Local communities organised 'Spitfire' events to give everybody the chance to offer what they could.

The Importance of Churchill as a wartime leader

There were several reasons that contributed towards Churchill being appointed Prime Minister:

- I. He had been against the policy of appeasement and he had been right.
- II. He had improved relations with the Labour Party
- III. He had undertaken various political roles previously
- IV. Opinion polls showed that he was popular with the British people
- V. He made it clear that Hitler had to be defeated
- VI. He appeared to be the only politician who was prepared to stand and fight.

Churchill wasn't interested in negotiating peace with Hitler, instead he planned to:

- I. Organise the military
- II. Ensure that the air force was ready to defend the skies
- III. Organise the war economy
- IV. Create a command structure between the navy, army and air force.

- V. Build a close relationship with the US so that Britain received support to fight the war.

6. Life after the war

At first there were mass celebrations up and down the country. There was 'Victory in Europe. However, this war had lasted almost 6 years and it became apparent that some of the harsh realities that occurred as a result of the Great Depression after WWI were going to once again make a very real appearance.

- ✚ Britain's national debt was £3,500 million
- ✚ Britain had lost 30% of its total wealth
- ✚ The USA ended the Lend-Lease agreement
- ✚ A third of Britain's housing stock had been destroyed
- ✚ Half of Britain's factories and shops had been destroyed
- ✚ Two-thirds of Britain's merchant fleet had been sunk
- ✚ Military deaths totalled 264,433
- ✚ Civilian deaths totalled 60,595
- ✚ Rationing remained in place
- ✚ Income tax was raised to 50%.

Another problem facing the government was demobilisation. In September 1944, Ernest Bevin created the demobilisation plan. This aimed to return men and women to life outside of military action. Unlike WWI, the plan was to return men and women in an organised manner. Each person was given a release number, this was based on their age and service number. Some male soldiers had a skill which was recognised as vital in terms of rebuilding after the war damage so they were released ahead of their turn. Lastly married women and men over 50 were also released ahead of their time.

Over 18 months, 4.3 million men and women were 'demobbed'. However, they returned home to find that food was rationed and that many homes and workplaces had been destroyed during bombardments. On top of this, many marriages became strained and broke down and some returned home with physical or mental injuries which made life very difficult to cope with.

War damage

About a third of the total number of houses that had existed before the war were destroyed. Some town centres like Coventry, Plymouth, Liverpool and Swansea had been extensively damaged or destroyed.

Labour's Victory in 1945

On 26th July 1945 it was announced that the Labour Party had won a landslide victory during the election. Their seats amounted to 395 which was an increase of 10.4% since the previous election.

Historians say that their victory was due to:

- ❖ Improving popularity
- ❖ Increasing support compared to that of the conservatives.

- ❖ Trade unions showing support for the Labour Party. Especially as showing them as supporting the working class.
- ❖ People were no longer frightened of 'state planning'
- ❖ The Conservatives were blamed for the unemployment and deprivation of the 1930s
- ❖ Churchill was seen as a wartime leader and not a peacetime leader
- ❖ Labour promoted opportunity for all, not matter what their background
- ❖ Labour politicians had held key posts in the wartime coalition government.

7. Rebuilding the country after 1945

The Beveridge Report

Beveridge identified 'Five Giants' that needed to be dealt with. The report was published on 1st December 1942 and within weeks it had sold 635,000 copies.

GIANT	WHAT	HOW
Want	Adequate income for all	1945 Housing Allowances Act 1946 National Insurance Act 1948 National Assistance Act
Disease	Access to healthcare	1946 National Health Service Act
Ignorance	Access to educational opportunity	1944 Education Act
Squalor	Adequate housing	1946 Housing Production Executive 1946 New Towns Act 1947 Town and Country Planning Act
Idleness	Gainful employment	Nationalism of several industries Building schemes ensured high employment for several years after the war.

The NHS

Who: Aneurin Bevan

What: Leading figure in the development of the National Health Service (NHS).

National Health Act 1946: This was free to the public and the service was comprehensive. Drug prescriptions, dental and optical care were included. Health boards were appointed. The administration of the system was the responsibility of the Minister of Health. The NHS would control hospital and specialist services, general practitioner services, ambulance services and community health services.

Opposition: BMA (the doctors' professional body). They believed that they would lose money. They feared that there would be no private patients. They wanted to retain their independence. They didn't want to become salaried employees of the government.

Other opportunities and policies

Educational opportunities following the Act of 1944 – Ministry of Education was created. It had the aim of providing a national system. Education was split into three stages: primary, secondary and further. The school leaving age was raised to 15 in 1947. Secondary education was split between three types of schools: grammar, technical and modern. Many grammar students went on to university and better paid jobs.

The 'Homes for All' policy – After WWII it was clear that British housing was in need of repair. Prefab bungalows that were meant to last for 10 years were built as a first response. The New Towns Act in 1946 allowed provisions for new council houses. Bevan promoted a vision of new estates where people from all walks of life could live together.

Nationalisation of the key industries – Nationalisation was justified on the ground of industrial efficiency, creating job to maintain full employment and lower prices to the consumer. Some of the industries that became nationalised were: coal, electricity, railways and road haulage. Nationalisation meant that industries that were struggling after the war would be owned by the state.

Reaction to the reforms of the post-war Labour governments

Labour lost the 1951 election to the Conservative Party. The changes that were made during the Labour government were left untouched until the 1970s. Overall there were positive reactions towards the changes that had been made but you couldn't please everyone.

Although the welfare state led to low unemployment, some people believed that it encouraged laziness and people depending too much on the state. The NHS was widely regarded by the population but many people saw it as far too expensive. The Education Act was seen as fair and open to all. However, some people believed that exams would categorise people and reinforce social class. Under the 'Homes for All' policy, houses became more modern and rented houses from the council made it easier for people to afford a home. However, not all councils built enough housing. Nationalisation had its advantages as electricity spread across the country and coal production increased. However, some people felt that it was their taxes that were saving failing industries thus making them inefficient.