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Victory in Europe

Victory in Europe Day/ VE Day took place on May 8th 1945. It was a public holiday and day of celebration to mark the defeat of Germany by the Allied forces in World War 2.

VE Day marked the formal conclusion of the war with Germany and brought to an end to six years of suffering, courage and endurance across the world.

A black and white historical photograph showing two young children standing in a street that has been completely destroyed. The ground is covered in rubble and debris. One child is holding up a large Union Jack flag, a symbol of victory. The background shows the remains of buildings, illustrating the devastation of the war.

Image: Public Domain

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Time to Celebrate

On May 7th 1945, in the presence of senior officers from Britain, America, Russia and France, Germany surrendered unconditionally. At last, there was peace in Europe.

As news of the surrender spread, the war-weary British began to rejoice straight away. People ran out on to the streets, hanging bunting and banners and dancing. Church bells pealed and everyone brought out food to share at street parties.

Tuesday May 8th was to be a national day of celebration; Victory in Europe Day.



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London VE Day

After suffering so many bombing raids, London was the place to be on VE Day and anyone who could reach the city did so. The centre of London was full of people wearing red, white and blue, waving flags, dancing and singing. Fireworks filled the sky with flashes of light.



Images: Public Domain

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“The German War is at an end.”

On VE Day, everyone, both in London and at home sitting by their wireless sets, wanted to hear just one man: Winston Churchill. At 3pm the Prime Minister broadcast to the nation: the war was over.



Crowds gathered in Trafalgar Square and up The Mall, waiting for Winston Churchill and King George VI to make an appearance on the balcony of Buckingham Palace.

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“This is your victory!”

Shortly after Churchill's speech, King George VI, Queen Elizabeth and the two princesses came out onto the balcony at Buckingham Palace. It was to be the first of eight appearances by the King and Queen on VE Day. When the doors onto the balcony were opened again at 5.30pm, the Royal Family stepped out accompanied by the man of the hour, Churchill. Churchill later told the crowds: “This is your victory!”



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A Memorable Night

Later that evening, Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret slipped out of Buckingham Palace to experience the celebrations for themselves. They stood amongst the joyful crowds below the royal balcony.

HM Queen Elizabeth II recalled in 1985:
 "... my sister and I realised we couldn't see what the crowds were enjoying ... so we asked my parents if we could go out and see for ourselves ... After crossing Green Park we stood outside and shouted, 'We want the King', and were successful in seeing my parents on the balcony. I think it was one of the most memorable nights of my life."



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 On what date was Victory in Europe Day? 

a May 7th 1945

b May 8th 2015

c May 8th 1945

d May 8th 2005

Why did people ring church bells? 

a For practice.

b To spread the news and celebrate.

c Because they are tuneful.

d To tell the time.

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Why did people wear red, white and blue?

a They are the colours of the German flag.

b That was all they could find.

c They looked pretty.

d They are the colours of the Union flag.

Who mingled secretly with the crowds on VE Day?

a Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret.

b Winston Churchill

c King George VI

d Neville Chamberlain

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Activity Ideas

- Could you write a postcard to a family member telling them about your VE day celebrations? You might draw a picture on the other side to show what you did and what you saw.
- How about dressing up and giving each other names which were common in the 1940s?
- What happened in your local area on VE Day? Can you investigate the local history of this event?
- Practice creating your own radio broadcast about VE Day. Perhaps you could be Winston Churchill?
- Could you create a VE Day feast – using rationed ingredients, of course?

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