

Reading extract and questions:

Year 5-6

The Battle of Britain

Set A/B

The threat

In early June 1940, Britain was in peril. The Germans, who had fallen under the spell of a cruel and thoroughly dangerous leader, had successfully overrun most of the countries in western Europe. Now, they were facing Britain across the narrow English Channel with a vast, aggressive army. Following their desperate evacuation from the beaches of Dunkirk in northern France, the British Army was in ruin and the population was in fear.



In such a weakened and demoralised state, Britain was ripe for the taking, or so the Germans thought, and they began planning an invasion. First, however, they had to clear the skies of the RAF, the Royal Air Force. The Battle of Britain was about to begin.

The air forces

The pilots of the German air force, the Luftwaffe, were brimming with confidence. Yes, they recognised that the RAF had two very good fighter planes, the Hurricane and the Spitfire, but they had already battled with these over France and felt sure they could deal with them. More importantly, they believed that they had numbers on their side. Their intelligence suggested that the RAF had only half as many battle-ready aircraft as they did. In that sense, it really did not appear to be a fair fight. The question is, was it really such a case of a weak underdog overcoming the odds to defeat a mighty giant?

Despite the one-sided appearance of the conflict, the RAF had some crucial advantages. As they were battling in the skies above their own country, any RAF pilot who had to bail out of a damaged aircraft would land on friendly soil and be able to fly again; German pilots were usually captured. Also, the German planes had to come further and their fighters often ran low on fuel.

The plan

The German plan was to use their mass formations of bombers to pulverise RAF airfields. Any British planes that came up to defend could then be picked off by the Luftwaffe's excellent fighters. It very nearly worked too, despite the valiant efforts of the RAF's young pilots.

Fortunately for Britain, the Germans also made a number of critical mistakes. One of them was to underestimate the value of radar. This new invention gave the British early warnings of Luftwaffe attacks which meant the RAF's leaders could be more precise about how many defenders to send up and when they should take off. The Luftwaffe did launch early bombing raids on the radar masts but lost interest in them disastrously quickly from the German perspective. Another big mistake was to stop attacking airfields and turn their attentions on London. Although terrible for the civilians who lived there, it gave the RAF a much-needed opportunity to recover, just as they were on their last legs.

Conclusion

No matter how heavily their cities were bombed, the British people did not give in. Meanwhile, the Luftwaffe's losses kept growing. Eventually, the Germans shelved their invasion plans. Britain was saved. The head of the British government, Winston Churchill, famously remarked, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few." That is how the brave RAF pilots from Britain and her allies became known as *The Few* by a nation, eternally grateful for their sacrifice. It was a major turning point in the war. Whether it was a victory completely against the odds or a fairly even contest in which the RAF simply managed their resources better and capitalised on German mistakes is a little less clear.

Questions for *The Battle of Britain* Set A

Vocabulary:

1. In early June 1940, Britain was in *peril*. What does *peril* mean?

2. ... *a weak underdog* ... What does the word *underdog* mean in this sentence?

3. ... *on their last legs* ... This means they were ... Circle **one**.

nearly defeated

badly injured

stuck on the ground

on their way home

Retrieval:

4. From where had the British Army evacuated?

5. What are the names of the two British fighter planes mentioned in the text?

a. _____ b. _____

6. Look at the paragraph beginning: '*Fortunately for Britain...*'

Give **one** of the mistakes made by the Germans.

Inference:

7. Why was Britain *in peril* in early June 1940?

8. Why were German pilots confident they could beat the British fighter planes?

9. How did the Germans hope to force the RAF fighters into the sky?

Summarise:

10. Here are some summaries of different events in the article. Number them from 1 to 4 to show the order in which they appear in the text.

- The Germans attacked RAF airfields.
- The Germans planned to invade.
- The Luftwaffe started bombing London.
- The British Army was evacuated from Dunkirk.

Meaning as a whole:

11. Draw lines to match each section to its main content.

The threat

The Germans had more planes but the RAF were closer to home.

The air forces

The Luftwaffe wanted to attack RAF airfields.

The plan

The battle was a big turning point in the war because the Germans gave up their invasion plans.

Conclusion

The Germans were planning to invade Britain.

Authorial intent:

12. ... *lost interest in them disastrously quickly from the German perspective*. How does the phrase *from the German perspective* help you to understand the effect of this decision?

Questions for *The Battle of Britain* Set B

Vocabulary:

1. Look at the third paragraph.

'... the Luftwaffe, *were brimming with confidence.*' What does *brimming* mean in this sentence? Circle **one**.

grinning

flying

fighting

filled

2. Look at the paragraph beginning *Despite the one-sided appearances ...* **Find** and **copy** a word meaning *very important*.

3. Look at the paragraph beginning: '*No matter how heavily...*'

Find and **copy** a word meaning *forever*.

Retrieval:

4. What do the letters RAF stand for?

5. What was the German air force called?

6. Who was the head of the British government?

Inference:

7. Why was the British population in fear?

8. ... *they believed they had numbers on their side.* This means ...

9. ... *the Germans shelved their invasion plans*. This means ... Circle **one**.

They found other plans on a shelf.

They abandoned their plans forever.

They put together new plans.

They postponed their plans, hoping to use them later.

Meaning as a whole:

10. Using information from the whole text, tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is true or false.

	True	False
The Luftwaffe had more planes than the RAF.		
Any pilots who bailed out of a damaged plane could not fly again.		
The Germans fully appreciated the importance of radar.		
The British people were forever grateful to the RAF.		

Predict

11. Based on what you have read, what would the Germans have done if they had completely understood how important radar was to the RAF?

Compare:

12. According to the text, give one way that ...

a. the Luftwaffe was similar to the RAF

b. the Luftwaffe was different from the RAF.

Answers for *The Battle of Britain*

Set A:

Vocabulary:

1. (great) danger
2. someone who is not expected to win
3. nearly defeated

Retrieval:

4. (the beaches of) Dunkirk in northern France
5. Hurricane, Spitfire
6. underestimated the value of radar / stopped bombing the radar masts / stopped attacking airfields / started attacking London

Inference:

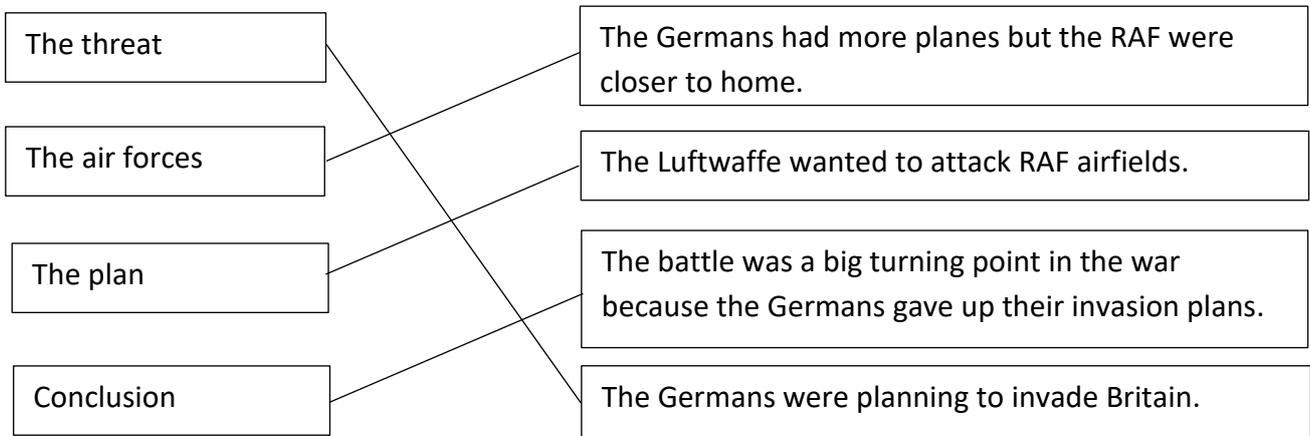
7. because the strong German army was planning to invade
8. because they had already fought the RAF planes over France / because they had twice as many planes
9. by bombing their airfields

Summarise:

10.
 - 3 The Germans attacked RAF airfields.
 - 1 The Germans planned to invade.
 - 4 The Luftwaffe started bombing London.
 - 2 The British Army was evacuated from Dunkirk.

Meaning as a whole:

11.



Authorial intent:

12. This phrase makes it clear that the decision to stop bombing the radar masts was a very bad decision for the Germans that had terrible consequences for their pilots. However, it was only bad for the Germans because it was very lucky as far as the RAF was concerned.

Commissioned by The PiXL Club Ltd. July 2019

This resource is strictly for the use of member schools for as long as they remain members of The PiXL Club. It may not be copied, sold nor transferred to a third party or used by the school after membership ceases. Until such time it may be freely used within the member school.

All opinions and contributions are those of the authors. The contents of this resource are not connected with nor endorsed by any other company, organisation or institution.

PiXL Club Ltd endeavour to trace and contact copyright owners. If there are any inadvertent omissions or errors in the acknowledgements or usage, this is unintended and PiXL will remedy these on written notification.

Answers for *The Battle of Britain*

Set B:

Vocabulary:

1. filled
2. crucial
3. eternally

Retrieval:

4. Royal Air Force
5. Luftwaffe
6. Winston Churchill

Inference:

7. They knew that the powerful German army was planning to invade their country.
8. They knew they had more planes and they thought this would be an important advantage.
9. They postponed their plans, hoping to use them later.

Meaning as a whole:

10.

	True	False
The Luftwaffe had more planes than the RAF.	✓	
Any pilots who bailed out of a damaged plane could not fly again.		✓
The Germans fully appreciated the importance of radar.		✓
The British people were forever grateful to the RAF.	✓	

Predict:

11. They would have kept bombing the radar masts until they were completely out of action.

Compare:

12.

- a. It had very good planes / both were their country's air force.
- b. It had more planes / it had further to go / its pilots were captured if they bailed out / it was not supported by radar.

Commissioned by The PiXL Club Ltd. July 2019

This resource is strictly for the use of member schools for as long as they remain members of The PiXL Club. It may not be copied, sold nor transferred to a third party or used by the school after membership ceases. Until such time it may be freely used within the member school.
All opinions and contributions are those of the authors. The contents of this resource are not connected with nor endorsed by any other company, organisation or institution.
PiXL Club Ltd endeavour to trace and contact copyright owners. If there are any inadvertent omissions or errors in the acknowledgements or usage, this is unintended and PiXL will remedy these on written notification.