

**Lesson  
Eight**

# War in the twentieth century

**Aims**

In this lesson we are going to learn about:

- what war was like in the twentieth century
- the different wars that took place

**Context**

One would think that as time has gone by, mankind would have learned to avoid wars. Yet, in general, this has not been the case. This module asks: Why did the major conflicts of the twentieth century affect so many people?



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<b>Activity 1</b>	What does war mean? Can you give a definition? Jot down your ideas for one minute.
	

## War

What do we mean by war? It is a sustained series of battles or attacks between two sides who are opposed to each other. What did war mean in the twentieth century? There have always been wars – look back to your Year 7 lessons on medieval monarchs to see that – but war in the twentieth century was different, because for the first time civilians (i.e. people who were not in the armed forces) were involved.

<b>Activity 2</b>	Write down five things you know about war in the twentieth century. List any wars you can think of. Also, write down any details you know about other aspects of the war – e.g. life at home, the types of fighting that took place, etc. Complete this activity before moving on to the next section of work. You do not need to carry out additional research – this is just to get you thinking about war and to remind you of what you already know.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.</li><li>2.</li><li>3.</li><li>4.</li><li>5.</li></ol>

## Images of War

Here are some images of twentieth-century conflicts.

### Activity 3

Look through the sources carefully and write down one or two sentences to describe how each source helps us to understand more about twentieth-century conflict. E.g. Source A – Indians fought for the British during the war, because of the Empire.

Source A - An Indian infantry section of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion about to go on Patrol in Burma, 1943 (Image from [learningcurve.gov.uk](http://learningcurve.gov.uk) and from Imperial War Museum)



Source B A panoramic view of Nagasaki in Japan after the atomic bomb had hit.



Figure 2

Panoramic view of Nagasaki after the bomb. Taken from North of X, looking south. The V-shaped foundations in the foreground are the remains of the prison. All of this area was thickly covered with factories and dwellings.

Source C Women working in munitions factories



Source D A Casualties Report from Hiroshima, Japan after the atomic bomb.

Casualties in School Children in Hiroshima

It is obvious that gross casualty figures of the kind quoted are of no value in studying the lethality of the bomb at various distances. The only way of approaching this subject in retrospect seemed to be to try to trace the fate of each individual in some suitable group. It was found that there were fairly good records of the whereabouts of the school children and of their fate. The Medical Section of the Joint Commission therefore made an effort to collect complete data concerning these children and also of some industrial groups. None of these data have been completely collected and analysed yet. A part of the data on the school children is presented to indicate roughly what may be expected from the complete data.

These children were organized into groups of various sizes and were scattered throughout the city doing a variety of war jobs. Very few of them were actually in school when the bomb fell. It was hoped that they are a fairly representative sample as far as proportion in the open, in various types of buildings, distance from the bomb, etc., are concerned. Any sampling bias is ignored here but will be investigated by the Joint Commission. The consolidated results for the many groups are:-

Distance from Centre	Total		Missing		Wounded		Untreated	
	Total	Dead	Unknown	Severe	Slight	Disconnected	Healthy	
0-1 km.	3,340	2,479	289	35	0	166	371	
1-1.5	4,633	693	481	240	0	1,643	1,626	
1.5-2	1,360	227	22	168	0	343	500	
2-2.5	5,121	96	14	1,123	0	832	3,056	
2.5-3	2,314	11	0	37	0	0	2,266	

Missing (unknown is the word used by the Japanese) means that the child's parents did not know what had become of it.

Untreated (disconnected) means that it was not possible to get in touch with anyone in the family.

The most logical treatment of this data seems to be to assume that all those that are missing are killed, and that the 'disconnected' suffered the same fate as the remainder at their distance, i.e., subtract them from the total. This gives the following results:-

Distance	Total	Killed	Percentage Mortality
0-1 km.	3,174	2,768	87
1-1.5	3,040	1,174	39
1.5-2	917	249	27
2-2.5	4,289	110	2.6
2.5-3	2,314	11	0.48



Answer these questions on the sources.

1. Source A – Why were Indians fighting for the British during WWII?
2. Source B - Looking at this picture, is it likely there were any survivors in this area?
3. What do you think were the long-term effects on this area?
4. Do you think the American government was surprised at the extent of the devastation in Japan?
5. Source C – What were the women making in the factory?
6. Why was this so important?
7. What does this source tell us about how people supported the war effort?
8. Source D – How many children died?
9. What do you think was the purpose of this report?

Now that you have examined these sources, you should have some ideas and thoughts about what war was like in the twentieth century. Some conclusions we can draw are:

- The colonies helped the British
- In Britain, women were called upon to help with the war effort
- Civilians were sometimes deliberately attacked
- The atomic bombs caused untold devastation

The major wars of the twentieth century were:

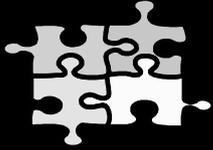
- 1914-1918 - World War I (at the time, called ‘The Great War’)
- 1936-39 - Spanish Civil War
- 1939-1945 - World War II
- 1963-1973 - Vietnam War
- 1991 - Gulf War

The second half of the twentieth century was also dominated by ‘The Cold War’. This was an ongoing conflict between ‘the West’ who wanted democracy and ‘the East’ who wanted communism. The fear of nuclear war was so great that the two sides never fought a proper battle, but small conflicts and diplomatic incidents occurred frequently between 1945 and 1989.

We will learn more about some of these conflicts in the subsequent lessons.

<p><b>Activity 4</b></p>	<p>Produce your own timeline showing the major wars of the twentieth century. Leave a good deal of space to add in extra details onto the timeline over the next couple of lessons.</p>
	Empty space for student activity

**Something to  
think about**



What wars are going on now? Why?