

Air Raids

A non-chronological report gives readers information about a topic, but isn't written in time order. The following report about air raids in the Second World War includes a timeline, but also presents information using subheadings, pictures and fact boxes.

Air Raids

World War II was the first war in which mass air attacks targeted the civilian population in built up areas. Cities in Europe and Japan suffered heavy bombing. For many children, air raids became part of daily, and nightly, life.

Britain was bombed by German planes in 1940-1941. This bombardment became known as the Blitz (from the German Blitzkrieg, meaning "lightning war"). There were more air raids in 1944, this time by V-1 flying bombs and V-2 rockets. From 1942, German cities were heavily bombed by British and American planes. In the Pacific, Japanese planes bombed some Australian towns, while American bombers attacked Tokyo and other Japanese cities.

Living with the bombs

There were fears that bombing would create mass panic, but most people just carried on with their daily lives. Children went to school, and during air raids slept in air raid shelters instead of bedrooms. Air raids were often at night, so children had to be woken and taken to the shelter when the sirens gave the alarm. Many people stayed at home during air raids, while others spent the night in shelters. Thousands slept in Chislehurst Caves in Kent, England, while many Londoners slept in London Tube (Underground) stations.



Air raid shelters were designed to protect people from bomb-blasts. This is a public shelter in New York, in the United States. Although the United States prepared for air raids, neither Japan nor Germany had bombers that could fly far enough to bomb US cities on the mainland.

Raids on Germany

German children experienced the terrors of air raids almost constantly in 1944-1945. In Berlin, people crammed the U-Bahn (underground) stations. With as many as 5,000 people crowded into shelters meant for 1,500, it was very uncomfortable. People lit candles to check if the air was being used up. If a candle on the ground went out, children had to be picked up and held at shoulder height, where there was more oxygen. At times, the air got so bad that everyone had to leave, even while the bombs were still falling.



A British bombing plane

WWII bombing casualties	
Australia	several hundred
Britain	over 60,000
China	over 560,000
Germany	600,000
Japan	over 400,000
Soviet Union	over 500,000
United States	over 2,000 (in Hawaii)

Discuss

Imagine you had to spend a night in one of the public air raid shelters (in Germany or in Britain). What do you think it would feel like? What might happen? What sights and sounds might you hear?



September 1940

The German Luftwaffe begins its bombing raids on London. Known as the Blitz, it reaches its climax in 1941.

1940-1941

Raids on Coventry and many other British cities damage thousands of houses and many schools.

1942

Allied air forces begin round-the-clock bombing of Germany: the RAF by night, the USAAF by day.

June-September 1944

Britain is hit by German V-1 flying bombs. A new evacuation begins with over 1 million people moving out of London.

February 1945

Allied air raids on the German city of Dresden kill at least 30,000 people.

6 and 9 August 1945

Two US atomic bombs wipe out the Japanese cities of Hiroshima (over 100,000 killed) and Nagasaki (over 40,000 killed).



An extract from *Children During Wartime* by Brenda Williams.