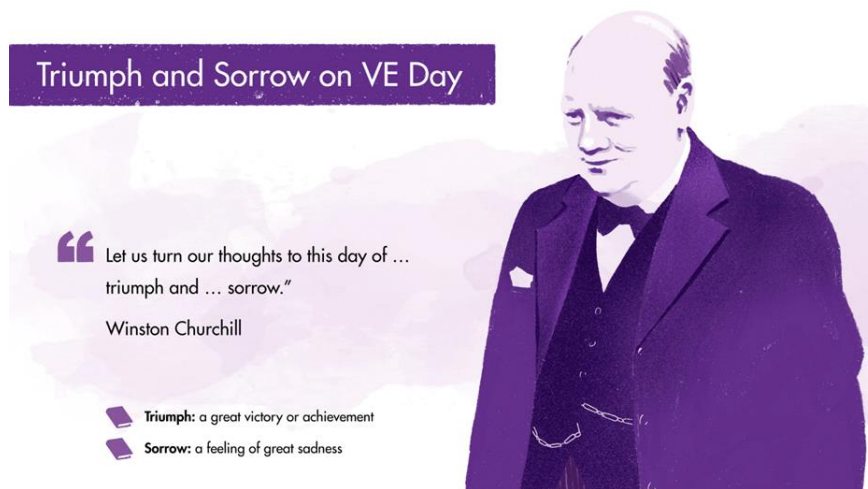


Activity 4 – Triumph and Sorrow



Triumph and Sorrow on VE Day

“ Let us turn our thoughts to this day of ... triumph and ... sorrow.”

Winston Churchill

Triumph: a great victory or achievement

Sorrow: a feeling of great sadness

On VE day, there was a mix of feelings. It was a time for celebrating the end of the war, but it wasn't only a celebration.

VE day was one full of triumph, and sorrow.

On the 8th May, Winston Churchill (the Prime Minister) announced the end of the War in Europe with a speech broadcast from Downing St. He said "we may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing, but let us not forget for a moment the toils and efforts that lie ahead". King George VI also gave a speech, broadcast from Buckingham Palace. Both men recognised the importance of remembering those who lost their lives.

Despite celebrations and relief that the war was over, for many, it was also a very sad time. There was a lot of damage after the war, for example many people's homes were destroyed in the air raids.

Millions of people had lost their lives or loved ones in the conflict.

Soldiers who survived and were able to return home were full of the memories of war and conflict. Many people weren't home yet - including Prisoners of War or evacuees

Here is part of his speech:

There we stood, alone. Did anyone want to give in? [The crowd shouted "No."] Were we down-hearted? ["No!"] The lights went out and the bombs came down. But every man, woman and child in the country had no thought of quitting the struggle. London can take it. So we came back after long months from the jaws of death, out of the mouth of hell, while all the world wondered. When shall the reputation and faith of this generation of English men and women fail? I say that in the long years to come not only will the people of this island but of the world, wherever the bird of freedom chirps in human hearts, look back to what we've done and they will say "do not despair, do not yield to violence and tyranny, march straightforward and die if need be-unconquered." Now we have emerged from one deadly struggle-a terrible foe has been cast on the ground and awaits our judgment and our mercy.

But there is another foe who occupies large portions of the British Empire, a foe stained with cruelty and greed-the Japanese. I rejoice we can all take a night off today and another day tomorrow. Tomorrow our great Russian allies will also be celebrating victory and after that we must begin the task of rebuilding our hearth and homes, doing our utmost to make this country a land in which all have a chance, in which all have a duty, and we must turn ourselves to fulfill our duty to our own countrymen, and to our gallant allies of the United States who were so foully and treacherously attacked by Japan. We will go hand and hand with them. Even if it is a hard struggle we will not be the ones who will fail."

Activity:

Why do you think people felt both victorious and sad on VE day?

Consider how different people might be feeling – people who were not home yet eg evacuees, soldiers, prisoners of war; people who had had their homes bombed; people who had family and friends who had died.

Activity:

We are experiencing a very uncertain and unusual time in our lives. What things have you felt triumphant and sad about during lock down?

