



Activity Pack

Dear Teacher / Youth Leader,

This year marks the 80th anniversary of VE and VJ Days, defining moments in our shared history.

Victory in Europe Day, 8 May 1945, marked the end of the Second World War in Europe. The day was filled with celebration, reflection, and relief. It was a time when communities came together, stories were shared, and letters were written.

As we celebrate this significant anniversary, we may also be approaching the last major commemoration where we can hear first-hand from those who lived through it.

That's why we launched VE-Mail: a nationwide initiative to connect every child in the UK with a WWII veteran.

Through letters from veterans and the children's written responses, we can build a living legacy of remembrance and gratitude.

Thank you for being part of this national moment. Together, we can ensure the voices of the WWII generation are not lost, but passed on.

With gratitude,

The VE-Mail Team

Step-by-Step Guide for Teachers and Leaders

Step 1: Register for a Veteran Letter

www.together.org.uk/vemail (remember to confirm your registration!)

Step 2: Receive and Read - Discuss the letter with your class or group

Step 3: Reflect and Respond - Pupils write back to the veteran

Step 4: Send Your Letters - Return by post (see below)

Step 5: Email **education@together.org.uk** to share how you have engaged in VE Mail and use **#VEMail** to let the world know you have participated.

Sending back your VE Mail replies

Once you have written replies to your VE Mail Veteran...

Step 1: Ask the children and young people to include

- First name
- Age (not date of birth)
- School/youth organisation name on the letter.

Step 2: Complete the return information slip on the bottom of the guidance insert.

Step 3: Put your letters AND the completed slip all into the same envelope.

Step 4: Address the envelope to:

{Name of Veteran}

VE Mail

PO Box 1615

PETERBOROUGH

PE2 2BH

Step 5: Add a stamp and pop in the post before **25th July** so your letters can be shared with your VE Mail Veteran.

Meet the Veterans!



We are honoured that these amazing World War Two Veterans from across the UK and beyond have put pen to paper to share their incredible memories and important lessons with you via VE Mail.

Bombardier Tom Jones (aged 103)

Wireless Operator in the Burmese Jungle

Tom joined the Lancashire Fusiliers at 17 and served through the Liverpool Blitz and later in the jungles of Burma. He finally returned home after a long journey by Dutch ship.

"War is not glorious, it's terrible, truly terrible. So my message to you is to be kind and please choose peace."

D-Day Veteran Mervyn Kersh (aged 100)

Landed in Normandy, France

At 19, Mervyn landed in France on D-Day and later helped survivors from Bergen-Belsen. He continues to share his story with young people today.

"It takes a lot of strength to achieve peace and we shouldn't romanticise war and violence."

Commando John Eskdale (aged 101)

Royal Marine Commando

John survived a ship sinking, served around the world, and witnessed VE Day in Australia. After the war, he met and married his wife, Barbara, also a Royal Marine.

"Take life as it comes and do the best you can because you don't know what's round the corner."



Colonel Joe Peterburs (aged 100)

American P-51 Mustang Fighter Pilot

Joe flew 49 missions from Kings Cliffe Airfield near Peterborough during WWII. After being shot down over Germany, he escaped captivity and fought alongside the Red Army. He later built a friendship with a former enemy pilot.

"I believe it is important to be kind as it gives you more than it takes away from you."

Sergeant Muhammed Hussain

6th Duke of Connaught's Own Lancers, 8th British Indian Army

After running away from home to join up at 16, Sgt. Hussain fought heroically in Italy and continued to serve his community in Britain long after the war.

"Remember us—not with sorrow, but with pride. You are the next generation of peacemakers."

Leading Wren Jean Rees (aged 101)

Fleet Air Arm, Royal Navy

Jean worked in the Regulating Office welcoming young recruits, and celebrated VE Day in London. She built lifelong friendships during her service.

"Be courageous and kind. Treasure your freedom and your country."



Sharing and engaging with your VE-Mail Letter

When your VE Mail letter arrives, simply share it with your class or group and support the children as they write their replies. That's all you need to do to take part.

But if you'd like to go further, here are some inspiring ideas to help children engage more deeply with their veteran's story, bringing history to life and encouraging meaningful reflection.

- **Small Group Reflection**

- Read the letter in groups and pause after key sections to discuss feelings, reactions, and historical context - you can use these discussion prompts:

What was life like for your Veteran during the war?

Discuss how they had to grow up quickly, live off rations, sleep in trenches, and face dangers. How do these experiences compare to your life today?

What was their role in the War? What job did they do & how did that help the war effort? Was there anything that surprised you about their role?

How did they stay connected to home? How would you feel if you couldn't message or call your family for a long time? What are the differences between communication then and now?

How did they feel when they finally returned home?

Was it strange to adjust to normal life again? What everyday things do we take for granted that might have felt unusual to them?

What is your Veteran's message to young people today?

Why do you think it's important to listen to Veterans?

How can we help make the world a more peaceful place?



- **Peer Performance or Dramatic Reading**

- Assign roles and perform the letter as a dramatic reading, as if it's a message arriving home in 1945.
- Use simple props (e.g. period-style envelope, radio sound effects) to bring it to life.

- **Display as part of a VE Day Exhibition or Memory Wall**

- Enlarge the letter (with permission) and display it on a VE Day wall in the school or youth centre where children and young people post:
 - Key facts about WWII.
 - Messages of thanks.
 - Photos or drawings inspired by Veterans' stories.

- **Create a Listening Station**

- Record a staff member or older child reading the letter aloud.
- Set up a quiet area with headphones where children listen and write reflections.

- **Use in creative writing sessions**

- Imagine you are a person receiving a letter from your Veteran on VE Day 1945.
- Use the letter as a writing prompt: "Write a reply," or "Describe the scene when you opened this letter."

- **Family & community reading**

- Send a copy of the letter home and invite families to read it together.
- Encourage children to talk to older relatives about their memories of the war and VE Day.



- **In the news**

- Make a short video that tells the story of your Veteran, either in the style of 80 years ago or how you would tell it today.
- Create a short video or podcast where the letter is read and reported on or design a newspaper front page.

- **Create a timeline or storyboard of your Veteran's story**

- Break your letter into key events and list them chronologically (e.g. enlisting in 1939, supporting during the Liverpool Blitz, serving in the Burmese jungle, hearing about VE Day, coming home, getting married).
- Create an illustrated timeline of your Veteran's journey, drawing key moments and writing a short description for each.
- Pair up to retell your Veteran's story in your own words using their timeline.
- Discuss: How did your Veteran's life change from the beginning to the end of their story? What experiences shaped them?

- **Find the facts**

- Research the information shared in your Veteran letters
 - can you identify the details of where they travelled in the war, their job during the war, what they ate and what life was like after the war?
- Create fact boxes to annotate the letter with further details about the experiences the Veteran mentions.



- **A Walk in the Veteran's Shoes**

- Write a diary entry from your Veteran's perspective, choosing a specific moment from his letter (e.g., the day they joined the army, a specific event in the war or returning home).
- Read your Veteran's letter as a class or group, highlighting key events in their journey (e.g., joining the army, living in the jungle, hearing about VE Day).
- Discuss what emotions they might have felt at different points—fear, loneliness, excitement, relief.
- Use descriptive language and reflect on how they might have felt at the time.

- **Letters Home**

- Compose letters as your Veteran, another participant in the war effort or an evacuee reflecting on the end of the war.

- **Fed in facts**

- Give the children a question or statement to agree or disagree with about VE Day (such as - 'VE Day was the end of WWII')
- As the children discuss the statement and their views on it - 'feed in facts' about VE Day and the war to introduce new information and perspectives.
- The fed-in facts could include photos, historical accounts, timelines or quotes.
- Allow the children to continue their discussion, incorporating the new information into their explanations or questions until they reach a final conclusion.



- **Message for the Future**

- In small groups, brainstorm ways to promote the values in the letter in their own lives (in school, at home, in their communities).
- Create a “Peace Pledge,” with each child writing about how they can promote kindness in honour of the Veteran’s story.
- Display the pledges as a reminder of the Veteran’s message.

- **Time Capsule**

- Bury a capsule filled with a copy of your Veteran’s letter and reflections and letters from children and young people.
-



Writing your replies

You can write your replies to your Veteran individually or as a whole class/group activity. Here's a templates to help children in drafting their responses.

Greeting: Start your letter by saying hello.

Example: "Dear Mr Jones," "Dear Veteran,"

Say Thank You: Thank the Veteran for their service and bravery.

Example: "Thank you for everything you did during World War II. Your courage helped bring peace to the world."

Share Your Feelings: Tell the Veteran how their story made you feel or what you learned.

Example: "I was amazed to learn how brave you were during the D-Day landings. It made me realise how important teamwork and hope are."

Ask a Question: You can ask the Veteran something you're curious about.

Example: "What is your happiest memory from VE Day?"

Ending Your Letter: Finish your letter with a kind message.

Example: "Wishing you happiness and good health. Thank you again for sharing your story with us."

Sign Your Name

Example: "Yours sincerely, Amelia"

Optional: Draw a Picture for the Veteran!



Activities to support and enhance VE Mail

Learn across the curriculum

- **Debate the Impact** – Discuss how VE Day shaped modern Europe and the post-war world.
- **WWII Reading Challenge** – Read historical fiction and non-fiction about the war.
- **Research the key players** – Write pen portraits of different people involved in VE Day (Churchill, the Queen, a mother of a soldier, a child, a serviceman serving in Japan, etc.) - what might different people say and feel on VE Day and what happened to them after the war was over?
- **Compete in a VE Day Quiz** – Test knowledge on the history and significance of the war.

Party like it is 1945

- **Let's Dance** – Learn 1940s dance styles like the Lindy Hop or the Victory Conga.
- **Music of the Era** – Explore and learn wartime songs and their cultural significance. Host a concert, perform wartime classics or compose an original "Victory Song."
- **Victory Bunting & Badge Making** – Design and display decorations inspired by 1945 street parties.
- **Ration Recipe Challenge** – Cook using limited wartime ingredients to understand rationing and make traditional wartime dishes like Lord Woolton Pie or carrot cake.
- **Recreate a 1945 Street Party** – Decorate, dance, and celebrate in true post-war style.



Get creative

- **Tableau Performances** – Re-enact historical moments from the celebrations in 1945.
 - **VE Day Murals** – Paint murals depicting life before, during, and after WWII.
 - **Wartime Speeches Performance** – Recite and analyse Churchill's VE Day speech.
 - **WWII Podcasts** – Record and share student-led podcasts about the war.
 - **Photography Challenge** – Recreate famous VE Day images and compare them with modern scenes.
 - **Soundscape Creation** – Use sounds to produce an audio representation of VE Day celebrations.
 - **War Effort Posters** – Create "Keep Calm and Carry On"-style motivational posters to display around your school or youth organisation.
 - **Build a VE Day Escape Room** – Solve WWII-themed puzzles to "unlock" victory.
-

Useful resources

- **VE-VJ Day 80 website**: access specially commissioned educational opportunities from prestigious partners, including the Royal British Legion, Imperial War Museums and the National Theatre.
 - **BBC Bitesize**: Lots of WWII learning resources and videos.
 - **Imperial War Museums**: Online archives, fact-files and interviews.
 - **Together Coalition**: Resources for celebrating with your community.
-