

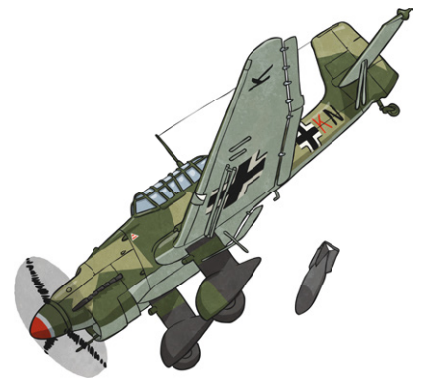
# Aerial Warfare

Aerial warfare means using flying machines (usually aircraft) to fight against an enemy in war.

During the Second World War, when the RAF and Luftwaffe were engaged in aerial warfare, people in Britain could not help but be dazzled by the spectacle of British and German planes battling in the skies over the south coast of Britain, carrying out daring mid-air feats in desperate bids to outsmart and, ultimately, defeat each other.

## Aerial Warfare Facts:

- News sellers published the losses from the battles each day, almost as if they were 'scores' in a game. Each evening, people would gather around the radio to listen to news updates.
- The term dog-fight describes the intense in-air battle between small groups of aircraft fighting at close range where strategic manoeuvring was the key to winning.
- Some of the most popular British aeroplanes to fight in the Battle of Britain were the Supermarine Spitfires and the Hawker Hurricanes. The Spitfires battled with the German fighter planes while the Hurricanes targeted the bombers.
- Some of the most popular German aeroplanes were the Messerschmitt fighter planes and the Heinkel bombers.
- A pilot who destroyed five enemy aircrafts during a battle was known as a fighter ace.



**This story extract describes a dog-fight from an Allied pilot's point of view:**

*Through a break in the cloud, Tom could see a band of Messerschmitts advancing towards him like a pack of wolves stalking their prey. For a few seconds, it was as if time had stood still, then the air around him exploded in deafening gun-fire as the Allied and Nazi planes flew amongst each other at crazily close-range. Tom nosedived down through the cloud, swerving around the left-hand side of the enemy fighters to try and gain a better position, but one of the Messerschmitts was right on his tail and blasted him with a round of fire. With his heart beating wildly, Tom spun sideways and immediately pulled his Spitfire upwards into a vertical climb, somehow managing to avoid being hit. His head pounded and he felt dizzy and disorientated from the sudden change in altitude but the air in front was clear and he managed to level out. Now, with an advantageous birds-eye view of the battle scene a few hundred feet below, he dived back down. He opened fire on the enemy plane, which had forced his retreat, and almost instantly it erupted into flames.*