

The Phoney War

The **Allies** (a group of countries including UK and France) declared war on Germany after they invaded Poland in **September 1939**. For the next 8 months there was not much fighting between the Allies and Germany. People called this period in WWII the **Phoney War** ('phoney' means fake or not genuine). In Germany they called it the **Sitzkrieg** ('sitting war') and in France the **drôle de guerre** ('strange war').

However, there were many important events during this time. This worksheet will help you understand what happened and allow you to analyse if the Phoney War was really 'phoney'.

Recap Task: the German Invasion of Poland

On 6 October 1939 Germany and the Soviet Union (USSR) declared victory over Poland. The country's territory was divided. Germany got the western part and the USSR the eastern part (some parts of Poland went to Lithuania and Slovakia). Some members of the Polish armed forces escaped the country to carry on fighting (e.g. Polish pilots joined the Royal Air Force in UK). Many Polish people joined secret organisations to carry on resisting Germany and the USSR in Poland.

One of the main reasons Germany had won in Poland was their method of fighting. It was called **blitzkrieg** ('lightning war') because it focused on fighting quickly and aggressively. The Germans launched rapid waves of attack that made it very hard for the Polish to react. German generals combined tanks with airplanes and made sure all of them had radios so they could coordinate attacks.

Read these two paragraphs and answer these questions in your books:

1. What were two ways Polish people carried on fighting after October 1939?
2. What were two features of the **blitzkrieg** method of fighting?

The Saar Offensive



- While Germany was busy fighting in Poland, France invaded Germany
- On **7 September 1939** the French Army attacked an area called **Saarland** (highlighted in the map)
- The UK did not take part because they were still organising their armed forces
- As most of the German Army were fighting in Poland, the French Army outnumbered them and marched 5 miles into Germany
- On **12 September 1939** French generals ordered their soldiers to stop
- They did this because they had decided to fight a **defensive** war and stay behind the

Maginot Line, a system of forts, obstacles and weapons on their border with Germany

- By **17 October 1939** all French soldiers had returned home - by this time Germany had defeated Poland and was had moved some soldiers back to their border with France
- For the next eight months French and German soldiers remained behind their defences
- After the war, two German generals admitted that they might have been defeated in 1939 if the UK and France had attacked quickly in large numbers

Read the bullet-points and answer these questions in your books:

1. What was the name of the region of Germany France attacked in September 1939?
2. How far did the French Army advance into Germany before they were ordered to stop?
3. What was the name of the defences the French built along their border with Germany

Challenge: To what extent do you think the Allies let down Poland with their cautious approach in 1939? (1-3 sentences)

Main Task: The Events of the Phoney War

Instructions:

1. Read through the left-hand column of the table, which gives details about some of the events of the Phoney War.
2. Complete the sentence about how significant (important) you think the event was - you can write this on the table or in your books. The first one has been done for you as an example. (Hint: you can also say you think it was not significant.)
3. On the table give a score of 1-5 showing how significant **you** think the event was, where 1= not very significant and 5= highly significant.
4. Answer this question in your book: **Describe two features of the Phoney War.**

Challenge: Imagine you are an official in the British government. Write three diary entries, from any point in the Phoney War, giving your thoughts about what WWII has been like so far. You could write about your hopes/fears for the rest of the war. Include detail about some of the events in the table.

Event of the Phoney War	Why it was important:	Your significance score (out of 5)
<p>Saar Offensive The French Army invades Saarland on 7 September 1939 while most of the German Army are fighting in Poland but retreats back home after a few days.</p>	<p>This was significance because... it showed that the Allies were planning on being defensive, and it also meant they were unable to stop Poland being defeated.</p>	
<p>Fighting at Sea The British and French navies unsuccessfully tried to blockade (stop ships coming in) Germany. German submarines attacked Allied ships, sinking some.</p>	<p>This was significant because...</p>	
<p>Fighting in the Air The Luftwaffe (German Air Force) bombed targets in the UK and France but did not cause serious damage. The Allies sent airplanes into Germany on surveying missions - they also dropped propaganda leaflets.</p>	<p>This was significant because...</p>	
<p>Winter War The USSR invaded Finland on 30 November 1939. They did this because they were worried the country might be used as a base to attack them. The Allies criticised the USSR but did little to help Finland. Although Finland was outnumbered they fought until 13 March 1940 - when they made peace with the USSR). As a result, Finland lost 10% of its land to the USSR.</p>	<p>This was significant because...</p>	
<p>German Invasion of Denmark On 9 April 1940 Germany invaded Denmark. Germany had more soldiers than Denmark and better weapons. Denmark quickly surrendered - the fighting lasted just four hours. As a result German occupied Denmark, meaning they put soldiers there and controlled their government.</p>	<p>This was significant because...</p>	
<p>German Invasion of Norway On 9 April 1940 Germany invaded Norway. The Allies helped Norway, sending ships and soldiers. It was not enough to save Norway, which was forced to admit defeat on 10 June 1940. As a result Germany occupied Norway. Norway was important because it had many iron mines and its ports allowed German ships to access the Atlantic Ocean.</p>	<p>This was significant because...</p>	