

**You
Wouldn't
Want to...**

BE IN A

TANK IN

WORLD WAR II

Cramped
tanks and
terrible
trenches!



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Another war looming?

You're a proud member of Britain's Royal Tank Corps, founded in the wake of the First World War. Army chiefs recognised the contribution of tanks to that victory, which is why the Corps was formed. Spirits were high back then, and some people even referred to the 'war to end all wars'.

Things in the 1930s seem different. You're enjoying your training with the tanks and other armoured equipment, but the daily news is less peaceful. Fighting has broken out in Spain's civil war, and there are military displays over in Germany. Adolf Hitler, the German leader, is telling his people that they must prepare for war. Your tank training begins to feel a lot more serious.

ARMS RACE

Germany was slow to adopt tanks in the First World War but by the mid-1930s was making up for things. Hitler and other leaders watched as dozens of new tanks paraded by at huge rallies.

TANK GROWTH

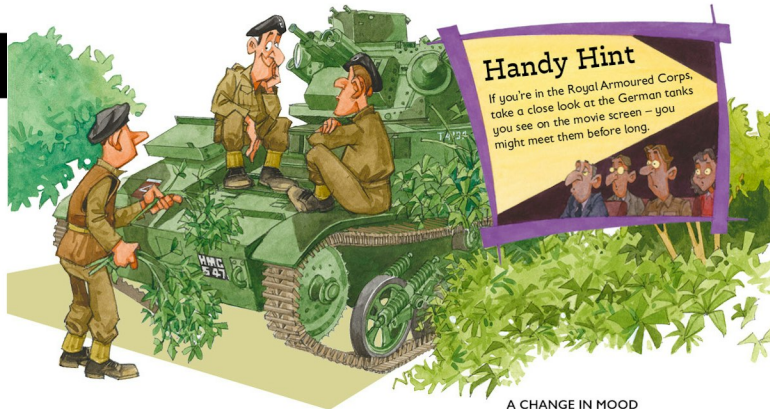
Conflicts involving tanks flared up across the globe in the 1930s.

This Soviet T-26 tank helped the Republican forces in the Spanish Civil War. Germany, Italy and Japan were also sending tanks to other hot spots.



TANK BRAVERY

The motto on the Royal Tank Corps' cap badge – 'Fear Naught (nothing)' – referred to the might of the tanks as well as the team spirit of those who rode in them.



Handy Hint

If you're in the Royal Armoured Corps, take a close look at the German tanks you see on the movie screen – you might meet them before long.

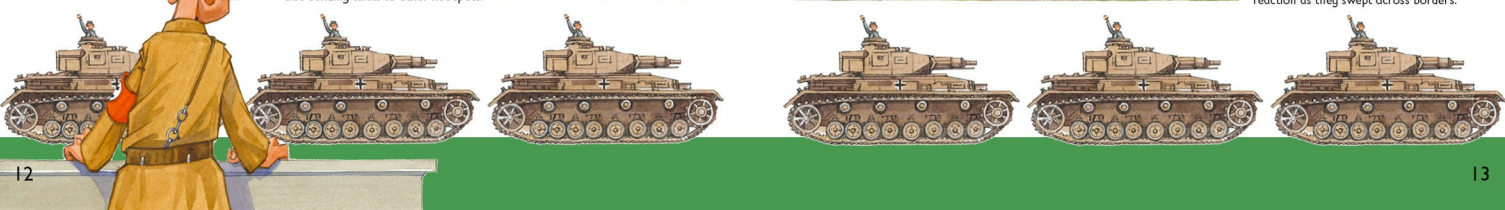


A CHANGE IN MOOD

British tank crews trained in high spirits in the early 1930s – but before long the atmosphere would become deadly serious as another war became more likely.

IT'S WAR!

Teamwork underpinned Germany's dramatic early blitzkrieg ('lightning war') in northern Europe, defeating France in 1940. German tank crews were equipped with radios, which gave them the advantage in action and reaction as they swept across borders.

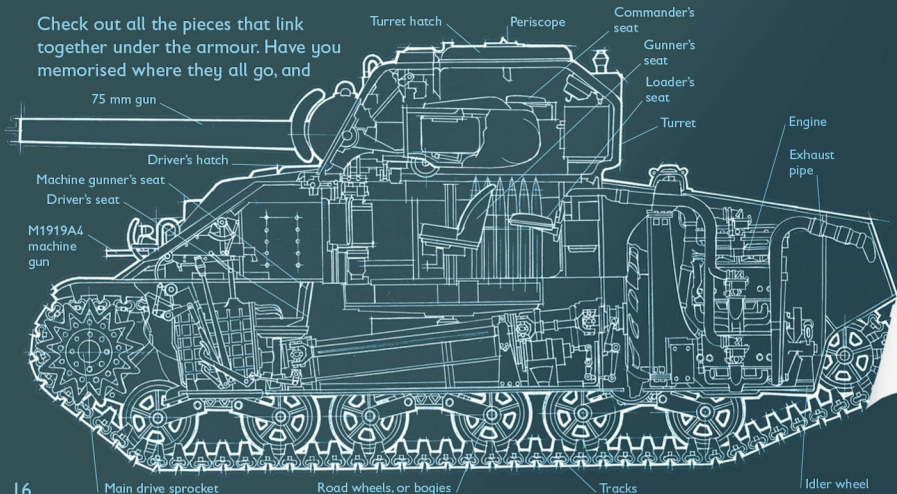


Ready to roll

It's a tight squeeze for the crew of a typical tank. The combination of heavy armour, fuel tanks, weapon and driving controls, and ammunition leaves very little space to sit comfortably or lie back. Do you feel like standing up or stretching? Forget it – at least until the fighting stops and it's safe to get out.

Check out all the pieces that link together under the armour. Have you memorised where they all go, and

what they connect to? Because just like those First World War crews, you'll have to be able to make repairs – sometimes hundreds of miles from the nearest mechanic. This image shows an American tank, the M4A4 Sherman, which was also used by other Allies throughout the war. Most tanks have similar features.



ROLES OF THE CREW

A typical tank crew had five members.

Each had his special job, but they could take one another's place in an emergency. In charge was the commander, who issued orders.

The driver had to steer the tank – often through difficult terrain and in bad weather with terrible visibility. The loader and gunner operated the main gun while the hull machine gunner's weapon was just beneath it.

Handy Hint

Try to keep your muscles and joints flexible. It's a tight squeeze getting through the hatch – and you might need to escape in a hurry!



Commander



Loader

Gunner

Driver



Hull machine gunner

D-Day and beyond

You're taking part in history's largest invasion by sea. The date – 6 June 1944 – will be remembered as D-Day. A combined force of British, Americans and Canadians has crossed the English Channel and landed on beaches in Normandy, a region of north-west France. Nearly 7,000 ships and landing vessels transport troops, weapons and vehicles to five beaches. Awaiting them is Hitler's 'Atlantic Wall', a massive series of defences to repel any attack.

Tanks will play a big part in this offensive and the attack will be a

chance to put some of Hobart's ideas into practice on the beaches and on the battlefields beyond. Many of them have floated into shore, buoyed up by 'flotation skirts' which can be removed once the tanks are on land.

If all goes well, the Allies will break through the coastal defences and drive the Germans back. Negotiating the countryside beyond, with its hills, marshes and hedgerows, will be a further deadly challenge – even to a powerful tank.



FEARSOME FIREPOWER

The huge firepower of German anti-tank artillery could strike terror in an advancing Allied tank crew. The shells from these cannons could pierce the thickest tank armour on the battlefield.



A CAPTURED PRIZE

German Tiger tanks were abandoned as their crews fled before the Allied advance from the beaches through the Norman countryside.

A BREAK IN THE FIGHTING

Breaks in fighting gave tank crews the chance to swap stories with others while snatching a quick meal outside.

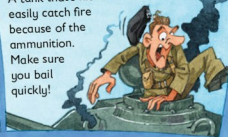


GOOD LUCK

Mascots brought tank crews luck. A grateful Dutch villager gave this teddy to a British tank crew in 1944. The bear travelled across Europe.

Handy Hint

A tank that's hit can easily catch fire because of the ammunition. Make sure you bail quickly!



RACIAL PREJUDICE

The African-American crews of the US 761st Tank Battalion fought two enemies – Hitler's Germany and racial prejudice back home.

New battlefields

As the war progressed, tanks wound up in the thick of fighting – in open ground, arid deserts, snowy forests and even in city streets. Tanks had to crash through thick jungles in Asia and on Pacific islands. As soon as the crews, cooped up in steamy tanks, dared to open the hatch, they faced risks – from malarial mosquitoes, venomous snakes and enemy snipers in the undergrowth.

The courage and endurance of tank crews helped the Allies defeat Germany (in May 1945) and Japan (in August 1945). They helped win the war and restore the peace.



FLAMETHROWING TANKS

These were terrifying additions to the fighting forces in the Second World War. This American tank used flames to flush out the enemy on a Pacific island.

M4 SHERMAN

The crew of an American M4 Sherman tank proudly relieved their fellow US soldiers who'd been surrounded by the enemy in Bastogne, Belgium, in December 1944.



SOVIETS TANKS TAKE BERLIN

Soviet tanks entered Berlin in April 1945 during the last days of the war. More than 30 million Soviet citizens had died in the war.

TANK VICTORY

A 1945 victory parade in Pennsylvania gratefully acknowledged the role of tanks and the extraordinary bravery of their crews.

