ST PAUL'S SCHOOL
JUNIOR SCHOLARSHIP EXAMINATION

MAY 2013

HISTORY

1 hour

plus 5 minutes reading time

(NB: during the first 5 minutes, you may annotate or highlight the question paper but may not write anything on your answer sheet)

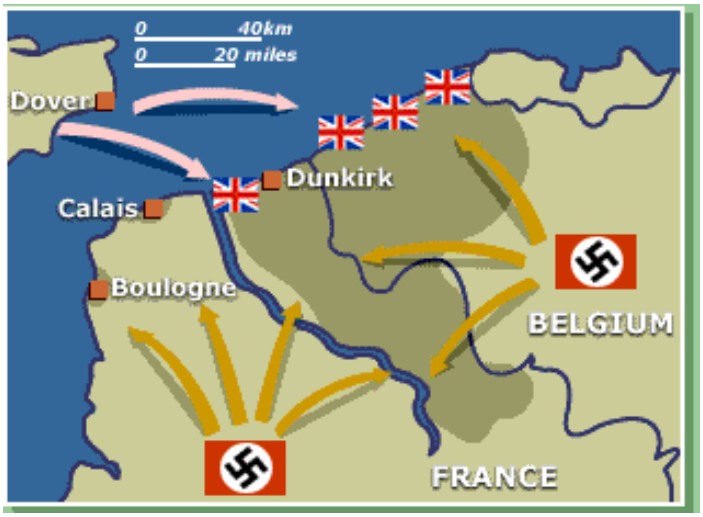
Credit will be given for clear and accurate English

The British evacuation from Dunkirk, 1940

Read the text below and the sources which follow and then answer all parts of Section A on the inserted sheet.

Background

In 1939 the Second World War broke out. It lasted until 1945. In the Spring of 1940 Hitler used his tactics of *Blitzkrieg* (lightning war) against Holland, Belgium and France. The German advance was so quick that the British Army (the British Expeditionary Force) was caught by surprise and was pushed back to Dunkirk, as you can see in this map.



There was a real danger that the entire British army (over 300,000 troops) might be destroyed and that Britain would have to surrender. Thus, an urgent evacuation from Dunkirk - codenamed *Operation Dynamo* - took place between 26 May and 4 June 1940. As many as 900 naval and civilian craft including pleasure steamers and fishing boats – the famous 'Little Ships' - were sent across the Channel under RAF protection and managed to rescue 338,226 British and French troops. During the ten day evacuation, the German air force (the Luftwaffe) attacked whenever the weather allowed, reducing the town of Dunkirk to rubble and destroying 235 vessels and 106 aircraft. The British army had to leave behind all its heavy armour and military equipment, the bulk of which was destroyed by the Germans. At least 5,000 British soldiers lost their lives. Although the Germans took more than a million Allied prisoners in three weeks at a cost of 60,000 casualties, the evacuation was generally presented at the time in such a way that it was a major boost to British morale and enabled the Allies to fight another day. Prime Minister Winston Churchill told the House of Commons that "We shall defend our island whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender." However, some historians have argued that the evacuation from Dunkirk was much more a disaster for the British than a triumph.

Source A **A cartoon by David Low for the *Evening Standard* newspaper, dated 18th June 1940 (just after the surrender of France). The British soldier standing on a beach shakes his fist at the *Luftwaffe* bombers and the caption reads: 'Very well, Alone!'**



Source B **From a book published in England in July 1940**

At Dunkirk a miracle was born. This land of Britain is rich in heroes. She had heroes in jerseys and sweaters and old rubber boots in all the fishing ports of Britain. That night when word went round in all the south-east ports of Britain, there was not a man or a boy who knew how to handle a boat who was not prepared to give his own life to save some unknown son of his country who had faced, without flinching, the hell of the Nazis.

Source C **Extract from the BBC internet page 'On this Day', as published on 10 February 2013**

Stories of amateur sailors rushing heroically to Dunkirk in their own small boats is largely a myth. There were a handful of fishing boats that went over to rescue the troops but the operation itself was carefully co-ordinated. Most [vessels] were crewed by naval reservists and were used to ferry men from the beaches to the destroyers. The majority of troops were taken off by Royal Navy destroyers.

TURN OVER

Source D **From the BBC six o'clock news bulletin on 31 May 1940. This was the news report about Dunkirk.**

All night and all day men of the undefeated British Expeditionary Force have been coming home. From interviews with the men it is clear that they have come back in glory; that their morale is as high as ever and that they are anxious to be back again to have a real crack at Jerry [i.e. the Germans].

Source E **A first-hand account by a gunner officer, present at Dunkirk. This was published in 1940.**

There were lines of men waiting in queues [behind the beaches] until boats arrived to transport them …. Stepping over the bodies we marched onto the beach. A horrible stench of blood pervaded the place. There was no escape from it. We might have been walking through a slaughterhouse on a hot day.

Source F ***Der Adler*, 5 June 1940. (*Der Adler* (=*The Eagle*) was the official publication of the German Air Force from March 1939 until September 1944.)**

For us Germans the word "Dunkirchen" will stand for all time for victory in the greatest battle of annihilation [= destruction] in history. But, for the British and French who were there, it will remind them for the rest of their lives of a defeat that was heavier than any army had ever suffered before.'

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