

## The Big Debate: The Home Guard in World War 2

Ever since the Second World War, historians have argued about whether or not the Home Guard was any good. Some historians think that the Home Guard were fantastic men who bravely volunteered, and just knowing that there was a fighting force in Britain was enough to stop Hitler trying to invade. Other historians think that the Home Guard was a waste of time, and that if Hitler had attacked Britain they would have been completely ineffective.



[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Home\\_Guard\\_001896.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Home_Guard_001896.jpg)

<p><b>Historian, J. Juniper from his 2008 book <i>War at Home: Britain in Panic Mode</i></b></p>	<p><b>Historian, C. Tessy, from her book <i>Britain Pulls Together</i></b></p>
<p>‘The Home Guard was an absolute shambles; the men did not receive any proper training. They were just given a basic gun (leftovers from WW1) and told to get on with it. These old men, often completely past it Granddads who thought war was all about charging on horses with a shiny sword, did not have a clue about modern war. If Britain was invaded would we have been absolutely slaughtered (killed) by the elite German fighting force.</p> <p>They thought they were real soldiers, when really they just had a uniform and marched around a bit thinking they were important.’</p>	<p>‘The Home Guard was of the highest importance and value to Britain in the war. Yes, some of the men had fought in wars many years ago, but many of the members had been in the First World War so they knew what they were doing and they definitely knew how to handle a gun!</p> <p>Every street was full of determined, armed men wanting to do their part, and when everyone pulls together like this a country will never be overthrown or invaded. Hitler did not dare invade Britain because he was frightened of the stories he’d heard.’</p>

### Activities

1. Fill in the table to decide if the information given is fact or opinion. Then you will need to decide which of the two historians would have used this information in their books. The first one has been done for you as an example.
2. Which historian do you agree with? Explain your answer.
3. Why is it important to use a number of sources, rather than just one, when interpreting history?

## The Big Debate: The Home Guard in World War 2

Information	Fact or opinion?	Which historian would use this information in their book, and why do you think this?
The Home Guard was full of old people clinging onto their glory days in the army.	<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Juniper would have used this in his book because he states that they would have been given a uniform and a gun from WW1 but did not really know about modern warfare.</i>
The main task of the Home Guard was to let the real soldiers get on with the job of being a soldier - fighting in war.		
The Home Guard was set up in 1940.		
Men between the ages of 17 and 65 could join the Home Guard. It was part time and unpaid.		
If Britain had been invaded, the Home Guard would not have been able to help in any way.		
<i>Dad's Army</i> is completely accurate when it shows the men in the Home Guard as accident-prone old men who do more harm than good.		
The Home Guard had regular jobs too. They were doctors, shop owners, butchers, priests etc.		