

SELF-LED ACTIVITY

WRITE A MILITARY REPORT – DUNKIRK



KS3

KS4+

Recommended for

KS3 and KS4 (History, English)

Learning objectives

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding about the evacuation of Dunkirk in 1940.
- Use sources from the time of the evacuation.
- Write using a formal report style.

Time to complete

Approx. 45 minutes



The evacuation of troops from Dunkirk in 1940 was coordinated by Vice Admiral Bertram Ramsay at Dover Castle.

SUMMARY

This activity encourages students to take on the role of a service person of the Royal Navy. Using transcripts of the secret progress reports that were collated daily by the War Office, they should write a military report detailing the personnel returned during the evacuation of Dunkirk. To simplify things, students could select one or two days to report on. The best responses will demonstrate an appreciation of the returns in context, showing wider knowledge and understanding of the operation.

PROGRESS REPORTS

Following arrival in Britain, evacuated troops would be transported via train to reception areas around the country where they could rest and recuperate before being assigned to new duties. Landing control (army personnel responsible for organising the troops on arrival into ports) would count the numbers arriving, noting their units and casualties as they boarded the trains. These figures were then recorded in progress reports maintained by the War Office and updated once or twice a day. Annotations indicate where new information has come in and an amendment made. The reports provide a striking reminder of the scale of the evacuation operation and the organisation required on land as well as at sea.

Ask students to imagine they are an Army Liaison Officer who has been on duty attached to the Royal Navy Dover command in the tunnels at Dover Castle during Operation Dynamo. They need to write a summary report for the War Office based on the daily progress reports to give an update on what has happened. Time is of the essence, so it needs to be concise, formal and informative.

As well as adopting the appropriate style and tone students should write precisely about dates and times, locations, and the forces involved. Once the situation has been recounted, students may want to expand the report by adding details of events happening on particular days, and making recommendations for future action. See the situation report from 30 May 1940 on page 2 as an example of the military report style. For background information on the evacuation, see pages 21-24 of the Dover Castle Teachers' Kit. Further insight can be gained from sources 8-12 (on pages 74-75).

Transcript

A situation report dated 30th May 1940, concerning the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk, held at the National Archives. Catalogue ref: WO 260/37

S3. WOTER V SAIC † IMMEDIATE GR279

TO: - DIRECTOR OF MILITARY OPERATIONS

FROM: - MAKOR GENERAL LOYD

30/5/40.

SECRET.

SITUATION REPORT 1200 HRS 30TH MAY 1940

1. The port of Dunkirk was reported closed about 2030 hrs last night owing to sinking of ships in the harbour consequently no personnel ships could be loaded last night and we were deprived of the biggest passenger capacity. At about 0700 hrs this morning however, we heard that the wrecks were visible and that destroyers could still get alongside the east pier one at a time, Information about possibility of entering is still confused the Dunkirk Military Authorities are now demanding personnel ships to be sent as quickly as possible and this is being done although the Navy consider there will be grave risk. In this connection Five Personnel Ships were sunk last night.
2. The beaches were worked continuously yesterday. The organization was much improved by reinforcements of Naval Beach Officers and the twelve Army Officers sent out last night are also giving valuable assistance. The latter sailed in an M.T.B. about 0100 hrs to-day.
3. Approximate evacuations since yesterday are as follows:- It is difficult to give accurate figures of evacuation but the following is a comparison of diver arrivals: -

Midnight to 1000 hrs	29th May	7048
" " " "	30th May	7987

Accurate figures of arrivals in this country are always in possession of movement control, Redhill.

4. After three days' unsuccessful wireless watch we got into communication with the Dunkirk – La Panne area last night 2000 hrs. We sent a test Cypher message but have had no reply except the acknowledgement "R". We are trying to find out by other means is this W/T station is genuine.

TOO 1245 THI 1300

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30/5/40.

Transcript

Progress report from May 1940, concerning the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk, held at the National Archives. Catalogue ref: WO 106/1618

SECRET.

Personnel returned from B.E.F. (Dynamo Plan).

PROGRESS REPORT, midnight 26/27 to midnight 27/28 May, 1940.

	Personnel Trains	Fit	Casualties	Allies	Remarks
Harwich					
Sheerness					
Margate					
Ramsgate					
Dover	7	3324	300	4	
Folkestone					
Hastings					
Eastbourne					
Newhaven			950		
Brighton					
Southampton					
Total today	7	3324	1250	4	
Total to date		25,987	6242	1538	

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SEARAIL.

Note : - Figures are based on check into trains and may not be accurate.

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Transcript

Progress report from May 1940, concerning the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk, held at the National Archives. Catalogue ref: WO 106/1618

SECRET.

Personnel returned from B.E.F. (Dynamo Plan).

PROGRESS REPORT, midnight 27/28 to midnight 28/29 May, 1940.

	Trains	Fit	Casualties	Allies	Remarks
Harwich					
Sheerness	2	581			
Margate	1	280			
Ramsgate	2	827			
Dover	26	12360	505	57	
Folkestone	1	493			
Hastings					
Eastbourne					
Newhaven					
Brighton					
Southampton					
Total today	32	14441	505	57	
Total to date	39	40528	6747	1595	

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Note : - Figures are based on check into trains and may not be accurate.

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Transcript

Progress report from May 1940, concerning the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk, held at the National Archives. Catalogue ref: WO 106/1618

SECRET.

Personnel returned from B.E.F. (Dynamo Plan).

PROGRESS REPORT, Midnight 28/29 to Midnight 29/30.

	Trains	Fit	Casualties	Allies	Remarks
Harwich					
Sheerness	2	903			
Margate	12	6429			
Ramsgate	5	2508		5	
Dover	44	21897	791	748	
Folkestone	10	5393			
Hastings					
Eastbourne					
Newhaven	1	326	716		
Brighton					
Southampton					
Total today	74	37456	1507	753	
Total to date	113	77984	8254	2348	

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Transcript

Progress report from May 1940, concerning the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk, held at the National Archives. Catalogue ref: WO 106/1618

SECRET.

Personnel returned from B.E.F. (Dynamo Plan).

PROGRESS REPORT, midnight 29/30 to midday 30 May, 1940.

	Trains	Fit	Casualties	Allies	Remarks
Harwich	1	650 549			
Sheerness					
Margate	3	1343			
Ramsgate	7	2745		560	
Dover	21	9920	258	1539	
Folkestone					
Hastings					
Eastbourne					
Newhaven					
Brighton					
Southampton					
Total today	32	14658 14557	258	2099 2103	
Total to date	145	92642	8512	4447	

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Transcript

Progress report from May 1940, concerning the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk, held at the National Archives. Catalogue ref: WO 106/1618

SECRET.

Personnel returned from B.E.F. (Dynamo Plan).

PROGRESS REPORT, MIDDAY 30 MAY to MIDNIGHT 30/31 MAY.

	Trains	Fit	Casualties	Allies	Remarks
Harwich					
Sheerness					
Margate	9	442			
Ramsgate	9	2533		2048	
Dover	32	14938	269	2780	
Folkestone	6	667		1130	
Hastings					
Eastbourne					
Newhaven		49	449		
Brighton					
Southampton					
Total	56	22,629	718	5,958	
Total to date	202	115,170	9,230	10,409	

Amendments.

In last report – Harwich for 650 read 549 fit and 4 Allies. In previous reports – Ramsgate for 5 read 6 trains. Totals have been corrected in this report.

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Transcript

Progress report from May 1940, concerning the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk, held at the National Archives. Catalogue ref: WO 106/1618

SECRET.

Personnel returned from B.E.F. (Dynamo Plan).

PROGRESS REPORT, MIDNIGHT 30/31 to MIDDAY 31 MAY 1940.

	Trains	Fit	Casualties	Allies	Remarks
Harwich					
Sheerness	2	990			
Margate	7	2559 2194		529	
Ramsgate	5	2694			
Dover	37	18203		2334	
Folkestone	4	618		1539	
Hastings					
Eastbourne					
Newhaven	1	178			
Brighton					
Southampton					
Total today	55 6	25064 24699	178	4402	
Total to date	257	140234	9408	14811	

These figures include Fit 22625 Casualties 4992 Allies 1534 evacuated from midnight 19/20 May to midnight 26/27 May already published

Q(M)2.A

31/5/40

SEARAIL.

Note :- Figures are based on check into trains and may not be accurate.

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Transcript

Progress report from May and June 1940, concerning the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk, held at the National Archives. Catalogue ref: WO 106/1618

SECRET.

Personnel returned from B.E.F. (Dynamo Plan).

PROGRESS REPORT, Midday 31 May to Midnight 31 May/1 June.

	Trains	Fit	Casualties	Allies	Remarks
Harwich	4	1896	23	6	
Sheerness	2	831		82	
Margate	10	3931		603	
Ramsgate	4	2436		13	
Dover	28	9776	592	5759	
Folkestone	8	2224		1384	
Hastings					
Eastbourne					
Newhaven			597		
Brighton					
Southampton					
Total today	56	21094	1212	7847	30,153
Total to date	312	160963	10620	22658	194,241

The totals to date include Fit 22625 Casualties 4992 Allies 1534.
Evacuated from m.n.19/20 May to m.n.26/27 May already published.

Amendments.

In last report – Margate – for 7 trains read 6 and for 2559 Fit read 2194.
Totals have been corrected in this report.

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Transcript

Progress report from May and June 1940, concerning the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk, held at the National Archives. Catalogue ref: WO 106/1618

SECRET.

Personnel returned from B.E.F. (Dynamo Plan).

PROGRESS REPORT, midnight 31 May/1 June to midday, 1 June.

	Trains	Fit	Casualties	Allies	Remarks
Harwich					
Sheerness					
Margate	8	3240		692	
Ramsgate	11	4414		1618	
Dover	27	6080	1302	9211	Plus 539 Allied casualties
Folkestone	2	246		252	
Hastings					
Eastbourne					
Newhaven			111		
Brighton					
Southampton					
Total today	48	13980	1413	11773	27166 + 539 Allied casualties
Total to date	360	174943	12033	34431	221407 + 539 Allied casualties

The totals to date include - Fit 22625, Casualties 4992, Allies 1534,
Evacuated from m.n. 19/20 May to m.n. 26/27 May already published.

Q(M)2.A
1/6/40

SEARAIL.

Note : - Figures are based on check into trains and may not be accurate.

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Transcript

Progress report from June 1940, concerning the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk, held at the National Archives. Catalogue ref: WO 106/1618

SECRET.

Personnel returned from B.E.F. (Dynamo Plan).

PROGRESS REPORT, MIDDAY 1 JUNE TO MIDNIGHT 1/2 JUNE 1940

		British		Allies		
	Trains	Fit	Casualties	Fit	Casualties	Remarks
Harwich						
Sheerness	5	1694		594		
Margate	9	2761		2052		
Ramsgate	10	1061		4112		
Dover	26	9513	609	6236	256	
Folkestone	14	1748		4711		
Hastings						
Eastbourne						
Newhaven						
Brighton						
Southampton						
Total today	64	16,777	609	17,705	256	35,347
Total to date	424	190,465	12,642	52,136	795	256,038

Amendments – Report for period midnight 19/20 to 26/27 May, on 24 May Dover for 1284 read 29 and reduce total of fir by 1255 to read 21,410. Totals have been corrected in this report.

Note. The totals to date include - Fit 21,410, Casualties 4992, Allies 1534 evacuated from midnight 19/20 to midnight 26/27 May.

The figures are based on check into trains and may not be accurate.

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Transcript

Progress report from June 1940, concerning the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk, held at the National Archives. Catalogue ref: WO 106/1618

SECRET.

Personnel returned from B.E.F. (Dynamo Plan).

PROGRESS REPORT, midnight 1/2 June to midday, 2 June, 1940.

		British		Allies		
	Trains	Fit	Casualties	Fit	Casualties	Remarks
Harwich						
Sheerness						
Margate	6	1288		1535		
Ramsgate	8	2154		1983		
Dover	21	8698	122	4212		
Folkestone						
Hastings						
Eastbourne						
Newhaven						
Brighton						
Southampton						
Total today	35	12140	122	7730	-	19992
Total to date	459	202605	12764	59866	795	276030

Note. The totals to date include - Fit 21,410, Casualties 4992, Allies 1534 evacuated from midnight 19/20 to midnight 26/27 May.

The figures are based on check into trains and may not be accurate.

Q(M)2. a.

2/6/40

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Transcript

Progress report from June 1940, concerning the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk, held at the National Archives. Catalogue ref: WO 106/1618

SECRET.

Personnel returned from B.E.F. (Dynamo Plan).

PROGRESS REPORT, Midday 2nd June to Midnight 2nd/3rd June, 1940.

		British		Allies		
	Trains	Fit	Casualties	Fit	Casualties	Remarks
Harwich	2	1102		88		
Sheerness	1	16		403		
Margate						
Ramsgate	4	639		1495		
Dover	5	235		2684		
Folkestone						
Hastings						
Eastbourne						
Newhaven		106		41		
Brighton						
Southampton						
Total today	12	2098		4711		6,809
Total to date	471	204,703	12,764	64,577	795	282,839

Q(M)2. (a).
3/6/40

"SEARAIL"

Note :- Figures are based on check into trains and may not be quite accurate.

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Q(M)1.

Transcript

Progress report from June 1940, concerning the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk, held at the National Archives. Catalogue ref: WO 106/1618

SECRET.MOVEMENT CONTROL,
WAR OFFICE.

Personnel returned from B.E.F. (Dynamo Plan).

PROGRESS REPORT, Midnight 2nd June/3rd June to midday 3rd June.

		British		Allies		
	Trains	Fit	Casualties	Fit	Casualties	Remarks
Harwich						
Sheerness	1			403		
Margate	6			3166	334	
Ramsgate	4			1992		
Dover	20	4388	240	7092		
Folkestone	10	2046		2578		
Hastings						
Eastbourne						
Newhaven						
Brighton						
Southampton						
Total today	41	6434	240	15231	334	22,239
Total to date	512	211,137	13,004	79,808	1,129	305,078

Q(M)2. (a).

3/6/40

SEARAIL.

Note : - The totals to date include - Fit 21,410, Casualties 4,992, Allies 1,534 evacuated from midnight 19/20 to midnight 26/27 May.

The figures are based on check into trains and may not be accurate.

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Progress report from June 1940, concerning the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk, held at the National Archives. Catalogue ref: WO 106/1618

SECRET.

Personnel returned from B.E.F. (Dynamo Plan).

PROGRESS REPORT, Midday 3rd June to midnight 3rd/4th June.

		British		Allies		
	Trains	Fit	Casualties	Fit	Casualties	Remarks
Harwich						
Sheerness	2	15		960		
Margate						
Ramsgate	4			1691		
Dover	5	106	49	2619	101	
Folkestone						
Hastings						
Eastbourne						
Newhaven						
Brighton						
Southampton						
Total today	11	121	49	5270	101	5541
Total to date	522	211,258	13,053	84,675	1,230	310,216.

Q(M)2.a.

4/6/40.

"SEARAIL"

Note : - The totals to date include Fit 21,410, Casualties 4,992, Allies 1,534 evacuated from midnight 19th/20th May to midnight 26th/27th May.

The figures are based on check into trains and may not be accurate.

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Progress report from June 1940, concerning the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk, held at the National Archives. Catalogue ref: WO 106/1618

SECRET.

Personnel returned from B.E.F. (Dynamo Plan).

PROGRESS REPORT, midnight 3/4 June to midday 4 June, 1940.

		British		Allies		
	Trains	Fit	Casualties	Fit	Casualties	Remarks
Harwich						
Sheerness						
Margate	4			2135		
Ramsgate	4			2184		
Dover	17	2		9518		
Folkestone	6			2827		
Hastings						
Eastbourne						
Newhaven						
Brighton						
Southampton						
Total today	31	2		16664		16666
Total to date	553	211260	13053	101339	1230	326882

Q(M)2.a.

4/6/40

SEARAIL.

Note :- The totals to date include Fit 21,410, Casualties 4,992, Allies 1,534 evacuated from midnight 19th/20th May to midnight 26th/27th May.

The figures are based on check into trains and may not be accurate.

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Transcript

Progress report from June 1940, concerning the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk, held at the National Archives. Catalogue ref: WO 106/1618

SECRET.MOVEMENT CONTROL,
WAR OFFICE.Personnel returned from B.E.F. (Dynamo Plan).FINAL PROGRESS REPORT, MIDDAY 4 JUNE to MIDNIGHT 4/5 JUNE 1940.

		British		Allies		
	Trains	Fit	Casualties	Fit	Casualties	Remarks
Harwich						
Sheerness	1			470		
Margate	1			538		
Ramsgate	4	5		1516		
Dover	10			5654		
Folkestone	3			1333		
Hastings						
Eastbourne						
Newhaven						
Brighton						
Southampton						
Clacton				27		
Total	19	5		9538		9,543
Total to date	572	211,265	13,053	110,877	1,230	336,425

Q(M)2a.

5/6/40.

SEARAIL.

Note :- The totals to date include Fit 21,410, Casualties 4,992, Allies 1,534 evacuated from midnight 19th/20th May to midnight 26th/27th May.

The figures are based on check into trains and may not be accurate.

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