

Spitfire Superheroes

The Supermarine Spitfire was the only RAF fighter aircraft to be produced through the whole of the Second World War and pilots loved this fast and glamorous aeroplane.

Discover the stories of some superheroes who made, flew and looked after Spitfires.

- Make your own Spitfire
- Find out what the parts of a Spitfire are called
- Make a flying helmet mask
- Create a cartoon Spitfire Superhero.



RJ Mitchell

Creating the Spitfire - The engineering superhero

1930 - The Air Ministry asks manufacturers to design a new, fast fighter plane for the RAF. Reginald Joseph Mitchell, or RJ, is in charge of aircraft design at Vickers Supermarine and he is already designing super-fast racing seaplanes, so he tweaks his designs to create what the Air Ministry have asked for.

The plane will be made entirely from metal. A new thin wing that is broad at the root, but tiny at the tips, (an elliptical shape) will make the plane fast and maneuverable. The wheels will fold down and go back up into the wing at the flick of a switch. This really is the aeroplane of the future.

One thing R.J. has kept secret is that all the time he has been in pain, in fact he is dying, but as a war with Germany is looking likely, he pushes on. By 1936 he has designed the Spitfire and it is very fast, at 349 mile per hour. The Royal Air Force orders over 300 before the testing has finished. RJ Mitchell has designed the best fighter plane in the world.

The first flight - The test pilot superhero

As a test pilot 'Mutt' Summers gets to be the first. Test pilots get to be the first to feel the thrill of a new machine. The first to take a new plane up in the air. The first to find out how it flies. The first to risk their life for new technology.

Summers gets to be the first to fly the Supermarine Spitfire, the most famous aircraft the RAF has ever flown. When he takes off for the first time in a Spitfire, he knows that this could also be his last flight but he relishes the challenge. After eight minutes of climbing, turning and diving the new fighter, he comes in to land. The designers of the plane are waiting anxiously for news on their new creation. Mutt hops out of the Spitfire and simply says, 'Don't change a thing'.



Joseph 'Mutt' Summers



Workers at Castle Bromwich

Building the wings - The factory superheroes

It is hard, noisy and sometimes dangerous work building aircraft, something Megan Rees discovers when she starts work at the Castle Bromwich factory in Birmingham.

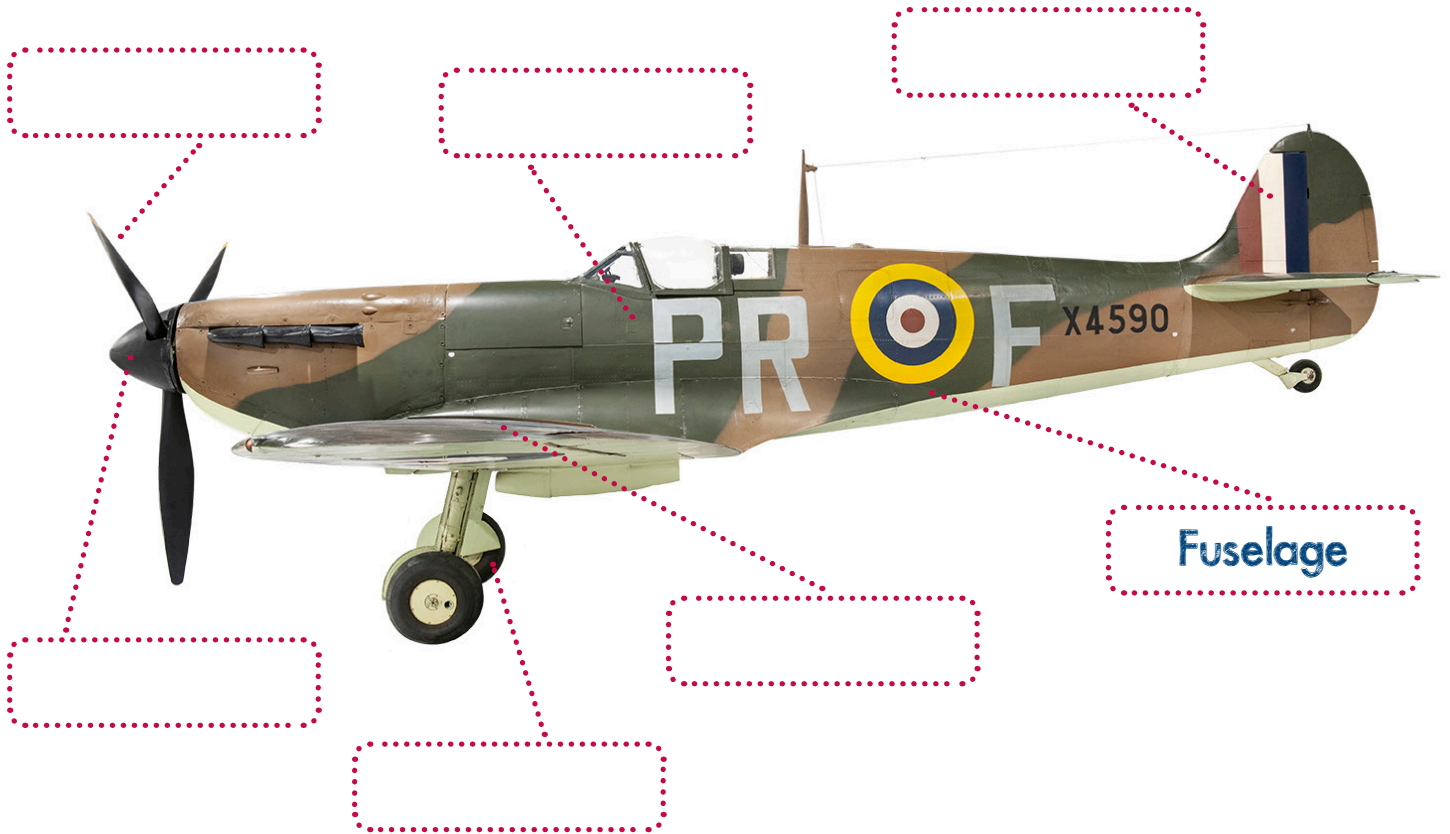
Her job is always the same, working on the starboard (right) wing of Spitfires, drilling holes through the metal. Then one day, it isn't the wing she drills, it is her little finger, ouch. There is no time to think about the pain, just a quick trip to first aid and back to the production line. Every aircraft is vital if the war is going to be won and pilots lives depend on them being built properly.

Find out more about Megan's war

bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/82/a4093382.shtml

Name the parts of a Spitfire

To start you off, the main body of the aircraft is called the fuselage



~~Fuselage~~

Tail

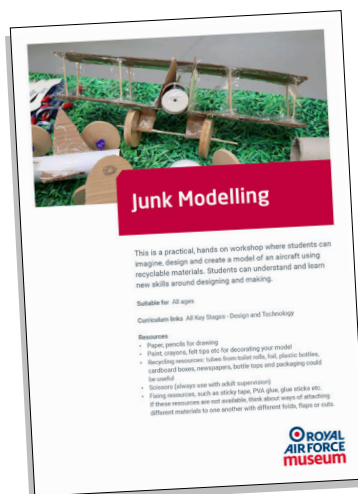
Cockpit

Nose

Undercarriage

Wing

Propeller



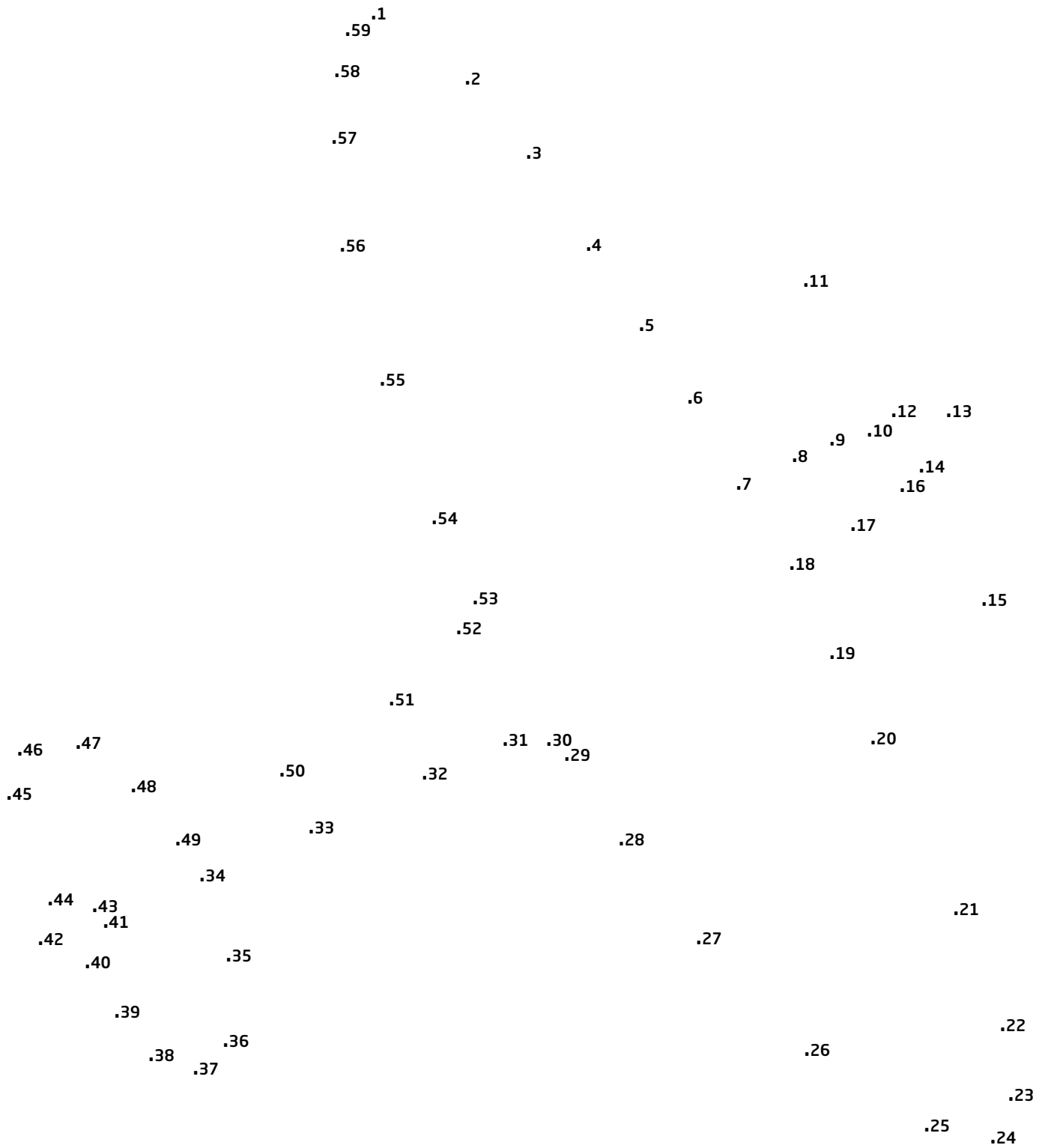
Build a Spitfire

Use our Junk Modelling guide to help you build a Spitfire. Just remember the special shape of the Spitfire's wings.

[rafmuseum.org.uk/documents/
Cosford/Educational-Visits/
Online_Resources/FamilyResources/
RAFMJunkModelling.pdf](http://rafmuseum.org.uk/documents/Cosford/Educational-Visits/Online_Resources/FamilyResources/RAFMJunkModelling.pdf)



Draw a Spitfire by joining the dots



More pilots needed - The volunteer superhero

Around 4,500 miles away, the brave young Vincent Bunting thinks to himself, 'I could be a pilot'. So he volunteers to join the Royal Air Force and his life's biggest adventure begins.

He travels from Jamaica, all the way across the Atlantic Ocean and he is soon dressed in his smart but slightly itchy, blue-grey uniform.

After his training he is told he will be flying Spitfires. Every pilot wants to fly a Spitfire. Vincent puts on his flying jacket, boots and helmet, he climbs into the cockpit and starts the engine. 'Chocks away' shout the ground crew, and he is off ...



Vincent Bunting (left)



Diana Barnato Walker

Ministry of Supply

The Honeymoon Flight - The cross-channel superheroes

On 1 October 1940, Diana Barnato Walker (Air Transport Auxiliary pilot) and her husband, Derek Walker (RAF pilot) are given special permission to go to Brussels for their honeymoon. The city has just been liberated by the allies and rather handily, the RAF need some aircraft delivered there, for reconnaissance. The problem is that female ATA pilots are only allowed to deliver planes in the UK. But hang on, she is on leave, and this job is for the RAF ... The two of them take to the skies and fly in formation across the white cliffs of Dover. As they land in Belgium, Diana becomes the first woman to fly a Spitfire across the channel.

A few days later the aircraft need to be ferried back to Britain. The weather is appalling and the couple are soon separated by thick, dense fog. Diana knows that she is on her own, lost in the heavy grey clouds. She is worried she will run out of fuel but just in time she sees the airfield at Tangmere and lands safely.

A month later, their honeymoon adventure is reported in the newspapers and some people in the government are not happy. Poor Derek is fined three months pay.

Become a Spitfire pilot

Simply print, cut out and attach some string. Then try on your flying helmet mask. If you don't have a printer, why not draw your own.





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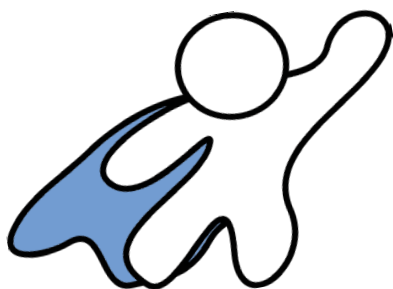
Tony Gaze

Shot down - The injured superhero

It is no surprise when Tony Gaze, an Australian student studying at Cambridge, joins the RAF in 1940. After all, both his parents served with the Royal Air Force in the First World War. He is accepted as a pilot and after training, Tony is posted to fly the glamorous, high speed, Supermarine Spitfire. He is a daring and skilled pilot but ...

4 September 1943, Le Tréport, France. Shot Down ...

He makes it safely to the ground but he is injured, and he has landed in enemy territory. If the Germans find him, he will become a prisoner of war. Luckily, he meets members of the French Resistance who help him travel hundreds of miles through occupied France, across the Pyrenees mountains and into Spain. After eight tough weeks, he makes it back to England and back into another Spitfire. Quite an adventure.



Design an outfit for a superhero

Turn RJ, Mutt, Megan, Vincent, Diana, Tony or Carolyn into a cartoon superhero. Most superheroes have a cape or a mask but think what else they might need. Maybe Megan could have a special tool belt to help her build the aircraft or the pilots might find a compass useful.

Get designing ...



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