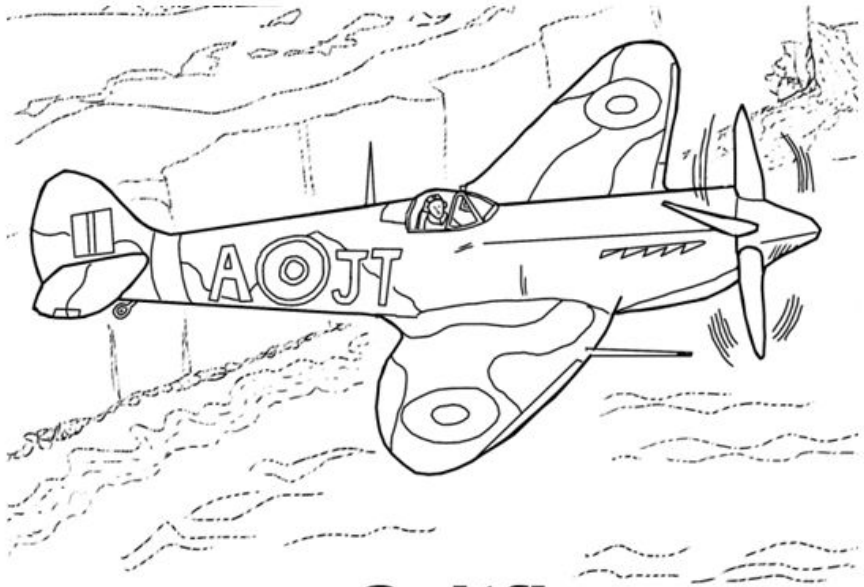
The Great Supermarine Spitfire

Imagine the perfect plane; an aeroplane with awesome firing capability. Imagine a plane that could mercilessly wipe out a target before the enemy had a chance to defend them-selves. Imagine a plane that was powerful and successful. You're thinking of the Great Supermarine Spitfire, Britain's model bombing machine. The Spitfire achieved legendary status during the Battle of Britain for its power and capabilities. In this explanation I will show you why this predator has no equal in air-to-air combat.



Spitfire

An Impressive History!

The Supermarine Spitfire was designed by RJ Mitchell, an engineer at Supermarine Aviation. It was originally designed to be a high performance, short range plane. The first planes were mass produced in 1938. Just over 20,000 Spitfires were built in total. The plane remained in production and active service until 1955. The plane weighed almost 2,400 kilograms and was able to climb to a height of almost 7,000 metres in just over 9 minutes. In fact, many German pilots actually believed the Spitfire was better than their own planes; one German pilot even asked his commanding officer for a squadron of Spitfires.

Awesome Engineering!

If you're going to attack, you need this single-seat fighter aircraft. With its Rolls-Royce engine, it could accelerate very quickly and due to the shape of the wings it could reach astonishing top speeds of 606 miles per hour. Armed originally with 4 guns (known as Brownings) then later 8 guns, the Spitfire was mainly used for dog-fights as well as short-ranged, quick attacks on bases. The Spitfire played an important role in the Battle of Britain in 1940, in which Germany sought to dominate the air. Despite having only 700 aircraft against the 2,000 German planes, the Allies won. Incredibly well camouflaged, this was the plane that gave British pilots the best chance of survival. As the war progressed, it was modified and improved several times – it was fitted with more powerful engines and had more blades added to its tip to allow it to fly at higher altitudes.

However, even if the eight Brownings worked perfectly, pilots soon discovered that they were not sufficient to destroy larger aircraft. Combat reports showed that an average of 4,500 rounds were needed to shoot down an enemy aircraft. The key aim of Fighter Command was to stop the *Luftwaffe's* bombers attacking Britain. Like a tiger, being a good hunter is one thing but you still have to find your prey.

This beast-like plane was able to detect the slightest movement from miles away giving it a trail to its victim. Although the Spitfire continued to improve in speed and armament because of its limited fuel capacity, its range and endurance were limited: it remained "short-legged" throughout its life except in the dedicated photo-reconnaissance role, when its guns were replaced by extra fuel tanks.

Watch out below!

The Spitfire continued to play many roles throughout the Second World War and beyond, often in air forces other than the RAF. For example, the Spitfire became the first high-speed photo-reconnaissance aircraft to be operated by the RAF. Sometimes unarmed, they flew at high, medium and low altitudes, often ranging far into enemy territory to closely observe the Axis powers and provide an almost continual flow of valuable intelligence information throughout the war. These beasts have served across every inch of the world including in the Pacific, the Middle East and Russia. In Australia, RAAF and RAF Spitfires helped defend the port town of Darwin against air attack by the Japanese Naval Air Force, Finally, the Spitfire MKVIIIs took part in the last battle of World War II in a ground attack role helping defeat a Japanese break-out attempt.

If you were to decide which plane ruled the skies, if you were to decide which plane was designed for the finest combat, if you're trying to decide which plane could consistently achieve success in its air battles, who could rule the skies then you're thinking of the ferocious, fearsome Supermarine Spitfire!