Boys Who Grew Up to Change the WORLD
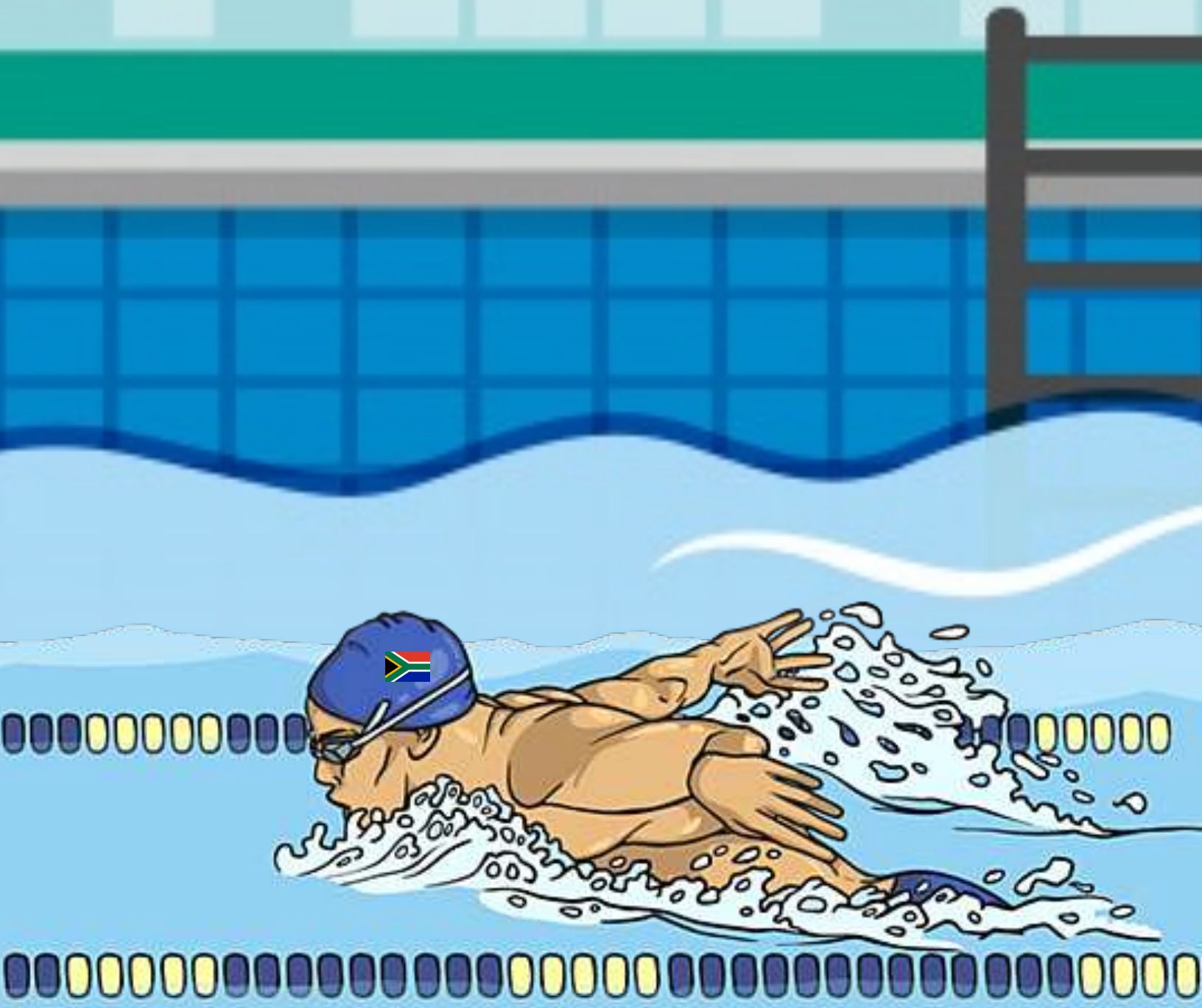
THINK
DIGITAL ACADEMY

Achmat Hassiem

Alan Turing

Achmat Hassiem

(Born 1982)

One quiet Sunday morning in Cape Town, Achmat and his brother Tariq, were at the beach practicing with friends for their life-saving exams.

In the exam, some people would pretend to be drowning while the other launched a boat to save them.

Tariq swam out and floated, while Achmat stayed nearer the shore, both waiting to be rescued.

That was when Achmat saw a huge, dark shape barrelling towards his brother. He wasn't sure what it was until a black fin broke the water. The shape was a great shark.

Tring to distract it, Achmat madly splashed and shouted. His tactic worked. The shark turned and headed for him instead, letting the lifeboat pull Tariq to safety.

But there was no time for the boat to reach Achmat. The shark reared up, its jaw locked open, showing rows and rows of bloody jagged teeth. Achmat tried to get away.

He couldn't move. Looking down, he realized the shark had his entire leg in its mouth.

At the last moment, his brother's hand appeared from above, dragging him aboard the boat.

When he woke up in the hospital, Achmat fell into a depression. His leg was gone.

He'd always loved sports and swimming and now he was worried he wouldn't be able to do either.

Then he got a visit from an athlete called Natalie du Toit. She'd lost her leg when she was seventeen and become a Paralympic swimmer, winning medals at three different Paralympics. She told him he should try it.
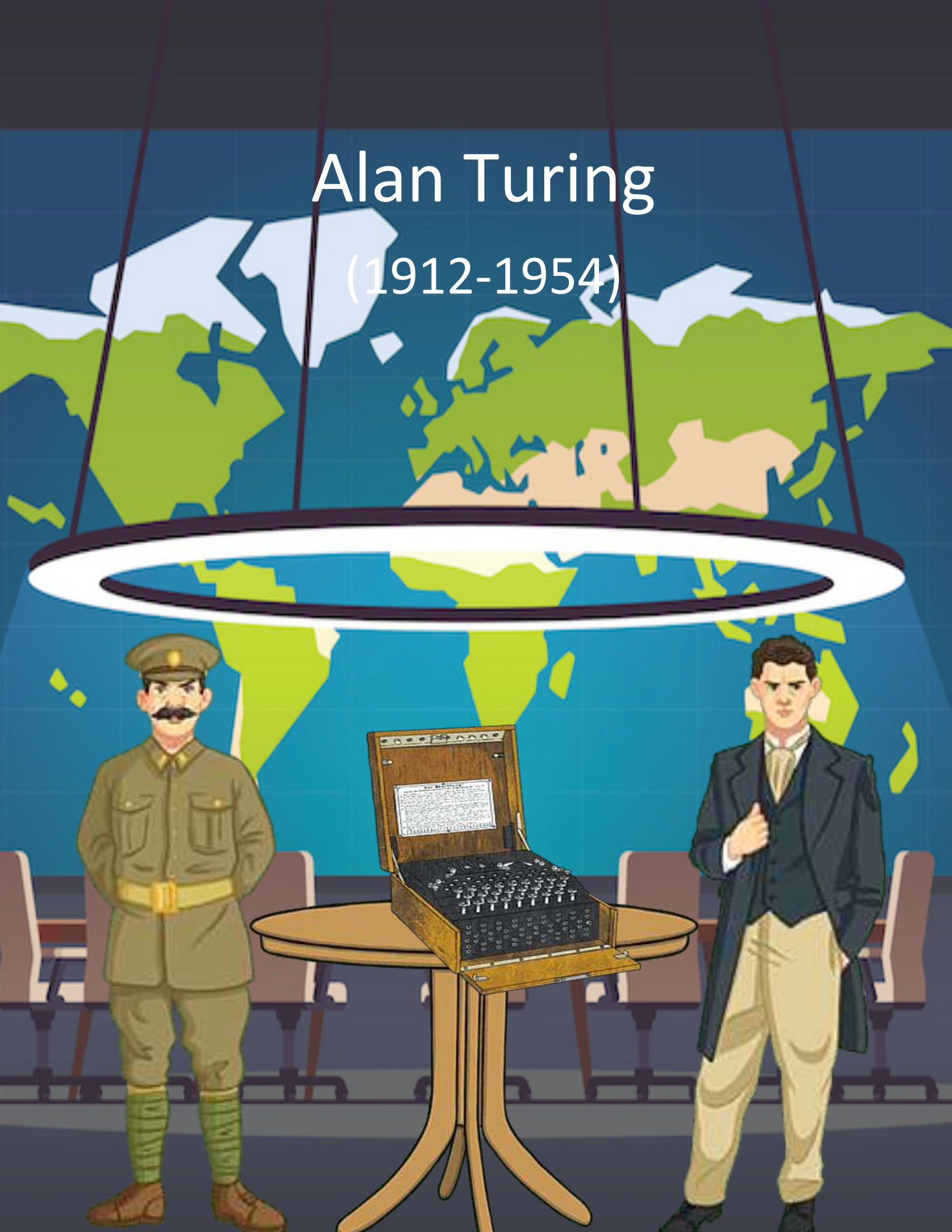
He did, and he ended up winning in the Paralympics too.

As he walked out for the final race, the audience chanted.
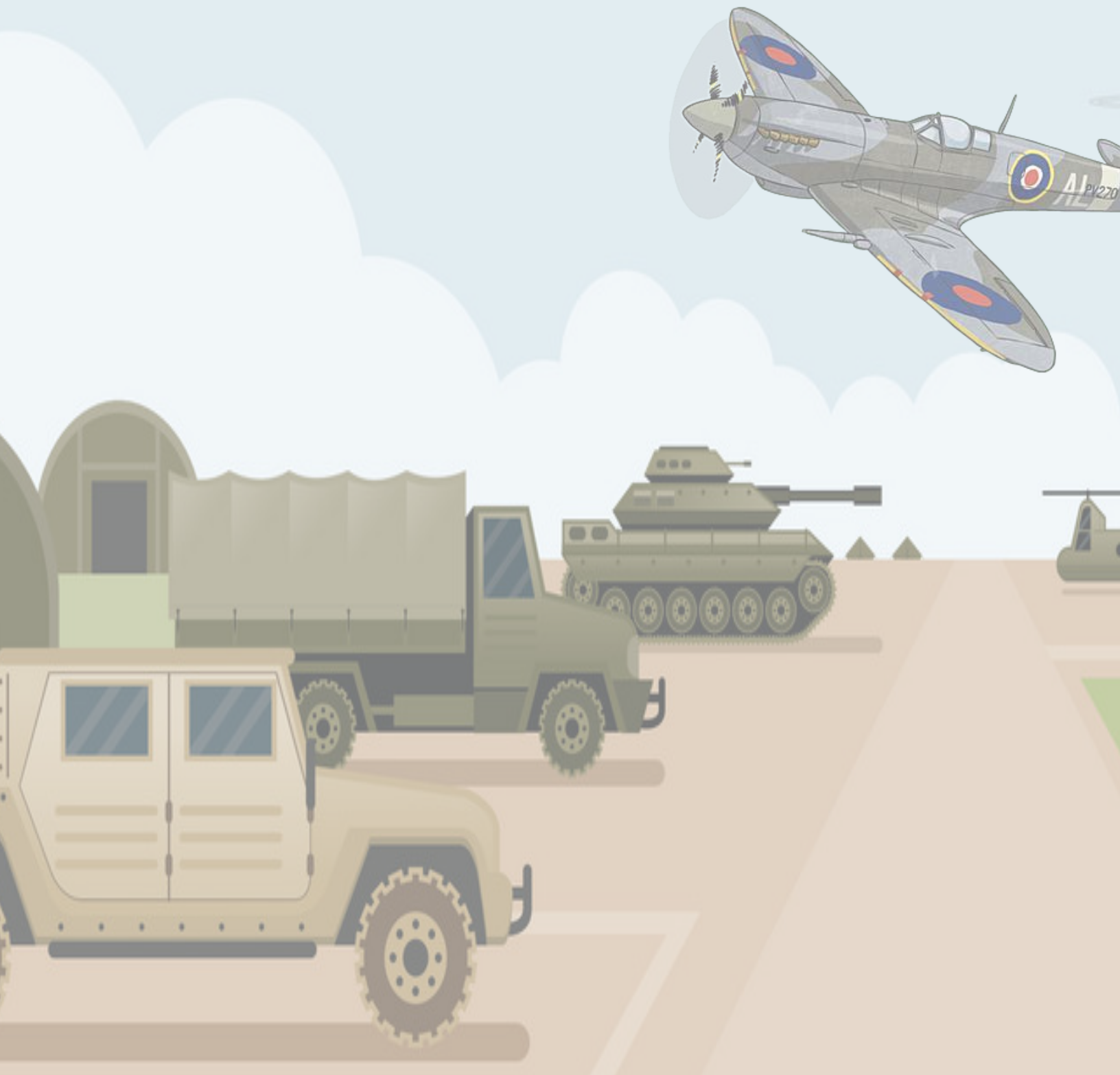'Shark boy! Shark boy! Shark boy!'
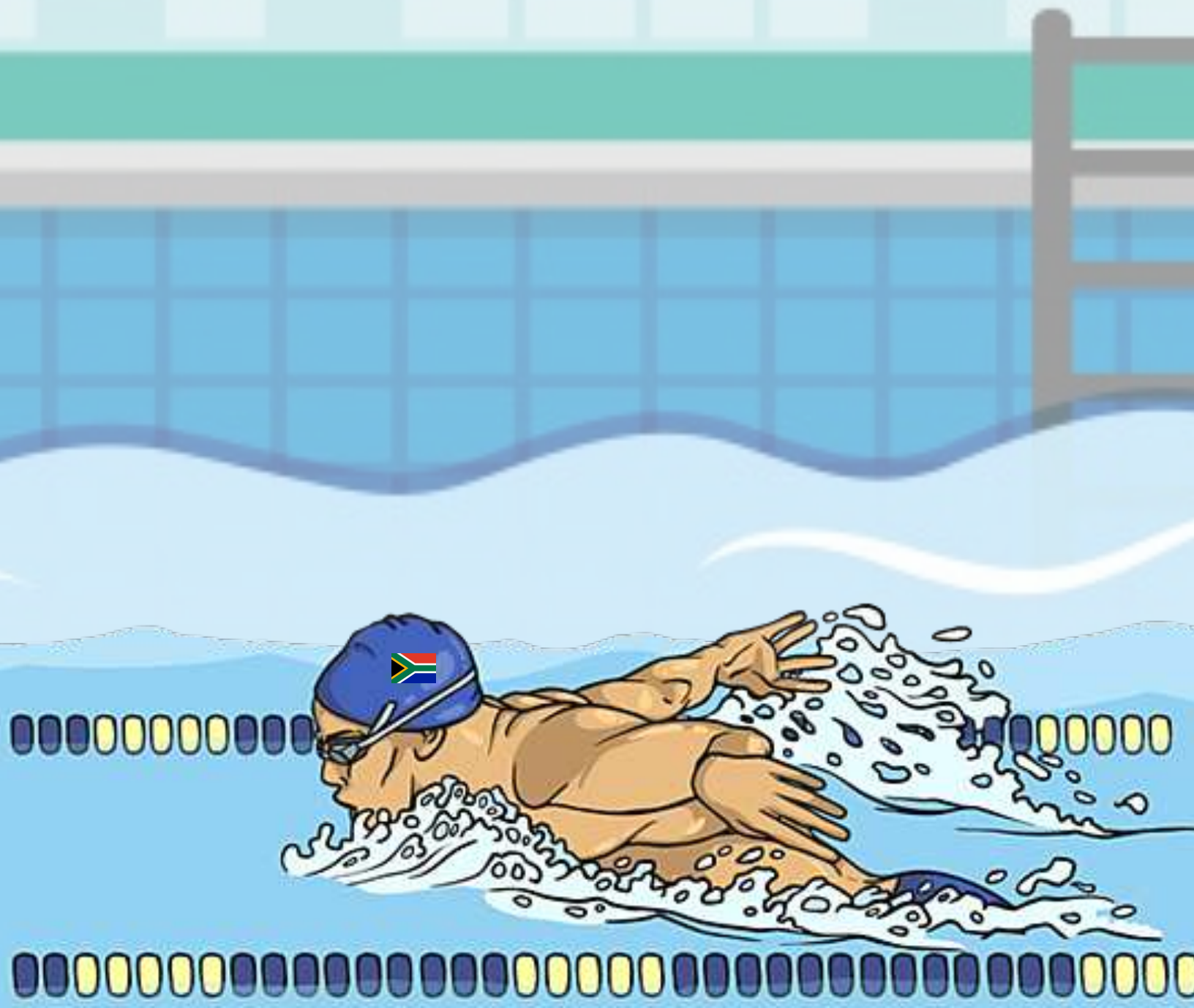
Alan Turing

(1912-1954)

During the Second World War, countries would speak to each other using codes, to prevent their enemies from understanding their messages. The most important and difficult code was used by the Germans. It was called 'Enigma'.

Britain desperately needed to crack it. If they could, they'd know all of their enemy's secrets, including their next moves. But it was almost impossible. There was only one person they could think of who might be able to help: Alan Turning.

Alan had loved numbers ever since he was a child. He wasn't encouraged at school, but when he got to university, Alan flourished.

He was studying pure mathematics, then his unusual way of thinking led him to look for practical ways of using maths.

He wanted to change the way people lived in a useful manner. He published a paper that turned out to signal the beginning of modern computers.

Once they'd brought him in, Alan helped the government break the Enigma code by building a machine called the 'Bombe'. Some people think that, by cracking the code, Alan shortened the war by four years, which would mean he saved millions of lives.
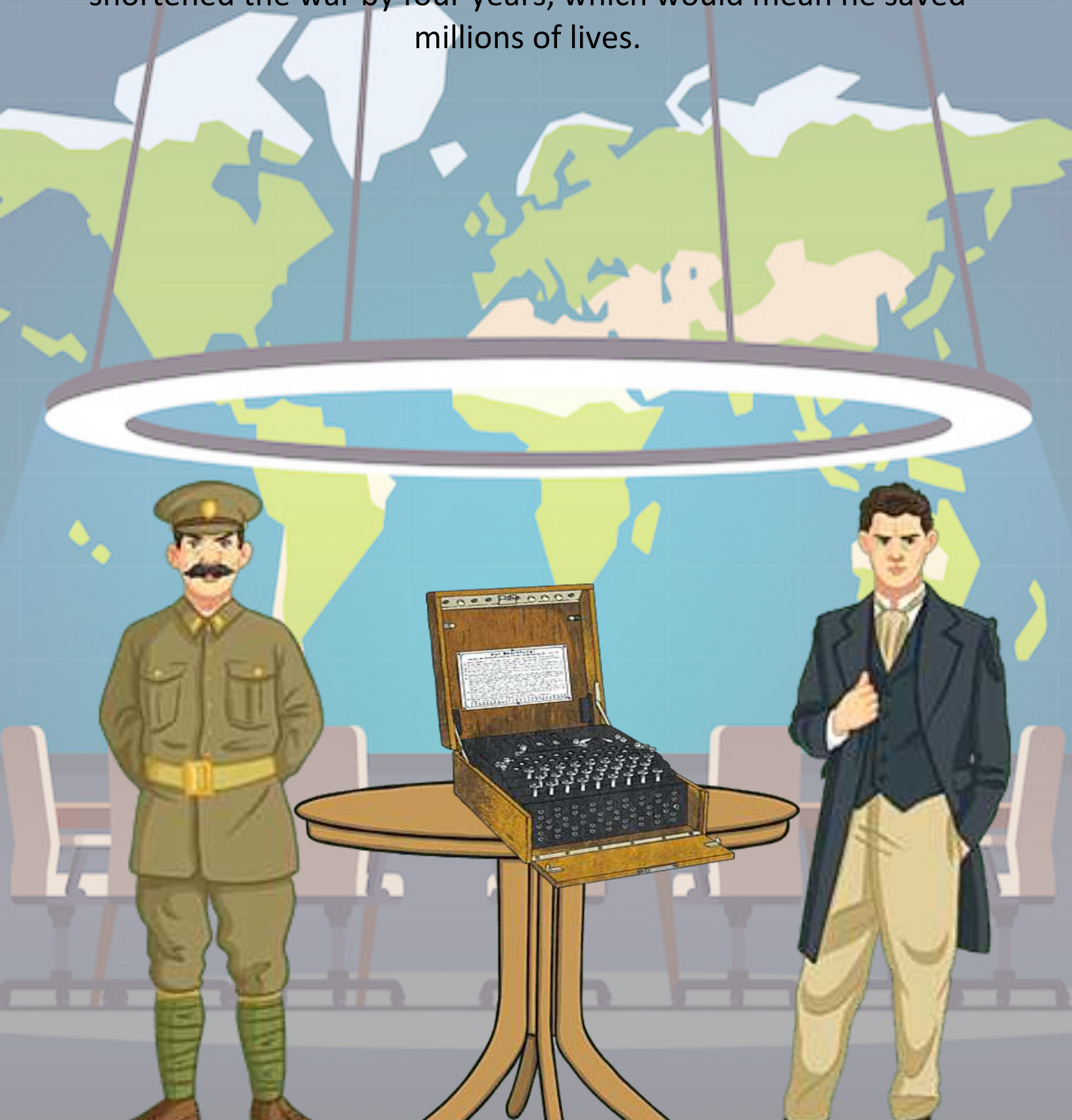
In 1952, police heard rumours that he was gay. At the time, being gay was still a crime, and he was arrested.

Alan was found guilty. Even after what he'd done for the country, he was given the choice of jail or taking drugs that would supposedly change him. He chose the drugs and they made him sick. It hurt so much that he poisoned himself and died.

But he was never forgotten. Sixty-one years later, in 2013, Alan was granted a posthumous royal pardon, and four years after that, in 2017, Turning's Law was passed, pardoning all men who had ever been convicted of anything related to being gay.

His great niece, Rachel Barnes, thinks it's tremendous, but wants people to remember that Alan was a lot more than just his sexuality. He was an incredibly intelligent, devoted and forward-thinking person, who helped save the lives of countless others.

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