

**ITALIAN FASCISM
UNDER MUSSOLINI
1922-1943**



ITALIAN FASCISM UNDER MUSSOLINI 1922-1943

Description

Through the investigation of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the major points of the fascist doctrine as defined by its Duce, Benito Mussolini, how the Duce came to power in Italy and how fascism inspired German National Socialism (yet was very different in its aims).

Subjects

World History
European History

Grade Level

11-12

Duration

90 minutes

Tour Links

- Piazza Venezia
- EUR, Roman Suburb
- Foro Italico

Essential Questions

- Who was Benito Mussolini? How did he develop his political doctrines?
- What were the ideas behind the creation of Fascism in 1919?
- What were the major points of Italian fascism?
- Were German National Socialism and Italian Fascism like twin brothers or more like distant cousins?

Academic Summary

*I believe in the high Duce, maker of the Black Shirts,
And in Jesus Christ his only protector.
Our Savior was conceived by a good teacher and an industrious
blacksmith.
He was a valiant soldier; he had some enemies.
He came down to Rome. On the third day, he reestablished the state.
He ascended into the high office.
He is seated at the right hand of our Sovereign.
From there, he has come to judge Bolshevism.
I believe in the wise laws, the Communion of Citizens, the forgiveness of
sins, the resurrection of Italy and the eternal force. Amen.*
"Prayer for the Duce", published in La Tribuna on July 25, 1929

On 28 Apr 1945, in the small village of Giulino de Mezzegra close to the Swiss border, Benito Mussolini, Il Duce of the Kingdom of Italy from 1922-1943, the man who had captivated both Italy and the world with his visions of grandeur and his promises to return Italy to its former Roman glory, was executed along with his mistress, Claretta Petacci, by Italian partisans. The following day, their bodies were hung up with piano wire in an Esso petrol station in Milan with over a dozen other fascist leaders. Italians from all over the city flocked to the square to see the spectacle. Mussolini and Petacci's bodies were viciously beaten and spit upon in the very city where 26 years earlier saw the birth of the fascist movement.

Fascism was always too complicated for most Italians to fully understand. Today, Mussolini's ideas and doctrines, born in the chaotic days of the Great War, are often linked to Adolph Hitler's National Socialism in Germany. Unfortunately, these analyses often miss many distinctions and differences in the two systems. While they may have had some common elements, German National Socialism and Italian fascism were markedly different on issues of race and purpose. Italian Fascism focused on hyper-militarism, a citizen's absolute allegiance to the state, economic corporatism for the economic good of all citizens, and finally an attempt to recreate the glory of the Roman Empire. As Mussolini's Doctrine of Fascism (1932) points out,

The Fascist conception of the State is all-embracing; outside of it no human or spiritual values can exist, much less have value. Thus understood, Fascism is totalitarian, and the Fascist State—a synthesis and a unit inclusive of all values—interprets, develops, and potentiates the whole life of a people.

Through the investigation of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the major points of the fascist doctrine as defined by its Duce, Benito Mussolini, how the Duce came to power in Italy and how fascism inspired German National Socialism (yet was very different in its aims).

Objectives

1. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain the major points of Italian Fascism as articulated by its duce, Benito Mussolini and how it tore Italians apart between 1870 and 1929.
2. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain how Mussolini came to power in Italy and implemented the fascist program.
3. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain why Mussolini's fascism is linked to German National Socialism and how that association with Hitler not only eventually brought Il Duce's regime down, but also continues to cause misunderstandings today.

Procedures

I. Anticipatory Set

- Writing / Question: Which is better – Freedom or Security? Why? (5 min)
- Handouts – Copies of documents and readings from the websites listed. (5 min)

II. Body of Lesson

- Lecture / PPT – Il duce Benito Mussolini and Italian Fascism (20 min)
- Video – (5 min)
- Independent Activity – Students read the articles and sources Mussolini and his ideas behind fascism, taking notes as appropriate. (30 min)
- Group Activity – Socratic Seminar: Discussion: Mussolini and Fascism (15 min)

III. Closure

- Exit Ticket / Assessment – Short Essay: Explain in detail the major points of fascism as articulated by Il Duce Benito Mussolini. How was Fascism different from National Socialism in Germany?

Extension

On tour: Fascist Symbols in Rome

While on tour, you will visit the Piazza Venezia in Rome, where students will have the opportunity to see for themselves the balcony from where Mussolini often rallied crowds with his fiery oratory. Although many of the “fascist” symbols from that era were purposely taken down after World War II, it is still possible to see a few examples in areas around the Italian capital. Look carefully.

Web Links

Lesson Plan Websites

- www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/mussolini-fascism.asp
Benito Mussolini – What is Fascism, 1932 (primary source) – from the Modern History Internet Sourcebook at Fordham University
- www.worldfuturefund.org/wffmaster/Reading/Germany/mussolini.htm
The Doctrine of Fascism (primary source)
- 100years.upi.com/sta_1945-04-29.html
“29 Apr 1945: Mussolini, mistress executed by firing squad” (UPI news report – primary source)
- www.ihr.org/jhr/v04/v04p--5_Whisker.html
Italian Fascism: An Interpretation (website) – article by James B. Whisker, professor of political science at West Virginia University, published in The Journal of Historical Review, Spring 1983, pages 5-27
- www.historyteacher.net/APEuroCourse/PowerpointPresent/ItalianFascism.ppt
Italian Fascism PowerPoint from Susan Pojer, AP European history teacher at Horace Greeley High School in Chappaqua, NY on her website www.historyteacher.net.
- www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1
Reading Like a Historian: Primary Source Documents (video) – great 2-minute video on how to incorporate primary sources into the Common Core and history classes. From Shilpa Duvoor of Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City, CA – highly recommended for teachers.
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Ofa9nhPjN8
“Benito Mussolini – History Documentary” (video) – this video, although 45 minutes, covers Mussolini’s life well. Recommended for both students and teachers.
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=igXA4IAAykl
Mussolini’s Italy – Part 1 (video)
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjAfWCR_vS8
Mussolini’s Italy – Part 2 (video)
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7lw30qKFLw
The Rise of Mussolini and the Fascists (video)
- www.honors.ufl.edu/apps/Thesis.aspx/Download/136
“For the Defense of the Race: The Italian Racial Laws and the Persecution of the Jews under Fascism.” Outstanding thesis paper by Edward Grodin, graduate student at the University of Florida. Long, but does a good job explaining the racial situation in Italy and Il Duce’s decision to institute racial purity laws in 1938.
- romethesecondtime.blogspot.com/2012/01/fascism-and-reconstruction-of-rome.html
“Fascism and the Reconstruction of Rome” (website)

Background Information

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benito_Mussolini
“Benito Mussolini” – Wikipedia article
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Fascist_Party
“National Fascist Party” – Wikipedia article
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lateran_Treaty

“Lateran Treaty” – Wikipedia article

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fasci_d%27Azione_Rivoluzionaria
“Fasci d’Azione Rivoluzionaria” – Wikipedia article
- www.passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/italy/country_profile
On the Road: Italy (country profile) – from Passports Educational Travel
- www.passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/italy/rome
On the Road: Rome – from Passports Educational Travel
- www.passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/italy/the_vatican
On the Road: Vatican City – from Passports Educational Travel

Other Relevant Passports Lesson Plans

- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/mussolini-and-the-fascists
Mussolini and the Fascists 1922-1943
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/solving-the-roman-question-lateran-accords-of-1929
Solving the Roman Question: Mussolini, Pius and the Lateran Accords 1929
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/interwar-europe-rome-berlin-pact-of-steel-1939
Interwar Europe (1919-1939) – Pact of Steel: Rome-Berlin Axis
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/austria/interwar-europe-anschluss-of-1938
Interwar Europe (1919-1939) – Austro-German Anschluss
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/czech/munich-accords-of-1938
Interwar Europe (1919-1939) – Munich Accords of 1938

Key Terms

- Corporatism
- Il Duce
- Fascism
- Militarism
- Mussolini
- Claretta Petacci
- Propaganda
- Roman Empire
- Socialism

