Your notes

GCSE History: revision notes

The unification of Italy and Germany, 1848–71

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Italy before unification

- In 1848 Italy was a collection of states: Piedmont-Sardinia in the north-west, Lombardy and Venetia ruled by Austria, small duchies under Austrian influence, the Papal States ruled by the Pope, and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (Naples and Sicily) in the south.
- Giuseppe Mazzini spread Italian **nationalism** through his movement Young Italy, calling for a united, democratic Italy.
- In 1848–49 revolutions broke out. Piedmont's king, Charles Albert, fought Austria but was defeated at Custoza (1848) and Novara (1849), and a Roman Republic led by Mazzini and defended by Garibaldi was crushed by French troops. Unification failed because Austria was strong, the nationalists were divided, the Pope opposed it and no great power helped.

Cavour, Garibaldi and the Kingdom of Italy

- Count Cavour, prime minister of Piedmont from 1852, made it modern and strong, with railways and a bigger army, and joined the Crimean War to win friends. At Plombières (1858) he agreed with Napoleon III of France to fight Austria together.
- In 1859 France and Piedmont beat Austria at Magenta and Solferino. Piedmont gained Lombardy, and in 1860 the central Italian states voted to join it; France was given Nice and Savoy.
- In 1860 Giuseppe Garibaldi led his Thousand (the **Redshirts**) to conquer Sicily and then Naples. Cavour, worried he would attack Rome and bring in France, sent Piedmont's army south through the Papal States. Garibaldi handed his conquests to King Victor Emmanuel II.
- The Kingdom of Italy was declared in 1861. Venetia was added in 1866 after Prussia beat Austria, and Rome in 1870, when French troops left to fight Prussia.

- Debates: Garibaldi won the south, but Cavour's diplomacy and France's help made unification possible, and Cavour wanted a larger Piedmont more than a united Italy.

Germany: from 1848 to Bismarck (Cambridge IGCSE)

- After 1815, 39 German states formed the German Confederation, led by Austria. The **Zollverein**, a customs union led by Prussia from 1834, linked their economies but left Austria out.
- In 1848 the Frankfurt Parliament tried to unite Germany and offered the crown to King Frederick William IV of Prussia, who refused it. By 1850 Austria had restored its control.
- Otto von Bismarck became Prussia's Minister-President in 1862 and said that the great questions would be decided by "blood and iron", not speeches.

Bismarck's wars and the German Empire (Cambridge IGCSE)

- 1864: Prussia and Austria beat Denmark over Schleswig and Holstein. Bismarck then used arguments over running them to provoke Austria.
- 1866: Prussia beat Austria in seven weeks, at Königgrätz (Sadowa). Austria was pushed out of German affairs, and Prussia led a new North German Confederation.
- 1870: Bismarck used a dispute over the Spanish throne and edited the Ems Telegram to provoke France into declaring war. The southern German states joined Prussia, and France was beaten at Sedan.
- In January 1871 the German Empire was proclaimed at Versailles, with Wilhelm I of Prussia as Kaiser, and France lost Alsace-Lorraine. Bismarck's skill was vital, but so were Prussia's army, its industry and the **Zollverein**.

Key terms

Nationalism	The belief that a people who share a language and culture should have their own country.
Risorgimento	The movement for Italian unification.
Redshirts	Garibaldi's volunteer army, the Thousand.
Zollverein	The customs union of German states led by Prussia. (Cambridge IGCSE)
Realpolitik	Politics based on practical power rather than ideals, as practised by Bismarck. (Cambridge IGCSE)

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. Which foreign power controlled Lombardy and Venetia in 1848?

Your notes

2. Who founded Young Italy?
3. Who did Cavour make a secret agreement with at Plombières?
4. What did Garibaldi's Thousand conquer in 1860?
5. When was the Kingdom of Italy declared?
6. How did Italy gain Venetia in 1866?
7. What was the Zollverein? (Cambridge IGCSE)
8. Which war pushed Austria out of German affairs? (Cambridge IGCSE)

Answers

1. Austria
2. Giuseppe Mazzini
3. Napoleon III of France
4. Sicily and Naples
5. 1861
6. Prussia beat Austria
7. A customs union of German states led by Prussia
8. The Austro-Prussian War of 1866

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 3 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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