Italian Fascism
Fascism is the totalitarian philosophy of government that glorifies the state and nation and assigns to the state control over every aspect of national life.

The State not only is authority which governs and molds individual will with laws and values of spiritual life, but it is also power which makes its will prevail abroad....For the Fascist, everything is within the State and...neither individuals nor groups are outside the State...For Fascism, the State is an absolute, before which individuals or groups are only relative....Liberalism denied the State in the name of the individual; Fascism reasserts the rights of the State as expressing the real essence of the individual.

-- Enciclopedia Italiana, 1932
The Fasces Symbol

Don’t Need to Write:

Comes from the Latin word *fasces*.

In ancient Rome, the *fasces* were cylindrical bundles of wooden rods, tied tightly together around an axe.

They symbolize unity and power.
The Characteristics of Fascism
1. Ideology

- It celebrates the nation or the race as a community transcending all other loyalties.
- Powerful and continuing nationalism.
  - Constant use of patriotic mottos, slogans, symbols, songs, etc.
  - Flags are seen everywhere.
2. Subordination to the State

- Fascism seeks to forcibly subordinate ALL aspects of society to its vision of community.
- It uses organized violence to suppress opposition.
  - Glorification of force.
  - Accepts the tenets of Social Darwinism.
  - Is anti-democratic.
3. Cult of State Worship

The individual had no significance except as a member of the state.

The fascists were taught:
- *Credere!* [to believe]
- *Obbedire!* [to obey]
- *Combattere!* [to fight]
4. Militarism
5. Identification of Enemies or Scapegoats as a Unifying Cause

- The people are rallied into a unifying patriotic frenzy over the need to eliminate a perceived common threat or foe.
- This foe could be racial, ethnic, a religious minority, liberals, communists, etc.
7. Disdain for the Recognition of Human Rights

Don’t Write:
Because of the fear of enemies and the need for security, the people are persuaded that human rights can be ignored out of “need.”

People look the other way or even approve of torture, summary executions, long incarcerations of prisoners, assassinations, etc.
9. Religion & Government Are Intertwined

Don’t Write: Fascist governments tend to use the most common religion in the nation as a tool to manipulate public opinion.

They meld religious rhetoric, symbolism, mythology, etc., into their policies [appears to give a religious imprimatur to government policies!]

[Image of people in religious attire standing together.]
10. Disdain for Intellectuals & for the Arts

- Don’t Write:
- Open hostility to higher education and academia is promoted.
- Professors and other academics are censored or arrested.
- Free expression in the arts is openly attacked.
11. Controlled Mass Media
The Rise of Mussolini
Fascism, to some extent, was a product of a general feeling of anxiety and fear among the middle class of post-war Italy:

- Fears regarding the survival of capitalism.
- Economic depression.
- The rise of a militant left.
- A feeling of national shame and humiliation at Italy’s poor treatment by the other leaders after World War I [especially at Versailles].
Don’t Write:

In 1920 the Italian Socialist Party organized militant strikes in Italian industrial cities.

- Economic chaos in the north could spread to the rest of Italy!

Hundreds of new fascist groups developed throughout Italy in response → “Black Shirts” [paramilitary squad] violently attacked the Socialists.
Don’t Write: Originally a Marxist.

- By 1909 he was convinced that a national rather than an international revolution was necessary.
Benito Mussolini (1883–1945)

- Don’t Write:
- His views on WWI:
  - The war was a turning point for Italy.
  - The returning combat soldiers would form a new elite and bring about a new type of state.
  - This new elite would transform Italian politics and society!
Mussolini Comes to Power

1921 election → Fascists included in the political coalition bloc of the government [they win 35 seats].

October, 1922 → Mussolini threatened a coup d'état.

- “March on Rome” → 25,000 Black Shirts staged demonstrations throughout the capital.
King Victor Emmanuel III refused to sign a law giving the Italian military the ability to quell the chaos and arrest the Fascists. He invited Mussolini to join a coalition government.

1925 → Mussolini seized dictatorial powers during a political crisis [Black Shirts murdered one of Mussolini’s chief Socialist critics, Giacomo Matteotti].
The Fascists Consolidate Power
(1925–1931)

New laws passed to create the legal basis for Italy’s official transformation into a single-party state:

- Don’t Write:
  - Independent political parties & trade unions were abolished.
  - Freedom of the press was curbed.
  - Special courts created to persecute any political opposition.
  - National police force created [with a secret police component].
The Lateran Accords (1929)

This settled a long-running dispute over the Catholic Church’s role in Italian politics → this was the 1\textsuperscript{st} time in Italian history that the Church and the government agreed on their respective roles!

Terms:

- The Papacy was granted temporal sovereignty over Vatican City.
- The Papacy was guaranteed the free exercise of Roman Catholicism as the sole state religion throughout Italy.
- The Papacy accepted Italian sovereignty over the former Papal States.
The Lateran Treaty
Italian Fascist Propaganda
The Fascists encouraged the development of large families. For having 14 children you received a medal from Il Duce himself!
The first sentence pronounced by children at school was “Let us salute the flag in the Roman fashion; hail to Italy; hail to Mussolini”.

Textbooks emphasized:

- The glorious past of the ancient Romans.
- The limitations imposed upon the present inhabitants by geography and the West.
- The imperial destiny that awaited Italy’s future development.
Anti-Semitism

- 50,000 Jews lived in Italy in the 1930s.
- Mussolini did NOT implement an extermination program in Italy.
  - 75% of Italian Jews survived World War II.
  - 8,000 died in German extermination camps.
- 1938 → anti-Semitic laws passed
  - Manifesto degli Scienziati Razzisti [The Manifesto of the Racist Scientists].
    - Excluded foreign Jews [most of them were sent to German death camps].
    - Forbade all Jews from teaching.
    - Excluded Jews from serving in the government or in the military.
Don’t Write: Gli Ebrei in Italia (1937)

Provided the intellectual premise for the 1938 racial laws.

Attacked Jews for:

- Their alleged Zionist sympathies.
- Their championing of degenerate avant-garde cultural expressions.
- For their doubtful loyalty to the Fascist regime and its imperial claims.
Mussolini Was Hitler’s Role Model