

Country of the Week: Italy



FRAME 11

Italy was not a unified country until 1861.

BASIC LEVEL

The first thing people notice about Italy is its shape. **What does it look like to you?** (*A boot.*) **What continent is Italy part of?** (*Europe.*) Italy is famous for many things. People all around the world eat Italian food. **What does Italian food mean to you?** (*Pizza, pasta, and so on.*) Italian artists like Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo are loved everywhere. Italy is also known for its music, its poetry, and its soccer teams. Italy's biggest city is its capital, Rome. This is one of the most important cities in world history. It was the center of the Roman Empire, which once ruled most of Europe and large parts of Africa and the Middle East. **What is an empire?** (*A group of lands all controlled by one government.*) It is also the center of the Roman Catholic Church.

It might surprise you to learn that there was no country called "Italy" until 1861. That is when Rome and many other large cities decided to come together to fight their enemies. NEXT PICTURE

GENERAL LEVEL

Italy has always been a country of many competing groups and parties. That is perhaps because this region was ruled by powerful city-states for thousands of years. **What is a city-state?** (*An independent city, with its own government and army.*) Some of the most powerful city-states in the world sprang up here. **What was the biggest and most important city-state from Italy?** (*Rome. The Roman Empire once stretched over all of Europe and large parts of Africa and Asia.*) This empire was formed together with the Roman Catholic Church, which is still based there, in an independent state called Vatican City.

Florence, Pisa, Venice, Milan, and Genoa were also large and important city-states from this area of the world. In the early 1800s, these city-states were under the control of various other foreign countries like France and Austria. Several leaders began to say that the only way to drive these powers out was to unite as a country. The king of Sardinia became the leader of this movement, but it did not happen until a man named Giuseppe Garibaldi sailed to the island of Sicily to help free it from the Bourbon army. In 1861, the Kingdom of Italy was born. **Are you surprised that Italy is such a "young" country?**

Many people think that mainland Italy is shaped like a boot. **Do you see "the boot"?** Italy also includes Sardinia and Sicily, the two islands marked here in red. **Which one is which?** (*Sardinia is the northern one, while Sicily is the closest to the toe of the "boot."*) NEXT PICTURE

ADVANCED LEVEL

Italy, our country of the week, is rich in ancient history and worldwide tradition. But, you may be surprised to learn that it only came together as a country in the year 1861. Before that, it was a collection of autonomous cities and regions, each with its own set of laws and customs. **What are cities like this called?** (*City-states.*)

The most famous city-state of all is Rome. According to legend, this city was founded by twin brothers named Romulus and Remus in the year 753 B.C.E. But one does not need to rely on legends to talk about ancient Rome — the truth is impressive enough. By the time the Roman Empire was at its peak, in the second century C.E., it controlled all of southern Europe, most of northern Africa, and the entire Middle East. This empire split in 395 C.E., but had already left its mark as one of the great civilizations of all time. **What else do you know about the Roman Empire?**

Italy itself came together when Rome and the many other city-states in the area grew tired of foreign occupiers like Austria and France. These city-states began to rally around the king of the large island to the north in this picture, Sardinia. Italy's national hero is Giuseppe Garibaldi, who sailed to the island of Sicily with 1,000 men to defeat a much larger Bourbon army. The Kingdom of Italy was established in 1861. **Why is there no king of Italy now?** (*After World War Two, Italians voted to replace its monarchy with a parliamentary democracy.*) NEXT PICTURE

Country of the Week: Italy (continued)



FRAME 12

There are many amazing sights, sounds, and tastes in Italy.

BASIC LEVEL

Many tourists come to Italy every year. Some come to ski in the Alps, which are located in the northern part of the country. Others come to hear opera music, to visit beautiful small towns, or to buy Italian clothes. But most of them want to see sights like the ones in these pictures. The large picture shows the Colosseum in Rome. Here, warriors called gladiators used to fight against each other. The smaller picture shows a city called Venice. This city has streets, but it also has a system of canals. **What is a canal?** (*A human-made waterway.*) The boats shown here are called gondolas, and the people who steer them are called gondoliers. **Would you like to travel this way sometime?** Another Italian building is famous because it does not stand up straight. **Do you know what this building is called?** (*The Leaning Tower of Pisa.*) END OF STORY

GENERAL LEVEL

Italy was divided up into different regions, or sections, for so long that it has many different and interesting cultures. Depending on who you ask, you are liable to get ten different answers to the question, "What is Italy like?" Northern cities like Florence and Milan have very different lifestyles — and food recipes — than southern cities like Naples or Palermo. **What regional differences have you noticed in the U.S.?**

Tourism is one of Italy's greatest sources of business. The large picture here shows one of the most famous buildings in the world, the Colosseum. **Where is this building located?** (*Rome.*) This is where warriors used to fight each other in brutal contests. **What were these warriors called?** (*Gladiators.*) When one gladiator beat another one, he would wait for the crowd to vote. If they put their thumbs up, the defeated warrior could live. **What happened if the thumbs went down?** (*He would be killed.*) The smaller picture shows the canals of the beautiful city of Venice. This city is famous for its gondolas, the small boats that take people from place to place on these canals. Another famous monument is located in the town of Pisa. **Do you know what it is?** (*The Leaning Tower of Pisa.*)

Italy also has a wide range of climates. Two mountain ranges, the Alps and the Apennines, run through Italy, and skiing is a national obsession. But some places in Italy, especially along the Mediterranean Sea, are hot and dry. **Have you ever been to Italy? Would you like to visit there?** END OF STORY

ADVANCED LEVEL

Italians are passionate about opera, soccer, and politics. But the many city-states that came together to form Italy still shape most of its character. For example, while Americans tend to think of all food from Italy as "Italian food," Italians themselves distinguish between the heavy French-influenced foods of Bologna and Genoa in the north and the Mediterranean-style dishes of southern cities like Naples. **What is your favorite Italian meal?**

These regional differences may have a lot to do with Italy's climate regions, which are also very different. Europe's largest mountain range takes up much of the northern section of the country. **What is this mountain range?** (*The Alps.*) Another range, the Apennines, comes down through the middle of the country. One of the most famous volcanic eruptions in history happened here, burying the city of Pompeii in the year 79 C.E. **What mountain was this?** (*Mt. Vesuvius.*) But Italy also has many plains regions, including the Po Valley, and some areas of hot and dry weather.

And, of course, Italy has some of the most famous buildings and tourist sites in the world. The large picture shows the Colosseum of Rome, where gladiators competed to the death thousands of years ago. The smaller picture shows the gondolas and canals in one of Europe's most romantic cities. **What city is shown in this picture?** (*Venice.*) Other tourist attractions include the Leaning Tower of Pisa and Milan's gothic cathedral called "Il Duomo." **Have you ever been to Italy? If so, what stands out most about your trip?** END OF STORY