

Teacher's Notes: The Rise of Mussolini

Questions for group discussion:

1. If you wanted to start a new political movement, how would you do it?
2. Why is identifying other people as enemies effective for politicians?
3. Why do you think fascism appeared after the First World War, and not after the Franco-Prussian war (1871) or the Second World War (1945)?

Possible answers to source analysis questions:

Source 1

1. What do you think is meant by “true Italians”?

The source refers to true Italians in comparison to ‘foreigners’. Students might infer that ‘true Italians’ were ethnically Italian. Students could also infer this meant patriotic Italians or Italians who wanted to support other Italians.

Who does the source identify as the enemy of “true Italians”?

Foreigners.

2. Which group of people made up the majority of unemployed people according to the source?

Veterans

- a) Given the date of the source, why might people have thought it was wrong for this group to be unemployed?

Veterans had fought for their country in the First World War but now they couldn't afford to feed their families.

- b) Could this be seen as an **emotive** argument?

Yes... war is an emotive topic due to the level of sacrifice experienced by many.

3. Who was the source addressed to and why is this significant?

Head of the General Civil Commissariat of the Julian March – a person with great authority. Fascists were confident enough and willing to make demands to powerful people. The Fascist message was being directed at people with power.

Source 2

1. Does the violence in the source appear to be organized?

The group have clearly organized the attack, but it is a paramilitary attack rather than official justice.

2. Why would the fascists attack the younger brother of their target?

The associates of the enemy might also considered the enemy. It would intimidate the intended target and any others who might be seen as opponents of fascists.

3. How do you think violence could have helped the Fascist movement grow?
 - *Intimidation can deter opponents and encourage people to join to feel safe*
 - *Some people might want to join in violence, such as veterans who were used to military action, or people who were too young to have fought in the war.*

Source 3

1. Read Source 3 carefully. Find three words that describe the city before the fascist demonstration.
 - *Unusual*
 - *Movement*
 - *Excitement*
 - *People barely walked around*
 - *Crowded*
 - *Music, pennants and tricolour flags*

2. Were the people gathering for the demonstration just from Bologna?

No, people were travelling into the city.

- a. What can this tell you about the popularity of fascism in Italy?

People were willing to travel to join a fascist gathering. Fascists groups were not just local but joined together across different areas.

- b. Can this tell you anything about the dedication of fascist members to Mussolini?

Members were willing to travel to hear him speak.

3. What do you think was meant by the “programme of Italianness” that Mussolini proposed?

An ultranationalist society in which Italian culture and identity is important in all aspects of public and private life.

Why might Italian people have been drawn to this idea?

People might like the idea of celebrating their cultural identity. It could also have given them a sense of belonging and unity or even a sense of superiority.

Source 4

1. Read Source 4 carefully. Note down three of the qualities Fascist soldiers were meant to have.
 - *Untamable faith*
 - *Determined to sacrifice*

- *No cowardice*
- *Fulfil his duties*
- *Enjoy his duties*
- *Humility*
- *Respect*

2. List any words that make you think of religion or spirituality.

- *Spirit*
- *Mysticism*
- *Apostolate*
- *Faith*

Do you think these words were meant to promote faith in religion or something else?
If so, what were fascist soldiers meant to have total faith in?

Italian Fascists were meant to have faith in the leader and in the fascist movement. Fascism is presented as more of a religion than a political ideology as it is all consuming, unshakable and personal. People are more likely to sacrifice themselves for religious beliefs than politics.

Can this tell you anything about the nature of fascism in Italy and how this encouraged obedience to Mussolini?

If Mussolini was the ‘supreme leader’ and people felt as strongly about fascism as they might feel about their religion or beliefs then Mussolini could be comparable to a god.

3. Why would it benefit a leader like Mussolini to have “blind, absolute and respectful” obedience from fascist members?

- *Mussolini would be able to **mobilise** his followers making him very powerful.*
- *People will be less likely to follow another leader or overthrow him*
- *It created the necessary conditions to establish a dictatorship*

Source 5

1. The Newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia* was founded by Mussolini.
 - a) Why do you think he would put this message in his paper?

It is supportive of his cause

- b) Who do you think this message would reach?

People who are already fascist members

- c) What effect might this have on the reader?

It may encourage them to fight for fascism to not let their fellow fascists' sacrifices go to waste.

2. What do the mother and sister of Fredrico ask of his fellow members?

To continue his devotion to fascism.

- a) Is it significant that the request came from his female family members?

- *Women's role in fascism can be seen as allowing the sacrifice of the men they love*
- *The appeal of women could perhaps be seen as more emotive at the time*

- b) What does this tell us about women's involvement in fascist movements?

The roles of fascist women were very different to men's roles in Italy.

- c) "Him" and "His" have capital letters. Do you think this was done deliberately and if so, why?

Words can be capitalised in order to show respect such as to God whose name is capitalised. This could also serve to martyr the dead as the dead man is seen as worthy of respect and hence, give greater motivation in the movement.