Sunshine State Standards

Chapter 22

SS.912.W.6.5 – Summarize the causes, key events, and effects of the unification of Italy and Germany.

Separately, these two countries became unified for the first time in the 19th century. The process in Italy occurred between 1848 and 1870, and in Germany between 1850 and 1871. Prior to unification, both regions had been decentralized collections of smaller states with their own governments.

Germany

Causes of unification:

- Nationalism. The widespread feeling of pride and devotion to one’s country – nationalism – was a major theme of the 19th century. The German people living in various principalities increasingly came to view themselves as one, especially following the Napoleonic wars of the early 1800s.

- Economic integration. The establishment of an economic union among Prussia and other German states in the 1830s set the stage for further unity. This union reduced tariffs (taxes on goods imported from other states) and encouraged German states to work more closely together.

- Otto von Bismarck. Prussia was the largest and strongest of the German states, and the true leader of German unification was Otto von Bismarck, Prussia’s prime minister and later chancellor (or highest official of Prussia’s monarch, King William I). Bismarck strengthened Prussia’s military and used realpolitik (realistic politics based on the needs of the state) to engineer German unification, with Prussia as the leader.

Key events:

- Wars with Denmark and Austria. Known for his “blood and iron” policies, Bismarck led Prussia as it defeated neighboring countries and annexed new lands.

- Franco-Prussian War of 1870. An example of Bismarck’s realpolitik was the trickery he used to play up nationalist feelings and provoke war with France. After a French ambassador met with King William, Bismarck edited a memo of the account to make it seem like the two had insulted one another. When the “Ems dispatch” was released to the press, public opinion was inflamed and Napoleon III declared war on Prussia, as Bismarck had hoped. Prussia easily defeated France and gained new territory in the Alsace and Lorraine regions.

- Birth of the second Reich. Following the German victory over the French, German princes came together and persuaded King William to take the title of Kaiser, or emperor, of a unified Germany. This would be the second Reich, or empire – the first having been the Holy Roman Empire. A constitution was adopted that included a two-house legislature.

Effects of unification:

- Germany becomes an economic and military powerhouse. The industrial strength of a unified Germany became magnified in the late 19th century. It became a leader in industrial development, including in the areas of science and engineering, such as the production of artificial chemicals. Its military continued to expand, eventually threatening to tip Europe’s “balance of power,” and its navy came to rival Great Britain’s vaunted navy.

- Germany pioneers social reform. After Bismarck initially attacked the revolutionary threat of Marxist and socialist protestors seeking help for the working class, he changed course and sponsored new laws to protect workers with such things as health and accident insurance, as well as retirement benefits. Germany’s system of economic safeguards became the model for other European nations.
Italy

Causes of unification:

• **Nationalism.** As in Germany, the dream of national unity in Italy came to life in the aftermath of Napoleon’s invasions. Giuseppe Mazzini spurred the movement by founding Young Italy, a secret society aimed at creating a free, independent and unified republican nation.

• **Economic integration.** While some nationalists reminded Italians of its rich history, which included the glories of the ancient Roman empire and the central role of the Roman Catholic Church during Europe’s Middle Ages, others insisted that unification would end trade barriers among the Italian states and stimulate the economy.

• **Camillo Cavour.** The Italian nationalist movement became centered in the kingdom of Sardinia, where its constitutional monarch, Victor Emmanuel II, made Cavour his prime minister in 1852. Their long-term goal was Italian unity, with Sardinia as the leader. Notice this storyline is quite similar to the one in Germany.

Key events:

• **Sardinia allies with Britain and France in Crimean War.** After its role in helping defeat Russia in the Crimean War, Cavour negotiated a secret deal with Napoleon III, who promised aid to Sardinia if it went to war with Austria. A year later, Cavour provoked that war and, with French assistance, was able to defeat Austria and annex the principality of Lombardy. Around the same time, several other northern Italian states overthrew Austrian-backed rulers and joined with Sardinia.

• **Garibaldi’s “Red Shirts.”** In southern Italy, the nationalist fighter Giuseppe Garibaldi had recruited by 1860 a thousand red-shirted volunteers. Cavour provided him with weapons and the aid of ships to conquer Sicily.

• **Sardinian troops link up with the Red Shirts.** Fearing that Garibaldi might try to establish his own republic in the south, Cavour urged Emmanuel to move troops to the region. As a result, Sardinians overran the Papal States, a region in central Italy, before linking up with Garibaldi’s troops. Garibaldi then turned over Naples and Sicily to Emmanuel, who was then crowned king of Italy.

• **Italy adds Venetia and Rome.** The province of Venetia was added to Italy in 1866 following the Austro-Prussian War, in which it had formed an alliance with the victorious Prussia. And following the Franco-Prussian War, France was forced to withdraw its troops from Rome.

Effects of unification:

• **Internal turmoil.** Regional rivalries intensified after unification. The north had long been a hub of trade and a center of culture, and its relative wealth stood in stark contrast to the poorer south, where illiterate peasants worked exhausted farmland. The Catholic Church, angry about the loss of the Papal States and Rome, urged its followers not to cooperate with the newly unified Italian government. The constitutional monarchy extended the right to vote to only a small percentage of men. Socialists organized strikes and anarchists (people who want to abolish all government) resorted to violent tactics such as bombings.

• **Slow economic progress and reform.** Despite its problems, conditions in Italy gradually improved through the first decades of the 20th century. The government passed laws to improve social conditions and extended voting rights to more men. Industrialization brought urbanization.

• **Emigration.** Faced with the struggles and slow progress at home, many Italians sought new opportunities by emigrating to the Americas (the United States, Canada and Latin America, especially Argentina).