Biography of Benito Mussolini

DIRECTIONS: Using the information below answer the questions on side two:

Mussolini's rise to power was rapid; his Fascist Party Blackshirts marched into Rome in 1922, a year before Hitler's failed first attempt to seize power, the Munich Beer Hall Putsch, landed the German in prison. By the time Hitler became the Fuehrer (Leader) of Germany, Mussolini had been "IL DUCE" (Leader) of Italy for more than ten years. He had been successful in improving the Italian economy and bringing stability, as it was said, "He made the trains run on time" (by shooting someone if they didn't). His ambition was to regain for Italy the prestige and power.

Benito Mussolini, "IL DUCE", Prime Minister of Italy, is an Axis European political leader. Like Hitler, he served in the First World War as a young man and dreamed of military glory in a Second War to come. Both returned from the First World War to find their countries in political and economic chaos and formed extremist political parties.

This led him to a program of militarization. Many Europeans felt that his visible successes in restoring Italy outweighed any "rumors" of police brutality. His 1935 invasion of Ethiopia was carried out with a ruthless disregard for world opinion, including the use of poison gas. When the British and French leaders condemned him for these acts, he looked elsewhere for allies and found Germany and Japan.

He joined Hitler in supporting the Fascist "Nationalist" side in the 1936-1939 Spanish Civil War. This gained him an ally, Spanish Generalissimo Franco, but being associated with the atrocities of this brutal war lost him still more support in the rest of the world.

His biggest mistake, however, was the decision to enter the Second World War. On 10 JUNE 1940, Germany had been at war with Britain and France since the previous September, but Italy was still at peace, and had little reason to fear that any of the other powers would attack it. Germany was on the verge of winning the Battle of France, and France was likely to surrender very soon, and it seemed too many observers that Britain would then make peace. Perhaps Mussolini thought that Italy would be the next target for Nazi aggression, if he did not help Hitler win; or he may have just been moved to grab a piece of France before it was too late. In any case, he did declare war on France.

By July 1943, Italy had lost all of its colonies in Africa, and most of its army, and was being invaded. Mussolini was deposed by a revolt within his own Fascist Grand Council, and Victor Emmanuel III, the King of Italy, who had been reduced to a figurehead by Mussolini, appointed Marshal Badoglio to be the new Prime Minister. Mussolini was arrested, while Italy attempted to change sides. In the southern part of Italy, occupied by the Allies, this succeeded, and the new Italian government helped create the Italian Co-Belligerent Forces.

Hitler sent German paratroops to rescue Mussolini from the mountaintop resort where he was imprisoned. He then set up the Italian Social Republic in German-held northern Italy, with Mussolini as its leader.

When the Germans surrendered in northern Italy, in April, 1945, Mussolini was arrested again. He and his mistress, Clara Petacci, were removed from the jail at Giulino di Messegra and lynched, by the local Communist partisans.
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NAME: _________________________________  Period:_____  Row:____  Score:_____

1. What was Mussolini’s Fascist Party called? ______________________________________

2. Mussolini was called "IL DUCE". What did that mean? ____________________________

3. What was Mussolini’s ambition?

4. Describe Mussolini’s 1935 invasion of Ethiopia:

5. When the British and French leaders condemned him for these acts what did Mussolini do?

6. What was Mussolini’s biggest mistake? _____________________________________________

7. What were the two possible reasons why Mussolini joined Hitler by attacking France?
   1. 
   2.

8. What was the status of Italy by July 1943?

9. How was Mussolini deposed?

10. Who came to Mussolini’s rescue? ________________________

11. How was Mussolini rescued?

12. How did Hitler help Mussolini after the rescue?

13. When the Germans surrendered in northern Italy, in April, 1945, what happened to Mussolini?