

0. ITALY - UNIFICATION and a COMMON LANGUAGE - Story Preface

1. ITALY and RISORGIMENTO

2. ITALY and 19TH-CENTURY REVOLUTION

3. CAVOUR and VICTOR EMMANUEL II

4. GARIBALDI and the UNIFICATION of ITALY

**5. ITALY - UNIFICATION and a COMMON LANGUAGE**



These three men—from left-to-right Giuseppe Mazzini, Count Camillo Benso di Cavour and Giuseppe Garibaldi—together with King Victor Emmanuel II, are known as "The Fathers of the Fatherland." Their work helped to unify the various regions of Italy into one country.

In early 1861 a national parliament convened and proclaimed the Kingdom of Italy, with Victor Emmanuel II as its king. At this point, there were only two major territories outside of the parameters of the new Kingdom of Italy: Rome and Venetia.

Venice (Venetia) was still controlled by Austria. How would the new Kingdom of Italy wrest control of Venice from Austria?

The short answer ... go to war.

The U.S. State Department provides an overview of those efforts:

*In 1866, Italy joined Prussia in a campaign against Austria (the 1866 Austro-Prussian War) and thus won Venetia.*

That left Rome—the place where the Pope was living—as the only place on the Italian peninsula which was not yet unified with the rest of the Kingdom. How would Italian forces add Rome to the newly unified kingdom?

At the time—in 1870—French forces were responsible for guarding the Pope. France, however, was distracted by another war—the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71)—which gave the Italian army an opening.

Italian forces marched into Rome, in 1870, and took over. That year both Rome and the Papal States were incorporated into the Kingdom of Italy.

The goal of *Risorgimento*—at least for some individuals, but not for all (such as Mazzini who still wanted his country to be a Republic)—was complete. And ... now that Rome was part of a unified Italy ... the "Eternal City" could become the country's capital.

That happened during 1871.



## Italy by 1829

The process of unifying Italy, into a single country, was one of the great events of the 19th century. However, it was neither a quick nor simple process. And ... it took even more years for people living in Italy to speak a common language.

Why was that?

Because Italian—a language stemming from the Tuscan dialect, used by poets such as Dante (who mixed southern Italian dialects and languages, especially Sicilian, with his native Tuscan), Boccaccio and Petrarca—was definitely not the country's most-predominant language in 1871.

In fact:

- Today's "Italian" was such a little-known language that it was only spoken (and understood) by roughly 3-5% of all people who were living in the newly unified country.
- It wasn't until the advent of television, during the second half of the 20th century, that Italy's "official" language became widely understood throughout the Italian peninsula.
- The Italian parliament didn't approve a Constitutional resolution—stating that "The Italian language is the official language of the Republic"—until 2007 (when the vote passed by 361 votes to 75).

Why did 75 Members of Parliament oppose this Constitutional recognition of Italian as the country's official language? Because people throughout Italy still speak their own regional dialects (just like they favor regional foods and cultural traditions).

Who knew?

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ITALY-UNIFICATION-and-a-COMMON-LANGUAGE-How-Italy-Was-Unified>

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## Media Stream



Italy  
by 1829

### Italy Becomes Unified - Animated Map

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### Italy's Unifiers: Mazzini, Cavour and Garibaldi

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