Italy: *a brief history*

For hundreds of years, the history of Italy was the history of Western Civilization.

The Roman Empire influenced the government, the arts and the architecture of many centuries to come.

After the fall of the Roman Empire in the A.D 400s, Italy began a long period as a divided country governed by foreign rulers.

The renaissance, a period of great achievement in the arts, developed in Italy after 1300 and spread throughout the rest of Europe.

Much of the Italian peninsula was united for the first time under one ruler during the early 1800s, when Napoleon Bonaparte captured the region.

Napoleon made the region part of the French Empire.

Most of Italy was united as an independent country for the first time in 1861 under the constitutional monarchy headed by King Victor Emmanuel II.

The Italian flag (designed by Napoleon) was adopted in 1870 .

Benito Mussolini took control of the Italian Government in the early 1920s as a Fascist Leader.

He ruled as dictator until 1943 when he was overthrown as a result of Italy's defeat in World War Two.

Italy has had a republic form of government since 1946. In that year Italy voted to abolish the monarchy.

Italy's coat of arms was established after the formation of the Italian Republic (1946).

The Christian Democratic Party is Italy's largest political party and has held the majority of cabinet positions since World War Two, even today.