

# TOTALITARIAN DICTATOR HANDBOOK

Fold your piece of blank paper into six squares until it looks like this:



Number each square in the upper left corner

Write the bolded headings below next to the corresponding number. Listen to the story about how Benito Mussolini, a totalitarian dictator from Italy, used each tactic to secure power in his country. Then, sketch an image of your own imaginary supervillain using the same tactics to gain power.

Picture it! Italy!! 1920s and 1930s...

**1. A single-party dictatorship with blind obedience to a single leader.**

- a. Though Italy was technically a constitutional monarchy (it had both a constitution and a king) Mussolini came to power promising to return Italy to its former glory after years of hardship during and after WWI. He named his party the Fascist party, named after a Roman symbol of strength and unity. He was a fiery speaker and promised to end corruption and replace political turmoil with order. He told the people that he was the only person alive who could bring Italy back to the glory days of Rome. War weary Italians were receptive to his message because they felt their government was not serving them properly after the War. Italy did not receive some of the lands promised by the allies before the Treaty of Versailles, and Italians felt disappointed and cheated as well as war weary. They ignored their individual rights in exchange for a stronger country and chanted Mussolini's slogans glorifying the state and himself, such as "Believe! Obey! Fight!" and "Mussolini is always right!"

**2. State control of the economy.**

- a. To encourage economic growth and end conflicts between workers and employers, Mussolini's government took over control of industry, agriculture, and trade. His system favored the upper classes and industrial leaders and kept workers' wages low. Workers were forbidden to strike. This improved production for the country as a whole, but the majority of individuals suffered as a consequence while an elite few prospered.

**3. Use of police spies and terror to enforce the will of the state/leader.**

- a. One of Mussolini's strongest supporters and assistants was his son-in-law, Galeazzo Ciano, who was married to his favorite daughter Edda. Ciano was a diplomat in China before serving in the military. After the war, Ciano climbed high in the Fascist hierarchy, eventually becoming foreign minister, and many people thought he would be Mussolini's successor. When WWII worsened, however, Ciano joined with other fascist leaders and called for Mussolini to resign. He was arrested, tried for treason, and then executed.

**4. Government control of the media to indoctrinate and mobilize citizens through propaganda.**

- a. A common thing for totalitarian leaders to do is to develop a "cult of personality." This is a strategy through which the leader makes the public love him, even though he uses violence and force to keep control. Mussolini, for instance, gave himself the nickname Il Duce, which means "The Boss," or "The Leader." He had a very enthusiastic style of speaking and made grand gestures in front of the crowd to inspire people. He used nationalistic messages to promote the greatness of Italy, and promised to return Italy to the glory days of the Roman Empire! His face appeared in magazines and newspapers, on posters in public places, and even on the cover of children's notebooks. Sometimes he would participate in publicity stunts like working bare-chested next to Italian field workers, or wrestling wild animals at the public zoo. Newspapers were not allowed to criticize Il Duce or question his methods, or else they might face charges of treason and disloyalty.

**5. Use of schools and youth organizations to spread ideology to children.**

- a. In order to make sure that every generation would support his ideology, Mussolini spread his ideal of Italian supremacy to children through a group called the "Young Fascists." Children participated in lessons about the glory days of Italy and were issued matching uniforms that resembled those worn by the military. He also glorified the role of women as wives and mothers. Women were pushed out of paying jobs and instead encouraged to "win the battle of motherhood!" Women who had 14 children or more were awarded a special medal of honor by Il Duce himself! This would ensure that Italy would have a large population of young Fascists to fill the military ranks throughout the coming years.

**6. Strict censorship of artists and intellectuals with dissenting opinions.**

- a. Mussolini once famously stated his idea of totalitarian Italy like this: "Everything within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state." He didn't believe in art for the sake of art or sports for the sake of entertainment. Everything that Italians did had to contribute to building up the country. Il Duce personally read newspaper articles and would call in the editors to praise them or scold them depending on how they depicted the news.

## **90 SECOND CHALLENGE- SUPERVILLAIN!**

- On the back of your paper, list and draw the features of your totalitarian supervillain!
- He/She needs an appropriate supervillain name!
- Don't forget to give super powers and accessorize your supervillain! He/She should have six total characteristics/accessories that are related to the six tactics you learned about during the story telling.
- GO!!!!