**Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898)** 

Otto Eduard Leopold von Bismarck was born into an aristocratic family at Schönhausen, northwest of Berlin, on 1 April 1815. He attended a prestigious school in Berlin followed by the University of Göttingen. He then entered the Prussian civil service but was bored by his job and in 1838 resigned. For nearly a decade, he helped his father manage the family estates.

In 1847, Bismarck married Johanna von Puttkamer, who provided him with stability. It was a year of significant change in his life, when he also embraced the Christian tradition of Lutheranism, and began his political career in the Prussian legislature, where he gained a reputation as an ultra-conservative royalist. In 1851, King Frederick Wilhelm IV appointed Bismarck as Prussian representative to the German Confederation. He then served as ambassador to Russia and France. In 1862, he returned to Prussia and was appointed prime minister by the new king, Wilhelm I.

Bismarck was now determined to unite the German states into a single empire, with Prussia at its core. With Austrian support, he used the expanded Prussian army to capture the provinces of Schleswig and Holstein from Denmark. He then escalated a quarrel with Austria and its German allies over the administration of these provinces into a war, in which Prussia was the victor. Prussia then annexed further territory in Germany.

Unable to persuade the southern German states to join with his North German Confederation, he provoked hostilities with France as a way of uniting the German states together. The German victory in the Franco-Prussian War won over the southern German states, and in 1871 they agreed to join a German empire. Wilhelm I of Prussia became emperor.

As 'chancellor' of the new Germany, Bismarck concentrated on building a powerful state with a unified national identity. One of his targets was the Catholic Church, which he believed had too much influence, particularly in southern Germany. He also worked to prevent the spread of socialism, partly by introducing health insurance and pensions.

Abroad, Bismarck aimed to make the German empire the most powerful in Europe. In 1879, he negotiated an alliance with Austria-Hungary to counteract France and Russia. Italy later joined the alliance. To avoid alienating Britain, Bismarck arranged the two Mediterranean Agreements of 1887, designed to preserve the status quo against a Russian threat.

In 1890, Bismarck resigned after disagreeing with the new emperor, Wilhelm II. He retired to his estate near Hamburg and died there on 30 July 1898.

Bismarck Quotes

Anyone who has ever looked into the glazed eyes of a soldier dying on the battlefield will think hard before starting a war.

People never lie so much as after a hunt, during a war or before an election.

The great questions of the day will not be settled by means of speeches and majority decisions but by iron and blood.

The main thing is to make history, not to write it.

Be polite; write diplomatically; even in a declaration of war one observes the rules of politeness.

When you want to fool the world, tell the truth.

A government must not waiver once it has chosen its course. It must not look to the left or right but go forward.

With a gentleman I am always a gentleman and a half, and with a fraud I try to be a fraud and a half.

Politics is not an exact science.

To retain respect for sausages and laws, one must not watch them in the making.

An appeal to fear never finds an echo in German hearts.

Politics is the art of the possible.

Never believe anything in politics until it has been officially denied.

Politics is the art of the next best.

There is a Providence that protects idiots, drunkards, children and the United States of America.

The secret of politics? Make a good treaty with Russia

1. Where did Bismarck come from and what was his background until 1847?
2. Why was this a significant year for Bismarck in three different ways?
3. What do you think ultra-conservative royalist means? Why do you think Bismarck thought like this?
4. How did his political career develop until 1862?
5. What was he now determined to do?
6. How did he go about achieving this goal in relation to:

* Denmark?
* Austria?
* independent north German states?
* France?

1. Why was this final victory in 1871 over France the most important and what were the results?
2. How did Bismarck start to build a new German national identity at home? Why was this important to the new Germany do you think?
3. How did he start to establish a German empire overseas? Who were Germany`s main rivals?
4. Why did he leave office and when? What happened after this?

**Otto von Bismarck – the man behind the mask!**

Using the quotes above, try and decide what sort of man he was....

For example, was he ambitious, cunning, curious, funny, greedy, kind?

For each description, try and justify your choice with an example from his life or a quote

**Hwk task**

Your task over the next week and to be handed in no later than the end of the Easter break is to design and write a Time magazine cover and leader article about Otto von Bismarck and his life....

Who was he? What did he believe?

What did he accomplish and achieve?

Was he a great leader or a leader who led Germany towards destruction and war?