Otto von Bismarck was born on April 1, 1815 in the Germanic state of Schonhausen. He is considered to be the 'founder' of modern Germany.

After studying law, Bismarck entered Prussian service and became a judicial administrator and eventually a Prussian ambassador to Russia and later France. By 1862 he returned to Berlin to become Prussia's Chancellor (Prime Minister). Despite strong steps toward economic unity, in 1862 Prussia remained the strongest state of a politically fragmented Germany. There were dozens of small German kingdoms. Bismarck was determined to unite all of them into a single nation state under the leadership of the Prussian King, Kaiser Wilhelm I.

Bismarck understood it would not be easy to draw the German states into a unified whole under Prussian leadership. He crafted a strategy similar to Machiavelli's "let the end justify the means." Realpolitik, as it came to known, meant an unyielding drive to achieve national goals at any cost. There would be no room for weak-minded liberals who cared too much for principles. Bismarck viewed democracy as a government for the weak. In his famous "blood and iron" speech delivered to his Prussian parliament he stated,

"Germany does not look to Prussia's liberalism, but to her power .... The great questions of the day are not to be decided by speeches and majority resolutions – but by blood and iron!"

Upon being warned that he might face British opposition he stated,

"What is England to me? The importance of a state is measured by the number of soldiers it can put into the field of battle ... It is the destiny of the weak to be devoured by the strong."

In a series of wars instigated by Bismarck between 1864 and 1870, Bismarck's realpolitik strategy paid off. Germans came together to defend their common interest. In particular they rallied behind Bismarck to defeat France in the Franco-Prussian War (1870), as they recalled the Napoleonic invasions which they did not want to see repeated. In January 1871, Germans celebrated the birth of the Second Reich and the success of German nationalism.
As imperial chancellor, Bismarck was not responsible to the Reichstag (German Parliament) but to the Kaiser. Characteristic of the anti-democratic attitude of Bismarck, it was he who decided major government policy and the Reichstag was left to merely issue a non-binding opinion.

Bismarck died on March 18, 1890. He left behind a strongly united Germany that had become a major world economic and military power ruled by an anti-democratic authoritarian government.

**Answer the following questions based on this reading, the information presented in class, and your textbook.**

1. What political experience did Bismarck have prior to becoming Chancellor? 
   
2. What was Bismarck’s goal for Germany? 
   
3. Who influenced Bismarck’s strategy? How? 
   
4. What was Bismarck’s strategy called? Describe it. 
   
5. What does the “Blood and Iron” quote mean? 
   
6. What attitude of Bismarck is reflected by his comments on England? 
   
7. How did Bismarck bring about German unification? 
   
8. When Bismarck died, the world was near the dawning of the 20th Century. Based on Bismarck’s rule, what will Germany be like in the early 20th Century?