**Theme 2**

**MUSIC**

Italy's Ministry of Culture has just put a century of Italian popular music online, for free. Created in partnership with the Spotify streaming service, the site launched on Monday to coincide with Italy's biggest music festival, Sanremo, which opens on the Ligurian seaside on Tuesday.

The catalogue covers Italian music from 1900 to 2000 and is divided chronologically, geographically and thematically. You can search for traditional songs from each of Italy's regions, explore political songs from the first half of the 20th century, track down Italian hits used on movie soundtracks, or work your way through 49 years of Sanremo archives.

**The Sanremo festival**

The Festival of Sanremo is a singing event held annually in Sanremo, Italy during the winter season. It is the most famous pop music event in Italy and a major media event on Italian television.

It currently takes place at the Teatro Ariston between late February and early March. Originally it was held in the ballroom of the San Remo Casino near the end of January. The festival is essentially a singing competition among performers presenting original songs in premiere, never performed publicly before, composed by Italian authors, and voted by juries and/or by popular vote.

**Rap Music**

If there’s one person who could be held responsible for giving Italy a big push in the hip-hop market, it would likely be Jovanotti, a hip-hop poet/rock star whose early beginnings had him explore a wide range of music as a DJ before picking up a mic and learning to rap. Jovanotti did for Italy what no other Italian artist at the time had done: introduce the consciousness of an American music subculture to the country’s masses and open up a new musical space which would see the birth of many MCs in years to come.

**MEDIA**

After reading the horrors in Dante’s “Inferno,” Italian students will soon turn to the dangers of the digital age. While juggling math assignments, they’ll also tackle work sheets prepared by reporters from the national broadcaster RAI. And separate from the weekly hour of religion, they will receive a list of what amounts to a new set of Ten Commandments. Among them: Thou shalt not share unverified news; thou shall ask for sources and evidence; thou shall remember that the internet and social networks can be manipulated.

The lessons are part of an extraordinary experiment by the Italian government, in cooperation with leading digital companies including Facebook, to train a generation of students steeped in social media how to recognize fake news and conspiracy theories online.

“Fake news drips drops of poison into our daily web diet and we end up infected without even realizing it,” said Laura Boldrini, the president of the Italian lower house of Parliament, who has spearheaded the project with the Italian Ministry of Education.

**CUSTOM AND TRADITIONS**

Italian tradition is filled with festivals celebrating saints, [holidays](https://people.howstuffworks.com/culture-traditions/holidays) and important events in Italian history. In Venice they celebrate ***Carnevale di Venezia*,** a two-week party in early spring. It is marked by parties, parades, live performances of music and, most famously, masquerade balls. Masks are worn throughout Carnivale, ranging from simple half-face masks to elaborate full-face masks called *bauta*. Although family-friendly events are part of the celebration, the masks and the party atmosphere give Carnivale a reputation as a place where "anything goes."

***Lo Scoppio del carro*** is an Easter festival held in Florence that marks the triumph of the First Crusade. Mimicking the supposed events of the Crusade (and blending the holiday with a celebration of Saint John), celebrants build a magnificent cart in the shape of a tower, then they have oxen pull it through the city. In a square outside the cathedral called the Piazza del Duomo, the oxen are led away and Easter mass is held. At the mass's climax, someone lights fireworks attached to the tower by wire. Those [fireworks](https://science.howstuffworks.com/innovation/everyday-innovations/fireworks.htm) ignite other fireworks which cover the tower, which soon catches fire in a shower of coloured sparks and explosions. The tower will eventually burn to the ground.

Every September 3, the city of Viterbo celebrates ***La Macchina di Santa Rosa* in** thanks to Santa Maria Rosa, whom they credit with saving their city from disease in the 1600s. This tradition also involves a tower, although it isn't burned -- instead, local [men](https://people.howstuffworks.com/men.htm) carry the five-ton behemoth. It takes 100 of these *facchini* (men chosen specifically for the job) to haul it through the city, and they train throughout the summer to make sure they can do it. The tower itself is created through a design competition, with a statue of the celebration's patron saint on top.

***Ferragosto*** is an Italian summer holiday. Traditionally, it was simply a period of relaxation; in fact, Italians used to take the entire month of August off as a vacation. The Catholic Church eventually incorporated the holiday, making it into a celebration of the Virgin Mary. Modern Italians typically celebrate it as a national holiday on August 15 (they only get one day off these days). In practice, it bears some resemblance to the American Independence Day, with families enjoying the beach, cooking food together and taking part in other recreational activities.