

THE BLACK DEATH

Vocabulary List

Important terms relating to medieval culture and the Black Death

Absolution: In Catholicism, a result of the sacrament of confessing one's sins to a priest, the priest administers absolution, which voids the penalties for those sins.

AIDS: Abbreviation for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, an incurable viral disease that attacks the immune system. Today, in central Africa and elsewhere, many millions of people are infected with the virus that causes AIDS. Because of the massive social and economic impact of AIDS in these areas, this epidemic could be compared to the Black Death of the fourteenth century.

Anti-Semitism: Prejudice against or persecution of Jews.

Artes Moriendi: The "art of dying," practiced by some people at the time of the Black Death. The goal of this practice was to approach death with a calm and peaceful outlook and to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Black Death: Same as Black Plague or Bubonic Plague.

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Bubonic Plague: A deadly bacterial disease of the lymphatic system, often marked by buboes, which are visibly swollen lymph nodes. Because buboes and other parts of the body often take on a dark cast, the plague came to be called the Black Plague or Black Death. Bubonic plague is typically spread through the bite of infected fleas, which are common parasites on rodents. Plague symptoms usually appear within two to ten days after a flea bite, and rapidly progress for three to five days, leading to death. Symptoms include very high fever, headache, aching joints, and toxic shock, due to bacterial toxins within the system. Today, plague can be treated with antibiotics.

Contagion: Any disease that is spread from one individual to another by either direct or indirect contact.

Dance of Death (Danse Macabre): In medieval art, an illustration of the power of death, in which a skeleton or demon leads people to the grave. During plague times, some people actually performed this dance as a way of trying to overcome their fear of death.

Epidemic: Something affecting many people at the same time; refers especially to disease.

Feudalism: The economic, political and social organization of medieval Europe. Power, wealth and prestige were distributed from the top down, in exchange for loyalty and service. Society was organized into successive tiers in the form of a pyramid. Protection and manor lands were granted to vassals in exchange for military service and a portion of whatever the land produced. Members of the peasant class, or serfs, performed most of the hard labor.

Flagellant: A member of a penitential movement which originated in response to the Black Death and which was characterized by the infliction of pain on oneself or on another as a form of penance. Groups of flagellants traveled through medieval Europe warning of the end of the world, preaching repentance, and publicly whipping one another. Some flagellants fostered intolerance toward religious minorities.

HIV: Abbreviation for Human Immuno-deficiency Virus, the virus that causes AIDS.

Hundred Years' War: A protracted series of wars between France and England that occurred between 1337 and 1453. The Hundred Years' War began over English claims to the French throne. A famous figure from the war was the French patriot, Jeanne d'Arc (Joan of Arc).

Lord: A person of high rank, who controlled a medieval manor. The lord gave protection and land rights to particular individuals, called vassals, in exchange for their loyalty and service.

(Continued on Blackline Master 2)

THE BLACK DEATH

Vocabulary List (continued)

Lymphatic System: A system of glands and vessels that distribute a substance called lymph. Lymph contains blood plasma and disease-fighting cells called phagocytes. The buboes, from which the Bubonic plague takes its name, are swollen lymph glands.

Manor: A district controlled by a feudal lord, usually consisting of a few farms, a village, a church and a manor house.

Medieval Era: The period of Western European history between the fall of Rome, around 476 A.D., and the beginning of the Renaissance, around 1450 A.D. Also known as the Middle Ages.

Middle Ages: Same as the Medieval era.

Morbid: From the Latin word, "morbus," meaning disease. It refers to anything which is diseased or is caused by disease.

Mortification: The act of subduing one's passions and appetites by performing penance.

Palsy: Paralysis in any part of the body; it is sometimes accompanied by involuntary shaking.

Pandemic: An epidemic of disease which extends over a large geographic area. The plague epidemics which occurred throughout much of Europe are good examples of pandemics.

Peasant: An agricultural worker; a poor country dweller.

Penance: Any voluntary suffering or punishment to show repentance, or sorrow, for having committed a sin.

Penitence: The state of being penitent--of being sorry for an offense committed.

Pestilence: A destructive, swiftly spreading disease, such as the bubonic plague.

Pilgrim: A wanderer. A person who travels to a holy place.

Pilgrimage: A long journey undertaken by a pilgrim to a holy place as an expression of religious devotion.

Pneumonic Plague: A form of plague that attacks the lungs and is caused by the same bacterium that causes bubonic plague. The coughing that accompanies this form of plague can spread the disease through the air.

Quarantine: Originally a 40-day period during which the personnel of a ship suspected of having the plague were obliged to wait before being allowed to go ashore.

Scapegoat: A person or group that is unjustifiably blamed for something. A scapegoat is the object of a psychological or social need to focus blame.

Serf: A person in feudal servitude, legally bound to his master's land, and often transferred with that land when ownership passed to another lord.

Urban: Pertaining to the city, as distinguished from the country.

Vassal: A person owing a debt of loyalty and service to a feudal lord and protector.

Yersinia pestis: The scientific name for the type of bacteria that causes plague, formerly called Pasteurella pestis.

THE BLACK DEATH

Timeline of the Fourteenth Century

1300-1309

- Eyeglasses come into use.
- In 1309, the first of seven popes who would be rivals of the Roman popes, establishes a papal residence at Avignon, France.

1310-1319

- The first mechanical clocks appear in Europe.
- Pope John XXII issues prohibitions against the practice of alchemy.
- The first Western European book on human anatomy, based on dissection, appears.
- A grain crisis in Europe starts in 1315 and results in widespread famine. Crop failure due to cold, wet weather forced people to eat their seed grain.

1320-1329

- The Aztecs founded the city of Tenochtitlan on the spot where they saw an eagle sitting on a cactus with a snake in its beak; here the Spanish conquerors will establish Mexico City 200 years later.
- The Pope forbids the use of counterpoint in church music.
- The explorer Marco Polo dies in Venice, January 9, 1324.

1330-1339

- The University of Paris decrees in 1336 that no student can graduate without attending lectures on "some mathematical books."
- The Hundred Years' War between France and England begins in 1337.

1340-49

- The first blast furnace for iron smelting is developed in Belgium.
- In 1346 or 1347, Italian ships bring rats carrying fleas infected with the Black Plague to Europe.
- Geoffrey Chaucer, author of the *Canterbury Tales*, is born in London.
- By 1347, small cannons that shoot arrows, using gunpowder, have been designed. This marks the first appearance of guns in Europe.

1350-1359

- By 1351, an estimated 25 million Europeans have died from the Black Death.
- The French king is kept a prisoner in England for a few years.
- In 1358, a peasant uprising in France kills 20,000 people.

1360-69

- The French reconquer many of the territories that had been captured by the English.

1370-1379

- The first quarantine station is set up in Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia. Persons suspected of exposure to the plague must stay at the quarantine station for forty days before being allowed to enter the country.
- Robin Hood appears in English literature.
- The steel crossbow is introduced as a weapon of war.

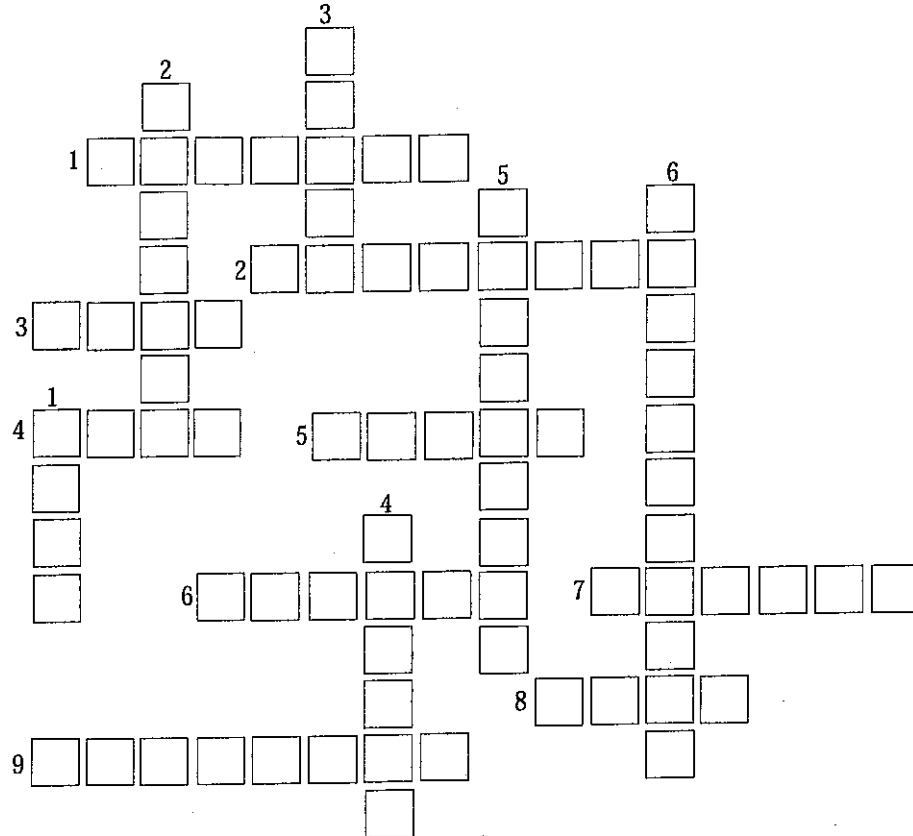
1380-1389

- Geoffrey Chaucer begins to write the *Canterbury Tales*.
- Rockets are used for the first time in Europe at the battle of Chioggia, between Venice and Genoa.
- Cast iron objects become generally available in Europe.

1390-1399

- Italian mapmaker Paolo Toscanelli makes a map incorrectly showing Asia to be only 3000 miles west of Europe. A century later, this map inspired Columbus to make his first voyage of discovery.

THE BLACK DEATH Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

1. The type of plague that infected the lymph nodes was called the _____ plague.
2. The _____ era refers to the Middle Ages, or the period of Western European history between the fall of Rome and the Renaissance.
3. A _____ was a lowly farm worker considered to be part of the property of a great fourteenth-century estate.
4. In the twentieth century, the disease known as _____, or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, has reached epidemic proportions in some countries of the world.
5. Plague is most commonly transmitted by the _____ that live as parasites within rodent populations.
6. The enlarged lymph nodes of bubonic plague victims are called _____.
7. During plague times, more people lived on _____, which were the estates of lords, than lived in towns and cities.
8. The plague wouldn't have spread so rapidly across Europe if there hadn't been so many _____ living in people's houses.
9. The horrible symptoms of the Black Death are actually caused by organisms called _____, that today can be controlled with antibiotics.

DOWN

1. The period of Western European history occurring after the fall of Rome and before the Renaissance is also known as the Middle _____.
2. While plague raged across Europe in the mid-fourteenth century, England and France were engaged in a conflict that has come to be known as The _____ Years' War.
3. During plague times, artwork was created showing a skeleton or demon leading people to their deaths in what was called the _____ of Death.
4. An English word meaning "having or caused by disease," that is derived from the Latin word for "disease."
5. The economic, social and political organization of Europe during the mid-fourteenth century is most commonly referred to as _____.
6. Religious fanatics who traveled about whipping themselves and preaching are called _____.

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Quiz

Directions: Answer the following questions by choosing the correct answer or filling in the blank.

1. It is estimated that _____ people died of plague in Western Europe between 1347 and 1351. (5 million, 15 million or 25 million)

2. Between the years 1300 and 1450, due to the combined effects of plague, famine and warfare, the total population of Europe declined by about _____ to _____ of its original numbers. (1/10 to 1/4, 1/4 to 1/3, 1/2 to 2/3).

3. There were three important and long-lasting effects of the radical depopulation of Europe. These were:
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

4. In the year 1347, Italian traders returning to Genoa, from an outpost called Caffa on the Black Sea, brought more than trade goods to Europe. What else did they bring?

5. Under the manorial system of agriculture, peasant laborers called _____ worked the fields for their wealthy masters, in exchange for protection and a share of the crops they raised.

6. During plague times, religious extremists called _____ traveled from town to town, preaching and publicly whipping one another.

7. Fasting and making pilgrimages to holy shrines are called Acts of _____ and were commonplace activities in plague times. Such acts of religious devotion were believed to help purify the soul of its sins.

8. Throughout history, people experiencing extreme hardships have often searched for someone to blame for their difficulties. During the plague years, _____ were often blamed for the spread of the disease.

9. Today, the plague is not the menace it was during the Middle Ages because it can be treated with _____.

10. Before, during, and after the plague years, a war called the _____ raged between _____ and _____.