

# THE BLACK DEATH 1347-1351



**Teacher's Guide**

# *The Black Death*

catalog #2382

## Teacher's Guide

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**THE BLACK DEATH**  
**(1347-1351)**  
**Grades 9-12**  
**Viewing Time: 15 minutes**

**VIDEO SUMMARY**

This 15-minute video, designed for use in 9th to 12th-grade classrooms, explores the fascinating story of the great epidemic of plague that struck Europe in the mid-fourteenth century. This epidemic resulted in the death of up to one-half of the population of Europe between the years 1347 and 1351.

This program explores the causes of the Black Death and traces its spread from the remote Black Sea outpost of Caffa to the rest of Europe.

Students learn how living conditions during the late Middle Ages provided the ideal environment for the spread of plague bacteria. The helpless desperation and flight of the people is portrayed and students learn how religious hysteria and intolerance were spawned by the nearly constant terror of the Black Death.

Finally, students discover the important role the Black Death played in bringing an end to the feudal system of manorial agricultural, a system that had dominated European civilization since the collapse of the Roman Empire.

**STUDENT OBJECTIVES**

After viewing this program and participating in the lesson activities, students should be able to:

- Explain what caused the plague, how it was transmitted, and how the disease affected the human body.
- Describe some of the immediate impacts of the Black Death on medieval society.
- Explain and give examples of the spread of the plague and the countries involved.
- Discuss the three long-lasting effects of the radical depopulation of Europe.
- Name the countries involved in the "Hundred Years' War" and describe its effects on the population of Europe.
- Discuss the role of religion during the plague between 1347 and 1351.

## **TEACHER PREPARATION**

Before presenting this video to your class, it is suggested that you review written materials on the subject of the Black Death. Furthermore, we suggest that you view the video and review this guide and the accompanying blackline masters in order to become familiar with their content. Duplicate those blackline masters you feel may be appropriate for your students so they can reference them before they view the video. You may choose to distribute Blackline Masters 1-3 to your group prior to viewing the video in order for your student to become familiar with some of the terms used in the video presentation.

As you review the instructional materials in the program, you may find it necessary to make some changes, additions, or deletions to meet the specific needs of your class. We encourage you to do so, for only by tailoring this program to your students will they obtain the maximum benefits afforded by the materials. A description of the blackline masters can be found on page 3. An answer key for those blackline masters requiring answers is found on page 5 .

It is also suggested that the video presentation take place before the entire group under your supervision. The lesson activities grow out of the content of the video; therefore, the presentation should be a common experience for all students.

## **STUDENT PREPARATION**

Although it is by no means essential, this program will be most useful if students have already been taught some of the basic elements of medieval history.

## **INTRODUCING THE VIDEO**

The video will speak for itself, however a few words would be helpful to introduce the program.

The period 1300-1450 was a time of great transition in Europe. During this period, Europe suffered a huge loss in population. The Black Death was the principal cause of this depopulation, but it was not the only one.

Early in the fourteenth century, after a long period of economic expansion, the European economy reached a plateau and began to decline.

By the year 1300, Europe was overpopulated. About this time, the climate in Europe entered a cold, wet cycle which severely impacted grain harvests. Deadly famines resulted, with the worst occurring between 1315 and 1322. Many thousands of people died in these famines.

Between 1337 and 1453, England and France were locked in a deadly series of conflicts called the "Hundred Years' War," which claimed many thousands of lives. Many more people died fighting in peasant revolts, which erupted across Europe following the worst plague years.

The video focuses on the appalling outbreak of plague that appeared in Western Europe in 1347. Let your class know that, although this was neither the first nor last time the plague struck Europe, it was undoubtedly the worst. From 1347-1351, up to one-half of the population of Europe died from the plague, and for the next 80 years, the plague struck repeatedly--at least once every eight years. It has been estimated that between 1300 and 1450, up to two-thirds of all Europeans died from plague, famine and warfare.

Finally, make your students aware that throughout the world, including the United States, people continue to die of plague, though the force of this terrible disease is now diminished through the use of modern antibiotics.

**View the Video.** The viewing time is 15:20 minutes.

## **DESCRIPTION OF BLACKLINE MASTERS**

Blackline Masters 1 and 2, **Vocabulary List--Important Terms Relating to Medieval Culture and the Black Death**, will help students become familiar with some useful and unfamiliar words.

Blackline Master 3, is a **Timeline of the Fourteenth Century**. By listing significant events, students will get a sense of the what was happening in the world before, during, and after the great outbreak of plague in 1347.

Blackline Master 4, **Crossword Puzzle**, will challenge students to use new ideas and vocabulary from this program.

Blackline Master 5, is the **Quiz** for this video presentation.

## **FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES**

To obtain an eye-witness feeling for the fourteenth century, it might be fun to read aloud from Geoffrey Chaucer's "Pardoner's Tale," which is a part of the *Canterbury Tales*, written in 1387. This is the story of three revellers who set out on a search for Death, who has killed one of their comrades. The *Canterbury Tales* are very relevant to the subject of this program because the storytellers are pilgrims who are traveling from London to the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket at Canterbury during the time that plague was ravaging Europe.

## **DISCUSSION TOPICS and RESEARCH TOPICS FOR WRITTEN REPORTS**

The following could provide interesting topics for both oral discussions and written reports:

1. A modern epidemic: AIDS. Today, huge numbers of people are infected with HIV virus and face certain death from AIDS. Compare and contrast conditions in these countries to conditions in medieval Europe. What parallels can be drawn between plague-stricken medieval villages and modern villages in central Africa, which have been devastated by the HIV virus? (Loss of family members, social stigma, economic impacts, lack of effective medical treatment)
2. Modern problems in fighting infectious disease: The indiscriminate use of antibiotics has resulted in the growth of populations of drug-resistant bacteria. How does this occur? (genetic mutations within the bacteria) Is mankind fully in control of nature? Are infectious diseases a serious threat in the modern era? Can viruses be treated with antibiotics? (no)
3. Radical depopulation: How would the United States be changed today if it experienced the death of 1/2 to 2/3 of its population? Would there be a redistribution of wealth, as took place in late medieval times? Would people look to religion for explanation and guidance?
4. Population and the environment: Most environmental scientists agree that the continued growth of human population on Earth is not environmentally sustainable. Do you think our planet would be able to heal its environmental wounds faster with fewer humans living on it? Are epidemics of infectious disease nature's way of regulating population? Can you think of more humane solutions to the problem of global overpopulation?

5. Religious intolerance: Throughout history, religious minorities have been subjected to intolerance and persecution. Can you find examples of religious intolerance in the modern world? What is anti-Semitism? Do you find evidence of anti-Semitism in European history? Give examples.

### ANSWER KEY

Blackline Masters 1 and 2, **Vocabulary List--Important Terms Relating to Medieval Culture and the Black Death**, is repeated below for your teaching convenience.

**Absolution:** In Catholicism, as 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.

**Black Plague:** Same as Black Death or Bubonic Plague.

**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.

**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.

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

Blackline Master 3, **Timeline of the Fourteenth Century**, is repeated below for your teaching convenience.

**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 Tenochitlan 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.

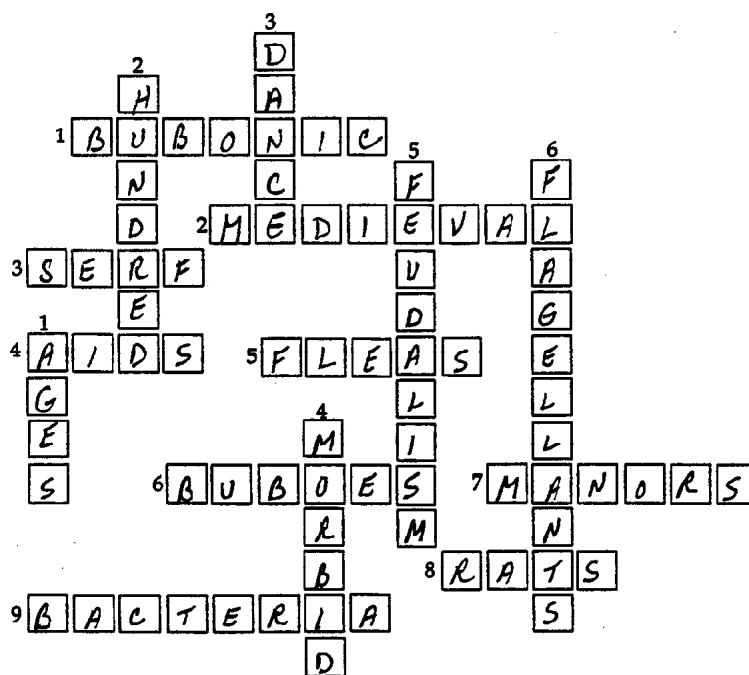
**1380-1389**

- 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.

### Blackline Master 4, Crossword Puzzle



### Blackline Master 5, Quiz

1. 25 million
2. one-half to two-thirds
3. 1) An expansion of manufacturing.  
2) An increase in the importance of towns and cities.  
3) A decline of the feudal way of life.
4. Plague, plague bacteria, plague-infected rats
5. serfs
6. flagellants
7. penance
8. Jews
9. antibiotics
10. Hundred Years' War, France, England

## **Script of Video Narration**

In the mid-fourteenth century, a horrible epidemic spread across Europe.

It was an all-consuming fire-storm of disease that, in a span of only four years, killed up to one-half of the European population.

One contemporary observer described it as follows: "This pestilence was so powerful that it was transmitted to the healthy by contact with the sick, the way a fire close to dry or oily things will set them aflame...

"...a vast rain of fire...burning up mountains and plains and whosoever beheld this died..."

It would take 150 years for the population of Europe to recover its numbers, while the economic and social effects of the plague would last much longer.

This program looks at the plague--one of the most deadly afflictions ever to strike mankind--the disease that came to be called simply "The Black Death."

### **THE BLACK DEATH**

The Black Death that brought such devastation to the people of medieval Europe seems to have been present throughout much of human history; appearing and disappearing without warning. For example, here in the ancient city of Rome, it is known to have caused a huge loss of life as early as the second century A.D.

The Black Death is caused by tiny, extremely contagious bacteria, like these, visible only under a microscope, which produce the lethal toxins that result in the symptoms of the disease.

Throughout history these symptoms have included severe trembling, high fever and chills, and in one form of the disease, known as the Bubonic Plague, enormously swollen lymph nodes, called "buboes," appeared, which usually blackened and then burst open.

Sometimes the bacteria attacked the lungs, resulting in another form of the disease called "pneumonic plague" that was marked by diffi-

cult, painful breathing, accompanied by the violent coughing-up of blood.

But in either case, death usually came rapidly--within three to five days after infection.

Over the centuries, populations of rodents, especially rats, have acted as reservoirs of plague bacteria. The bacteria living in their blood-streams can be easily transmitted to humans through the bites of the fleas that inhabit their fur.

During the late Middle Ages, rats abounded. They infested virtually every building in every village, thriving on the waste that was tossed from houses into the streets.

In fact, there were so many rats that some medieval villages employed a full-time rat catcher in an attempt to control them.

Even though rats abounded in Western Europe before 1347, it appears that they were not infected with plague bacteria. Indeed, it had been eight hundred years since the last major outbreak had occurred, so the population possessed no natural immunity to the disease. Thus, when plague arrived in 1347, nothing stood in its way.

#### **THE ARRIVAL OF THE PLAGUE - 1347**

It was in Caffa, a remote, fortified trading post on the Black Sea, that Italian traders first contracted the plague; for at that time, plague was raging throughout much of this part of the world.

When the Italian traders themselves began to fall ill with the disease, they quickly abandoned their fort, sailing back to the safety of their home port of Genoa. In doing so, they brought infected sailors and infected rats to Western Europe.

By the summer of 1347, the Black Death had started to appear all over Genoa and had also begun to show up in other Mediterranean ports. Infected sailors carried the disease to Constantinople, Athens, and Crete, to Alexandria and Sicily, and soon the plague stormed across the rest of Italy.

It followed the trade routes of ships, spreading like wildfire to countless seaports both in Europe and in Africa.

From the seaports, the disease moved inland, so that by the spring of

1348, most of France and Spain had been affected and it had reached into Ireland and southern England as well, killing over half the people in London.

By 1349 the epidemic had blanketed most of Scandinavia and Eastern Europe, and finally in 1350, the plague entered Russia.

Medieval people were overwhelmed by the astonishing loss of life all around them. And lacking any understanding of how the disease was transmitted, they were defenseless against this assault.

This was because the practice of medicine at that time was based mostly on traditional superstitions rather than science, and as a result, their treatments failed.

Unable to halt the spread of the plague, city dwellers fled in panic to the countryside, while country people simply tried to escape from each other.

Because the disease was spread, in part, through close physical contact, houses found to contain plague victims were marked, warning people to stay away.

As the Black Death raged on, whole families were exterminated. Many large estates stood empty, and sometimes entire villages were completely wiped out. Without workers, farms grew up in weeds and crops rotted in the fields.

## **THE ROLE OF RELIGION**

The constant sight of the dead and dying brought both torment and fear. So, as a result, huge numbers of people sought refuge in their religion, for medieval Christians widely viewed the Black Death as God's punishment for the sins of mankind.

Consequently, sculptors made carvings, like these, for churches to remind unrepentant sinners of the horrible fate that awaited them.

Deathbed scenes were often pictured both in stone carvings and in stained glass windows. Here we see a devil hovering over a plague victim, waiting to capture his soul.

Fear of the Black Death caused some of the most devout people to undertake difficult acts of penance--self imposed sufferings intended to purify the soul.

The most extreme of these, the flagellants, underwent public whippings to ward off the Black Death.

But probably the most popular form of penance during the plague years was to make a long and usually dangerous pilgrimage to a holy shrine.

In France, pilgrims flocked to the shrine of Saint Amadour, seen here, which is etched into the side of a rocky cliff. Inside the shrine, they offered prayers to the saint and pleaded for his help in obtaining protection from the disease that had killed off so many of their friends and family members.

Throughout history, when people are overwhelmed by forces they cannot understand or control, they often search for a scapegoat--someone to blame for their problems.

So it was that during times of plague, Jewish people, seen here wearing the yellow hats the law required them to wear, became targets of anti-Semitic hatred simply because their religion set them apart from Christian Europeans.

They were accused of poisoning the public water supplies and of deliberately spreading plague in order to destroy European civilization.

Thus, all along the Rhine River in Germany, the entire Jewish populations of several towns were wiped out by Christians driven to hysteria by fear of the plague.

By the year 1351, just four years after the Black Death first appeared in Genoa, about two-thirds of all Europeans had been afflicted with the disease, and of these, about half--roughly 25 million people--had died.

After 1351, the force of the plague weakened, but for the next two hundred years, nearly every generation witnessed reappearances of the Black Death, though none of them ever brought the appalling death toll of the years 1347 to 1351.

And yet for people of the fourteenth century, the plague was not the only killer they had to face, for huge numbers died from famine and war. In fact, England and France were locked in a deadly series of conflicts called the "Hundred Years' War," that lasted from 1337, all through the plague years, up to 1453, when it finally ended.

Amazingly, between 1300 and 1450, through the combined effects of

the Black Death, famine and warfare, the population of Europe declined by as much as two-thirds, and this massive depopulation had a tremendous impact on every aspect of the civilization of Western Europe.

### **THE RESULTS OF DEPOPULATION**

Depopulation severely affected the system of manorial agriculture, which had, since the fall of Rome, provided the framework for the European economy.

Under this system, food and a small number of manufactured articles were produced on manors--the large estates belonging to wealthy lords or monasteries.

Most Europeans in the Middle Ages lived in small villages on manor lands, while relatively few people lived in cities.

Labor for the manors was provided by serfs and, to a lesser degree, by freemen, who were independent workers.

Serfs were not free and although they had certain legal rights, they were considered to be the property of the lord of the manor.

However, because so many people died during the fourteenth century, the feudal relationship between lord and serf began to change.

Laborers had become so scarce that landowners found themselves competing for the few that survived. And so, to keep their lands in production, some lords resorted to paying cash wages for the first time.

Consequently, as wealth began to flow toward the peasant class, many serfs were able to join the ranks of freemen.

But a shortage of labor was not the only problem facing the lords of the manors, for their lavish lifestyles were also being threatened by wild fluctuations in the prices they were able to get for their farm commodities. Farming had simply become too risky as a result of years of plague, warfare and bad weather.

Consequently, some feudal lords, no longer willing to take chances on farming, reversed the old way of doing things and began to rent their lands to freemen, either for cash or for a share of the crops they raised. At the same time, other freemen were leaving their manor villages,

heading for the bustling towns and cities which were developing into centers of manufacturing and trade.

Manufacturing was rapidly expanding, partially because it was far less risky than farming, for manufacturers could more easily adapt to the tremendous changes that were taking place in the world around them.

The growth of manufacturing, combined with an ongoing labor shortage, led to a general rise in wages. As a result, more and more people were admitted to full participation in the new urban economy of the late Middle Ages.

### **REVIEW**

The Black Death, which struck Europe between 1347 and 1351, ended the lives of 25 million people. Plague deaths, combined with losses due to war and famine, eventually caused the population to decline by about two-thirds.

This massive depopulation had three very important effects on Western European civilization:

First, it brought about a **DECLINE IN FEUDALISM**.

Second, it resulted in a widespread **EXPANSION OF MANUFACTURING**;

and third, it created an **INCREASE IN THE IMPORTANCE OF TOWNS AND CITIES**.

More and more, land was worked by freemen; serfs were replaced by a wage-earning class of workers, and, as the role of manorial agriculture in the economy lessened, one thousand years of feudalism began to come to an end in Western Europe.

## 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.

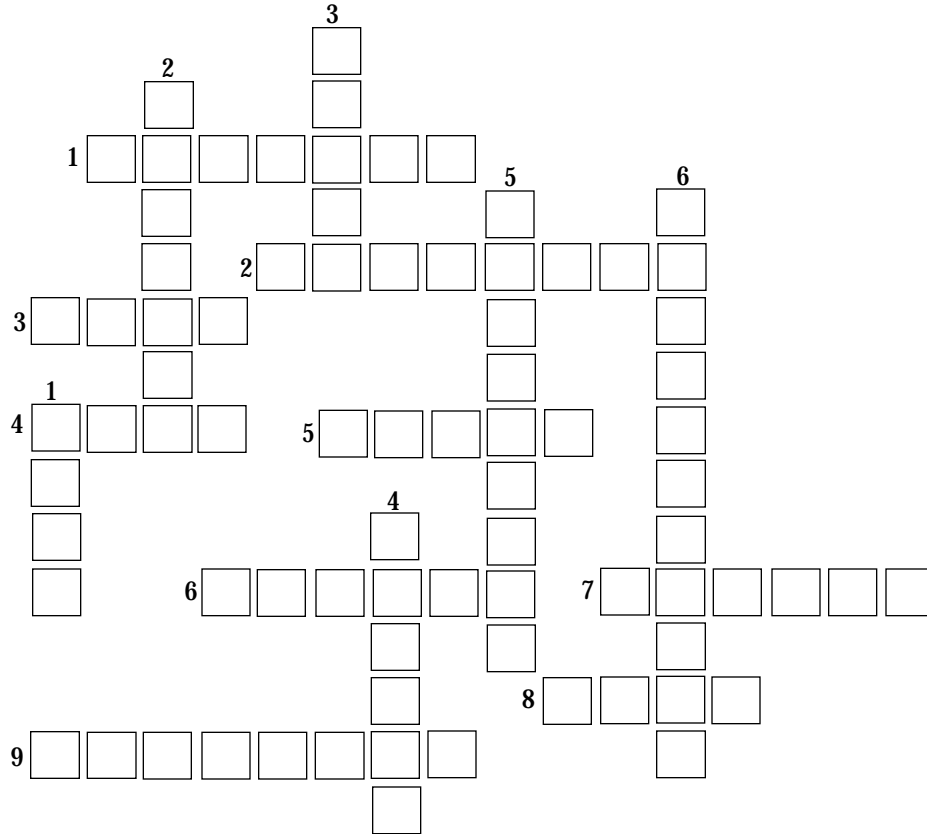
#### 1380-1389

- 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 \_\_\_\_\_.

**THE BLACK DEATH**  
**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 \_\_\_\_\_.