

The Bubonic Plague

The Crusades increased trade in the Middle Ages, and this improved the lives of people. People exchanged needed goods and new ideas. Unfortunately, many believed that they also exchanged something else. That something else caused the death of nearly 25 million people in the Middle Ages.

The bubonic plague, also called the Black Death, was a fatal disease that spread over much of Europe in the Middle Ages. The bubonic plague was a disease that was caused by bacteria that lived in rodents such as rats. When a flea bit a rat, it ingested some of the rat's infected blood. Then the same flea would bite a person and inject the diseased blood into them.

Many intelligent historians think that the bubonic plague spread along the Silk Road as people came into contact with each other. Also, the flea-infested rats were accidentally transported all over Europe on trading vessels.

Medicine and knowledge about disease was not as advanced in the Middle Ages as it is today. No one knew what the disease was or how it was spread. The plague is sometimes called the "black death" because once a person was infected black spots would develop on his or her skin.

The bubonic plague had a devastating impact on Europe in the Middle Ages. Some figures report that between 30- 60% of the population was killed. The death of so many people in the 1300s turned Europe's economy upside down. Trade declined and wages rose sharply because workers were in high demand. All the while, less people meant less demand for food. Food prices fell. Noble landlords paid workers more. The plague weakened the feudal system and changed European society.

Multiple Choice

1. Which of the following best describes how the Plague was spread?
 - a.) Rats bite fleas, fleas bite people
 - b.) Fleas bite people, people bite rats
 - c.) Rats bite people, people kill fleas
 - d.) Fleas bite rats, fleas bite people
2. The Black Death caused the death of how many people?

- a.) Nearly 25 million people
- b.) 100 million people
- c.) 300,000 people
- d.) 3 million people

All answers should be 3-5 complete sentences?

3. Explain how the plague weakened the feudal system and changed European society.

4. The emergence of many important ideas came from the Black Death including the merchant class and growth of banking. Explain how these ideas came out of the Black Death.

5. How did the Black Death shape the Renaissance? How was the Renaissance a positive moment after the Black Death?