

Depth study 2: Investigating the Black Death in Asia, Europe and Africa

The Black Death in Asia, Europe and Africa

During the 14th century, a deadly outbreak of plague known as the Black Death spread across Asia, Europe and Africa. Scientists and historians now believe that merchants returning home from the East introduced the disease to Europe in 1347. Within three years, it had spread across most of Asia, Europe and into north Africa. A lack of medical knowledge, filthy living conditions, superstitions and fear helped the disease to spread quickly. In Europe alone, 25 million people – one-third of the population – died.



10A

How was society organised at the time of the Black Death?

- 1 Living conditions in towns in the early 14th century were filthy and crowded, and people had poor diets. How do you think these two factors might have made people more susceptible to diseases such as the Black Death?

10B

What were the causes of the Black Death and how did it spread?

- 1 By the time the Black Death pandemic began, numerous land and sea trade routes had been established all over Europe, Asia and Africa. How do you think these trade routes might have enabled the rapid spread of the Black Death?



chapter 10

Source 1 *The Dance of Death*, painted by Johannes de Castuo c. 1490, shows victims of the Black Death being escorted to an open coffin by skeletons.

10C

What were the effects of the Black Death?

- 1 The Black Death caused a huge drop in the population, which meant there were far fewer peasants available to work. In what ways do you think this might have led to a decrease in the power of landowners and the wealthy over the peasant class?

10.1 The Black Death: a timeline



It is thought that the plague initially infected rodents like this black rat.

The hand of a victim of septicemic plague, the rarest (and deadliest) form of the plague



1330
CE

1330s
Widespread famine and plague breaks out in north-eastern China

1340

1346

Plague reaches the trading city of Kaffa on the Black Sea; Genoan merchants return to Sicily, spreading the disease

Source 1 A timeline of some key events and developments related to the medieval Black Death pandemic



1347

Genoan merchants on their return journey to Sicily spread the plague to Constantinople, Cyprus and then into modern-day Italy; it reaches Venice as well as Alexandria in Egypt.



The plague struck down people of all ages and from all walks of life.



Leader of the Peasants' Revolt, Wat Tyler, was wounded during a meeting between peasants and the English king, Richard II. Later, Tyler was beheaded.

1349

Widespread persecution of Jews, with thousands burned to death; plague reaches Aswan in Egypt and the entire Islamic world is now affected

1353

Some 35 million deaths from the plague recorded in China since the 1330s

1381

The Peasants' Revolt breaks out in England

1350

1350

Plague has largely run its course in the countries around the Mediterranean Sea

1351

The Statute of Labourers is introduced, making it illegal for employers to increase workers' wages; plague reaches Russia

1360

1380

1348

Plague reaches the French cities of Marseilles and Paris, then moves to England; it moves along the Rhine River and into modern-day Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg; outbreaks occur in Tunis, Cairo and Gaza; the flagellant movement gains popularity; serious persecution of Jews starts



People known as **flagellants** who believed the plague was God's punishment flogged themselves until they bled, in the hope of obtaining God's forgiveness.

Check your learning 10.1

Remember and understand

- 1 In what year did the plague reach Sicily?
- 2 In what year did serious persecution of the Jews begin?

Apply and analyse

- 3 Using the timeline, calculate how long the medieval plague epidemic lasted in Europe.

Evaluate and create

- 4 Conduct some Internet research to find out the years in which the Black Death reached Scandinavia. Add this to your own version of the timeline.

10.2 Life in Asia, Europe and Africa before the Black Death

In order to understand how and why the Black Death spread across Asia, Europe and Africa, it is necessary to look at how **societies** in these parts of the world were organised at the time, and what living and working conditions were like for the people there.

The information below provides a brief outline of what conditions were like across Asia, Europe and Africa before the first outbreaks of the Black Death.

Societies in Asia

The expansion of the Mongol Empire across Asia between the early 13th century and mid 14th century had significant impacts on the societies that it conquered. The Mongols introduced positive changes such as religious freedom, and also expanded trading routes (like the **Silk Road**) that increased contact and trade with the West. Not all elements of Mongol rule in Asia were quite so positive though. Their conquests of new regions often resulted in the deaths of many people and disrupted vital activities such as farming and food production. In addition to this, a series of civil wars and natural disasters across Asia led to crop failures in the early 1330s. This in

turn caused widespread famine across the region. Weakened and malnourished, many people were no match for the plague outbreak that followed.

Societies in Africa

Most of what we know about social and economic conditions in Africa during the 14th century relates to North Africa and Egypt. This period saw the dominance of a number of powerful Islamic nations – in particular the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt and the Marinid, Zayanid and Hafsid Dynasties across North Africa (covering modern-day Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya). Over many years, each of these Islamic nations struggled for control over different parts of the region. Despite many ongoing conflicts, sea trade and commerce thrived. Port cities along the coast of North Africa, such as Tunis and Tripoli, traded extensively with European societies, particularly those on the Italian Peninsula. There were also busy trade routes between Alexandria in Egypt and Constantinople, as well as other ports around the Black Sea. When the plague broke out, all of these trade routes and centres became gateways for the Black Death **pandemic**.



Source 1 A medieval illustration of serfs harvesting grain in a lord's manor fields

Societies in Europe

In contrast to societies in Asia and Africa, there is a great deal of evidence relating to the outbreak of plague in Europe. From the 10th century onwards, the system of **feudalism** that had organised society and provided protection and stability across the continent began to weaken. There were a number of reasons for this, but most historians agree that the changes brought about by a series of Holy Wars (known as the **Crusades**) had a lot to do with this. New ideas, products and wealth brought back to Europe from these wars

led to a time of great economic success between the 10th and 12th centuries. Trade with societies across Asia and Africa increased and towns and cities grew rapidly. This prosperity led to a huge increase in the birth rate. As more and more people moved to the cities, conditions became difficult. Many cities became extremely overcrowded and living conditions were unhygienic. As a result, the diet, housing and general hygiene of the average city dweller was very poor.

Despite the population explosion across Europe, farming methods had remained inefficient and farmers struggled to grow enough food to feed the population. In addition to this, from around 1250 onwards the weather also became unusually cold and wet, causing a series of crop failures. All of these factors led to a number of famines across Europe and many died from starvation. Just like those living in Asia and Africa, the people of Europe were not prepared for what they were to face with the first outbreak of the Black Death.

Historical evidence relating to the Black Death

One of the difficulties associated with studying the spread of the Black Death across Asia and Africa during the 14th century is that very few detailed sources of evidence are currently available. There are a number of different reasons for this. Although societies there were often quite advanced, the records they kept have either been lost over time or have not yet been analysed by historians in the West. Despite



Source 2 An artist's impression of a typical medieval town in Italy during the 14th century

this, there are some general sources available that outline the path taken as the disease spread and who was affected.

By contrast, many sources of evidence relating to Europe are available, and Western historians have spent considerable time analysing them. In countries such as England and Italy, local authorities and members of the church kept written records (such as birth and death notices, illuminated **manuscripts**, population surveys and **census** information). All across Europe, artists, poets and writers also recorded their experiences for future generations.

Given that much more research and analysis has been carried out on the effects of the Black Death across Europe, this chapter will largely focus on the experiences of the people there.

Check your learning 10.2

Remember and understand

- 1 What were the positive and negative effects of Mongol conquest in Asia?
- 2 What were some of the trading routes between north Africa and Europe?
- 3 What was feudalism? How did it help to organise medieval societies?
- 4 Which group of people became the new middle class in medieval cities? Explain why.

Apply and analyse

- 5 Why do you think medieval peasants, working under systems such as feudalism, might have been attracted to town life?

Evaluate and create

- 6 With a partner, write a script for a conversation a peasant farmer might have had with his wife to persuade her to leave the manor and go with him to live in a nearby town.

10.3 Growth of trade and cities

From the middle of the 11th century, European explorers such as Marco Polo (1254–1324) opened up the ‘world of the East’ to Europe. Marco Polo spent many years travelling in China and Mongolia, among other parts of Asia. The luxury goods that he and other merchants brought back included spices, semi-precious stones and silks. Wealthy Europeans were eager for more – and eager for knowledge about this part of the world that had been unknown to them.

Trade was also beginning to boom between European towns and places such as Constantinople, Damascus, Moscow and north Africa’s Alexandria. Goods were carried back and forth along a network of land and sea trade routes (see Source 1), often to be sold in huge open-air markets.

Growing trade routes

Much early medieval trade between West and East took place along the Silk Road. By the mid 1200s, this network of dirt tracks – stretching from China in the east, westwards to the Mediterranean Sea – was controlled by the Mongol Empire. Mongol protection meant safer passage and more reliable delivery of goods.

But this reliance on the Silk Road for trade would not last. New ways to reach markets faster and more cheaply would be sought. This would eventually change the balance of power between the East and West and weaken the authority of the Mongols.

New sea routes

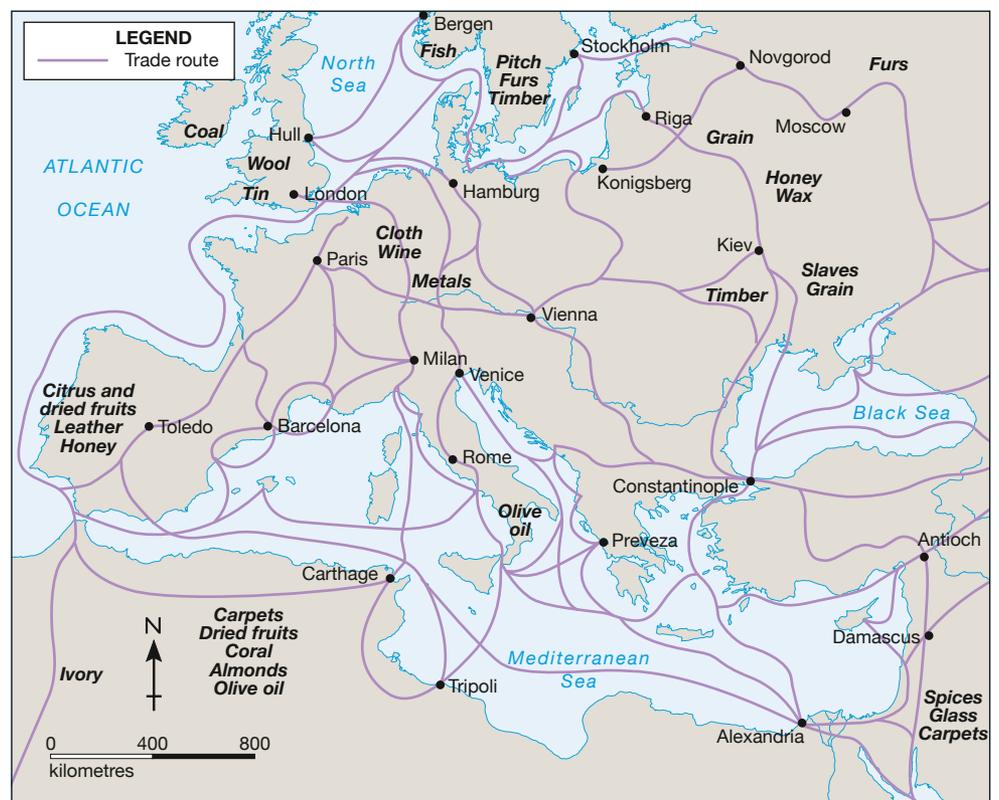
Countries such as Portugal and Spain led the push in Europe to discover new sea routes to eastern markets –

and to claim lands in the **New World** (the Americas). They were most likely motivated by a combination of curiosity and a desire to impose their culture on others they thought of as primitive. Most of all, they had a desire for wealth.

The European sailors of the late 1400s and beyond pushed further and further into unknown waters. Many sailors died at sea looking for new lands and trading partners, but eventually new lands in the East and elsewhere were reached by sea. This opened the door for the exchange of many new products that significantly changed societies.

Not only were these new sea routes faster than land travel they also made it possible to transport greater volumes of cargo. There were many risks, including being shipwrecked on rocks, facing wild storms at sea and being attacked by pirates. However, as ship design improved and navigational skills strengthened, some risks were reduced.

KEY MEDIEVAL TRADE ROUTES AND GOODS TRADED



Source 1

Source: Oxford University Press

New towns and cities

During the early part of the medieval period, societies and economies of Europe were based around agriculture and land ownership. These various kingdoms were largely divided into feudal estates and manors, owned by nobles and farmed by peasants. For centuries, this system was successful because these peasants needed the protection of these nobles and their knights against attacks from barbarians; however, from about 900 CE on, these attacks began to ease. This meant that common people no longer needed the protection from their lords and the system of feudalism began to weaken. Slowly, people began moving to, and living in, towns.

A number of different types of town began to pop up. Many grew up around castles or manor houses that had been established for hundreds of years, while others were newly settled close to ports, rivers and roads that were important for trade and

transport. As trade increased, so did the size and populations of these towns. To begin with, the populations of these towns across Europe were largely made up of people who had left manor estates. Many of the peasants that resettled there went on to earn their living as skilled craftspeople, labourers or merchants.

Over the next few centuries, a number of other events further weakened feudalism and fuelled the growth of towns. The Crusades, in particular, played an important role. Before heading off to fight, some lords sold their estates; others never returned at all. Those who did return brought new ideas, new customs and new products to trade. As trade increased, so too did the number of towns. Over time, many of these towns grew into cities. By 1200, there were about 600 cities in Europe, three times as many as there had been 50 years earlier. Because of this rapid growth, conditions in these towns and cities were often cramped and unhygienic.



Source 2 A 15th-century illuminated manuscript showing Marco Polo sailing from Venice in 1271, on his way to the East

Check your learning 10.3

Remember and understand

- 1 Explain why Marco Polo's adventures created such interest in Europe on his return.
- 2 How did the discovery of new sea routes improve trade in medieval times?

Apply and analyse

- 3 Many medieval people took great risks in the interests of trade, even exploring unknown seas.
 - a Why do you think they were prepared to do this?
 - b Do you think that people today also take risks for the same reasons? Justify your view.
- 4 Give three reasons why towns and cities began popping up across Europe from about the 10th century. Which of these reasons do you think is the most important?

10.4 Living conditions

Living conditions across Europe during the 12th century were often very harsh. A population boom in the 11th century led to a surge in the number of people living in towns and cities and competition for food and accommodation was tough.

Living conditions in towns

People living in medieval towns and cities included both the very wealthy and the very poor. Rich people might live in castles or manor houses on the outskirts of towns, or in tall, impressive homes in the town centre.

Source 1

The city was well laid out within, and constructed with many beautiful houses ... Buildings were improved to make them comfortable and elegant, and fine examples of all sorts of improvements were sought from outside the city.

An extract from the writings of Florence-based writer and banker Giovanni Villani (c. 1275–1348) describing his city in the early 1300s

The poor part of town

Homes for the poor in medieval towns were often just one or two rooms in one of the shabby multi-storeyed buildings clustered around a market area. Many of these buildings were joined together in a similar way to modern apartment blocks. Family businesses were typically run from the ground floor (which often had a dirt floor). Floors on upper levels were often covered with straw. Over time, this floor covering became a stinking squashed mat of rotting food, bones, bodily wastes and grease. Bathing was not seen as a daily routine in those days. In fact, some people thought that washing was bad for their health! The poor and rich alike lived with lice and fleas and scurrying rats.



Source 2 Part of a medieval European town, still standing today, with some modern additions



Source 3 A modern artist's impression of a medieval European town around the mid 1400s. Note the busy marketplace.



The dirty streets

Town centres were dirty and smelly. Rotting food scraps and sewage typically blocked the drains. Each day, household rubbish and the contents of chamber pots (used for going to the toilet) were tossed out of windows. It was common to see animals such as pigs and chickens roaming the streets and alleyways. The smell of animal manure and human waste was constant, and the streets were a thriving environment for rats and other vermin.

Narrow stone or dirt streets separated the rows of what were, at first, mostly wooden buildings with thatched or shingled roofs. Such flammable materials made these buildings major fire risks.

Market activity

Medieval towns and cities were noisy, crowded places. At the centre of many towns there was a marketplace where goods were bought and sold. Festivals were also held there. One might hear animals bleating, the clatter of cart wheels, the cries of merchants as they carried out their trade, the songs and music of wandering **minstrels**, and the yells of running children.

Living conditions in the country

People living in the country also faced very difficult conditions. Houses were small with dirt floors covered in straw. These houses were usually dirty, smelly and dark, and were often shared with animals such as chickens and pigs. Windows were narrow openings that could be boarded up in winter. The toilet was a hole in the ground outside.

Peasants living in the country worked long hours to produce their food, and were often undernourished. This made them susceptible to many different kinds of illnesses.

Life expectancy

Life expectancy during the 11th and 12th centuries was very low compared to today. Infant mortality (death) rates were very high, and if an infant survived, on average they could only expect to live to be about 35 years old if they were male, and about 31 years if they were female. Many women died during childbirth, whereas many more males died as children before the age of 10.

Life expectancy in medieval Europe became worse from about 1300 (even before the Black Death) as a result of famine and the dirty, overcrowded living conditions in cities.

Check your learning 10.4

Remember and understand

- 1 Why were towns and cities – especially the poorer parts – such fertile areas for the spread of the plague?
- 2 What was the average life expectancy for a male living in medieval Europe?
- 3 What was the average life expectancy for a female living in medieval Europe?
- 4 Why do you think the average life expectancy was lower for women than men?

Apply and analyse

- 5 Divisions in medieval societies helped to create living conditions in some towns and cities that were a breeding ground for disease. Think about the town or city in which your school is located. With a partner, answer the following questions:
 - a How are social differences reflected in the layout and appearance of your town or city?
 - b What health risks and social problems might be created by some areas of your town or city? Why?
 - c What steps have already been taken to improve this situation? Can you suggest others?

Evaluate and create

- 6 With a partner, draw a concept map exploring some of the hardships you think that those living in early medieval towns might have faced. Think how these hardships might have affected family life, health, lifestyle, employment and life span.

10A rich task

Medieval London – a dirty old town

How people in medieval cities lived is very different from how we live in cities today. In medieval London, the streets and roads were still bare earth and the ground was covered with the excrement of people and animals, as well as animal entrails and rotting food.



From our point of view today, it seems hard to believe that people were happy to live in these conditions. Were no attempts made in the 14th century to control the filth in the streets of London? The following extracts provide evidence of early moves to clean up London.

Source 1

Concerning dung

No-one is to throw straw, dust, dung, sawdust, nor any other unpleasant material into the streets or lanes. Rather they are to have them removed by the rakers or others to places designated for the dumping of such dirt, under penalty of 2s. [for default, payable] to the Chamber.

Concerning pigs and cows

No-one is to raise pigs, bulls, or cows within their houses, under penalty of seizure of the same to the Chamber.

Extract from Corporation of London Records Office, *Liber Albus*, f.213, c. early 13th century, translated and reproduced in Henry Thomas Riley, ed. *Liber Albus*, Rolls Series, no.12, vol.1 (1859), 335

Source 3

Next case heard by the wardmen of the city of London: the lane called Ebbegate was a right of way for all men until it was blocked by Thomas at Wytte and William de Hockele, who got together and built latrines [toilets] which stuck out from the walls of the houses. From these latrines human filth falls on the heads of the passers-by.

Extract from the *Book of Customs* (1321) which recorded court cases brought against people in London in the Middle Ages

Source 4

Almost all the floors are made of clay and rushes from the marshes, so carelessly removed that the bottom layers sometimes remain for 20 years, keeping there below spittle and vomit and urine of dogs and men, beer that has been thrown down, leftovers of fishes and filth unimaginable ... It would help also if people made the council keep the streets less dirty from filth and urine.

A letter from the Dutch scholar Erasmus to an English doctor (1524), with his ideas to stop plagues



Source 2 An artist's impression of the busy streets in medieval London

skilldrill

Identifying purpose and point of view

Whenever you use a historical source, you need to evaluate its usefulness and accuracy. The first thing you need to do is find out who created it and when, and what sources *they* might have used. Another aspect is to work out *why* the source was created. Most primary sources are created for specific purposes; for example, a letter might be intended to share news with a friend or convince somebody to do something. Even sources that are intended to inform us about the past, such as a history website or documentary, can have another purpose, such as to entertain or make money. Therefore, we need to be able to identify the point of view or attitude presented in a source (**bias**), and then decide whether it is useful and relevant.

Ask yourself:

- Why was the source written or produced?
 - Are there personal motives?
 - Are there political reasons?
 - Is it propaganda?

- How was it written or produced?
 - Does it give a particular point of view?
 - Does it give a detached, balanced account?
 - Is it biased either for or against the issue?

Remember, just because a source is biased does not automatically mean that it is not useful. It may be extremely useful if you are investigating the opinions of a particular group at a particular time. However, if you are investigating 'the facts' of an event, a biased source may be much less useful. To make a conclusion about whether a source is useful, you need to be very clear about what you want to use the source for.

Apply the skill

- 1 For each of the three written sources, name the main reason why they were produced.
- 2 What do these sources reveal about the state of London streets in medieval times?
- 3 How reliable do you think each of these sources are?
- 4 For each of the sources, consider whether there is any possible bias shown and why this might be the case.

Extend your understanding

- 1 Read Source 4 – taken from a letter by Erasmus to an English doctor. Put yourself in the position of the English doctor. Do some research on the Internet to try to find out what English doctors at the time thought of the filth in the streets and in people's houses. Find out whether they thought this increased the risk of disease. Would the English doctor have agreed with Erasmus or have had another point of view? Write a short response to the letter from the English doctor's point of view.

10.5 Causes and symptoms of the Black Death

Causes of the Black Death

The Black Death was a plague pandemic that broke out in parts of Asia, Africa and Europe between the early 1330s and 1350s.

A pandemic is an infectious disease that spreads through human populations across a large region, or even worldwide, in a short period of time. This particular pandemic did not become known as the Black Death until many years later. It was given this name because of the black lumps, or **buboes**, that appeared on the victim's skin.

There had been outbreaks of the plague in previous centuries, but the outbreak that occurred in the 14th century was far more deadly than previous ones. By the time it ran its course, it is estimated that more than a third of the population in Europe had died from it.

The Black Death is now believed to have been a combination of three types of plague – **bubonic plague**, pneumonic plague and septicemic plague. Bubonic plague is transmitted by infected fleas carried by rats. Rats were very common in the dirty, crowded conditions of medieval Europe. When the rat carrying the flea died from the plague, the flea would jump onto a person to feed from their blood. The person bitten by the flea would then be infected. Bubonic plague was the most common form of plague.

Pneumonic plague was the second most common form of plague. It attacked a person's respiratory system and was spread through the air by a victim's cough. It was far more contagious and deadly than the bubonic plague.

Septicemic plague was the rarest and deadliest form of the Black Death. It was also spread by infected fleas, but moves directly into the

Source 1 Medieval artist's impression of merchants conducting their trade. It was medieval traders, many say, who were responsible for spreading the pandemic.



bloodstream and becomes life threatening even before buboes have had time to form on the skin. Septicemic plague killed almost 100 per cent of victims.

Medieval societies were significantly changed by the Black Death. Town populations were devastated, trade virtually stopped and many manor lands and businesses were ruined. Family and social relationships were also ruined, for both the rich and the poor.

Symptoms of the Black Death

For most sufferers, the first sign of the Black Death was large bulges or lumps that appeared on the skin, usually in the groin, in the armpits or on the neck. These lumps were known as buboes, and initially appeared as a red colour, before turning purple, and then finally black. These buboes would spread all over the body. The victim would also get a fever and headaches. Over the next few days, the victim would lose motor control, so that they could not speak or walk properly. They would suffer much pain and vomiting, and become delirious.

The average time of death from the first symptom was between three and seven days. It is believed that between 50 and 75 per cent of those who caught the disease died.

Source 2 This detail, called 'Suffering man', from a painting by Matthias Grünewald (c. 1480–1528) provides evidence of why this terrible disease caused such fear and horror.



Source 3 *Yersinia pestis* bacteria – the bacteria that lived in the stomach of fleas and that caused the bubonic plague



Source 4 The black rat helped spread the bubonic plague throughout medieval Asia, Africa and Europe.

Check your learning 10.5

Remember and understand

- 1 What is a pandemic?
- 2 What were the three types of plague that became known as the Black Death?
- 3 Why did the disease become known as the Black Death?

Evaluate and create

- 4 Conduct some research into the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*. Find out:
 - a who discovered it as the real cause of the Black Death, and when
 - b who discovered the first effective treatment for the Black Death, and when.

Write a short report to show your findings.

10.6 The spread of the Black Death

From around 1330 to 1351, the Black Death swept through Asia, Europe, north Africa and the Middle East, killing an estimated 100 million people.

Origins of the Black Death

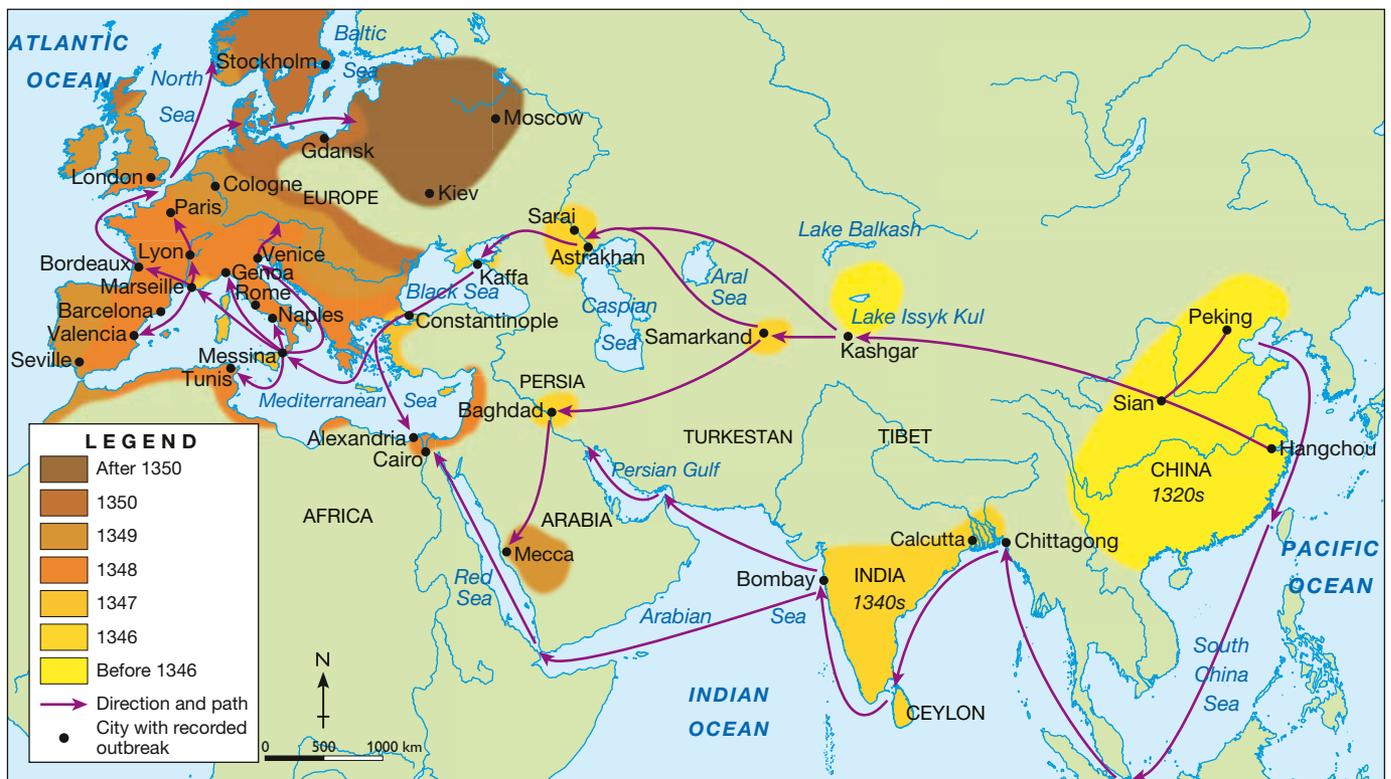
Most scientists and historians believe that an especially lethal strain of the plague broke out in China in the early 1330s, following a devastating famine. This area was then known as the Yuan Empire (covering most of present-day China and Mongolia), which had been under Mongol rule since 1279. Some think that the disease was first carried westwards by Mongols travelling along the Silk Road.

In 1346, the pandemic eventually reached a trading city on the Black Sea called Kaffa that was controlled by Genoan (Italian) merchants (see

Source 1). At that time, Muslim Turks (called **Tatars**) were attacking Kaffa. The attacking forces of Tartars were infected with the plague. A 14th-century Italian writer, Gabriele de' Mussi, described how the Tatars 'ordered dead corpses [of their men] to be placed in **catapults** and lobbed [thrown] into the city in the hope that the intolerable stench would kill everyone inside. What seemed like mountains of dead were thrown'. The Tatar attack began to break down as the disease spread rapidly among their troops, killing all but a few. The Genoan merchants in Kaffa took the opportunity to flee to their boats.

The Genoans, however, were now also carrying the disease. On the way home, they infected those they came in contact with, including merchants in Constantinople (who, in turn, carried the plague further east). When the ships reached their home port back in Italy, crowds flocked to greet them. These survivors unknowingly introduced the disease to their homeland via their own infection and the rats on board (who jumped to land).

ORIGINS AND SPREAD OF THE BLACK DEATH



Source 1

Source: Oxford University Press



Source 2 The tower of a 14th–19th-century Genoese fortress in Kaffa (modern-day Feodosiya in Ukraine)

The rapid spread of the Black Death

The spread across Europe

Once the Black Death had moved westwards from Asia, it raced through Europe (see Source 1). By the end of 1347, most Mediterranean islands were infected. Many Mediterranean seaports were also infected. By 1348, the Black Death was in Marseilles and, then, other cities in the south of France. From there, it moved into Spain and further into Italy.

Later in 1348 the plague was carried across to England by sea. In 1349, the plague spread across the rest of the British Isles and then across the North Sea into Norway. It also continued its spread across mainland Europe, reaching Germany. By 1350 the plague had further spread into eastern Europe, Russia and the rest of Scandinavia. By 1352 the plague was widespread across Europe.

The spread into Egypt and north Africa

Europe was not the only area devastated by the Black Death. By 1347, it reached Alexandria in north Africa, carried by infected travellers on ships. An Arab writer described the arrival there of a slave ship that had set out to sea from Constantinople with over 330 people on board. By the time it arrived in Alexandria, there were only three survivors.

By early 1348, up to 1000 people were dying per day in Alexandria. In fact, Alexandria's population did not return to what it was before the plague until hundreds of years later.

In other villages of the Nile delta, the death rate was so high that towns were abandoned, fishing almost stopped and law courts were closed. In the town of Bilbeis, for example, bodies were reported to be piled up in mosques and shops. Roads were littered with rotting corpses, which were eaten by dogs and rats.

The southward spread of the plague from Alexandria saw it travel up the Nile Valley (again, mostly through infected boat passengers). About 200000 people died in Cairo alone – 37 per cent of the city's population. By February 1349, the Black Death had reached Aswan, 1000 kilometres south of Cairo.

To the west of Egypt, the plague's advance followed the north African coastline. It reached Tunis in April 1348 – most likely through trading links with Sicily. From there it pushed into today's Algeria and Morocco. Interestingly, **nomadic** Arabs (who lived in tents, moving from place to place) were not struck down by the plague.

The spread into the Middle East

The Black Death spread to Yemen in the east by 1351. The king of Yemen, and his attendants and **courtiers**, carried the disease to their home country after their release from a Cairo prison.

Three years earlier, in April 1348, the plague had already reached Gaza. From there it spread to Palestine and Syria. Less than a year later, it had killed 50000 people in Damascus – roughly half the population. Eventually, the whole of the Islamic world was affected, especially those living in towns or cities.

Check your learning 10.6

Remember and understand

- 1 Where was the initial outbreak of the Black Death believed to have occurred?
- 2 Describe the impact of the Black Death on Egypt during 1348 and 1349.

Apply and analyse

- 3 Write a paragraph outlining the role that trade and trade routes played in the rapid spread of the Black Death.
- 4 Why do you think it is that nomadic Arabs were able to escape the Black Death?

Evaluate and create

- 5 Create a timeline that lists key events in the spread of the pandemic from east to west. Include key dates for Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe.

10.7 Medicine at the time of the Black Death

Today we know far more about many health conditions and diseases than medieval people did. Those suffering from the Black Death in the 14th century had no idea why they were dying. They knew nothing about germs or bacteria. The cause – the bacterium *Yersinia pestis* (see Source 3 on page 279) – was not discovered until the late 1800s.

Beliefs about the causes of the Black Death

When the Black Death broke out, some people looked to the skies for answers. In medieval times, astronomical events to do with the planets, the Sun and the Moon were often believed to trigger events on Earth. One such event occurred on 20 March 1345, when the planets of Jupiter, Saturn and Mars were aligned closely in the night sky. This unusual event was considered by certain people to have caused a toxic cloud to form over India. As this cloud drifted on, it was said to infect people below with the plague.

At this time, bad smells were also commonly considered to be the cause of disease. To counteract

the odours, people carried small bunches of flowers or parcels filled with fragrant herbs, spices or flowers. Green wood (such as from the rosemary plant) was burned in the home to give off a fragrant smoke. People were encouraged by doctors not to sleep on their backs because it was believed that bad smells could slip too easily up their nostrils.

Medical care at the time of the Black Death

By today's standards, medieval medical care was very primitive. There were some university-trained doctors in Europe, but only the wealthiest people in society could afford to visit them. One of these doctors would diagnose the problem, prescribe a treatment and then possibly refer the patient to a surgeon. Poor people received medical attention from **monks** or **nuns**, or healers in their community. Often, healers were older women, respected for their knowledge of illness and herbal treatments.

keyconcept: Evidence

Plague doctors

Plague doctors were specialist physicians hired by towns and cities to fight the Black Death, but they were not always well trained. Most could do little for victims, except separate them from people who had not yet contracted the plague and burn their clothing. They also prayed for them.

Source 1 provides evidence of how plague physicians typically dressed. Heavy floor-length coats extended up the back of the head. They also wore a hat, and a bird-like beak, which was filled with strong-smelling items such as mint, spices, garlic, flowers or vinegar. This, it was hoped, would protect them from contracting the plague and from coming into contact with its associated bad smells.

For more information on the key concept of evidence, refer to page 187 of 'The history toolkit'.

Source 1 A 19th-century illustration of a typical plague doctor. Earlier medieval plague doctors were similarly dressed.



Medical treatments

Besides taking or using herbs, one of the most common medical treatments was **blood letting**. Blood letting was believed to cure illness and prevent diseases such as the Black Death by removing 'dirty' blood. Leeches were sometimes used to suck out blood, or a person's vein was cut and a set volume of blood was collected in a dish. Often this procedure was done in a barber's shop – and the person who did it was the barber.

Other medical procedures included forcing a patient to vomit, or bringing on severe sweating or diarrhoea. Some doctors treated the buboes of plague victims by cutting them open to release blood. Then a mixture made from crushed dried toads and dried human faeces was spread over the open, pus-filled wound.

Surgeons

As discussed, there was a very limited understanding of human **anatomy** across medieval Europe and surgical treatments were very crude (see Source 3). In general, surgeons knew very little of what lay below the skin, despite the fact that some were university educated.

Medieval operating tools included saws, knives, hot irons and sharp instruments for blood letting. None of these were sterilised, and operations were often carried out in the open – even major procedures such as amputations. The success rates for major surgery were, unsurprisingly, very low.

Anaesthetics did not exist in medieval Europe, so the pain of surgery or other treatment had to be endured. Poor people might be given a piece of wood to bite on. More wealthy people were sometimes given a sedating drug like alcohol mixed with opium. Another sedative called 'dwale' was often used but it was deadly if given in the wrong amounts. Besides opium and dwale, lettuce juice, vinegar and the bile of a castrated wild pig were also used to relieve the pain of surgery.



Source 2 A 15th-century illustration of blood letting



Source 3 An artist's depiction of a medieval surgeon treating a broken leg. The pain of such treatments simply had to be endured.

Check your learning 10.7

Remember and understand

- 1 Medieval people did not know what caused the plague, but they did have some ideas. Describe two possible explanations put forward.
- 2 Who might the very wealthy go to see about a medical condition? Who might the very poor go to see? Why?
- 3 What types of tools did medieval surgeons use?

Apply and analyse

- 4 Describe two different methods used by medieval surgeons to control pain during surgery. How effective do you think each might have been?

Evaluate and create

- 5 Design and make a mask that meets the requirements of a medieval plague doctor. Share your creations with the class, explaining how you made them.

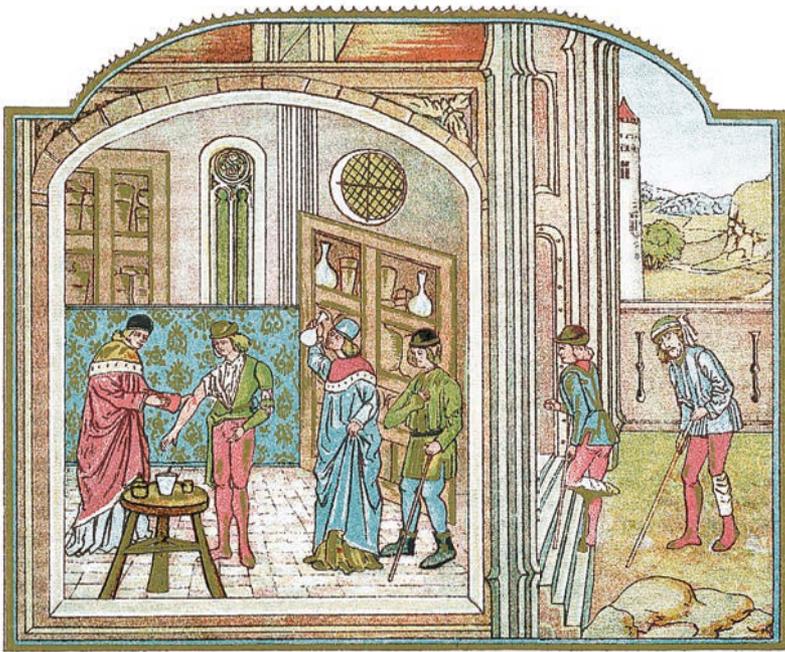
10B rich task

Medieval medicine

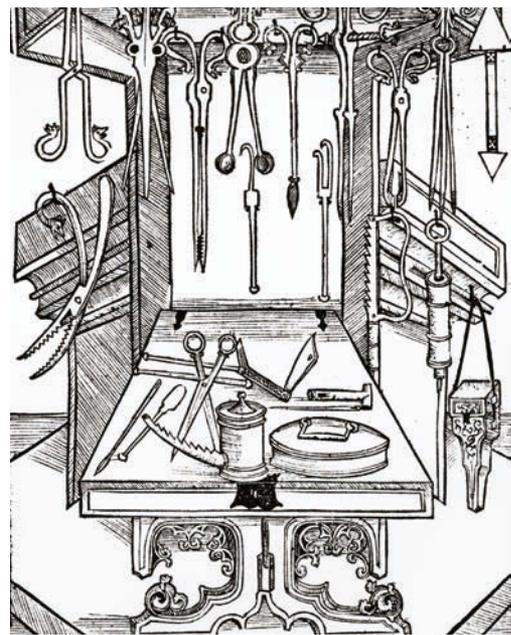
Doctors in medieval Europe had little knowledge, skills or resources to deal with serious diseases and health conditions. Physicians believed that illness was a result of the body's 'humours' being out of balance. Popular treatments used by physicians to restore balance included blood letting, which involved draining an amount of blood from the patient as a cure or alternatively attaching leeches to a patient's skin to suck blood from the patient. Other treatments involved herbal remedies. Some of these remedies were dangerous as they could contain poisons, but other herbs are still used today to help treat some health conditions.

Herb	Ailment
Aloe	hair loss, wounds
Anise	bad breath, bee stings
Basil	stomach upset, tumours
Caraway	gas, indigestion
Chamomile	indigestion, headache
Comfrey	broken bones, breathing difficulty
Coriander	cramps, plague
Dandelion	boils, itching
Dill	gas, hiccups
Fennel	insanity, body odour
Garlic	colds, heart problems
Ginger	flu, stomach upset
Liquorice	asthma, stomach upset
Oregano	indigestion, cramps
Parsley	epilepsy, arthritis
Pepper	depression, pain
Rosemary	paralysis, dandruff
Sage	worms, wounds
St John's wort	snakebite, burns
Thyme	worms, depression
Valerian	sleeplessness, pain

Source 2 Some of the herbs used in medieval times and a selection of medical conditions for which they were prescribed



Source 1 *The Leech's Chamber* shows sick people going to the doctor to have blood extracted using leeches, c. 16th century.



Source 3 This woodcut print shows assorted medical tools from the medieval period, c. 15th century

Source 4

If a depression caused by various fever attacks causes a person headaches, he should take mallow and twice that amount of sage, crush these into a pulp in a mortar and pour a bit of olive oil on it ... He should then apply it over the skull from the forehead to the neck and wrap a cloth over it.

An extract from *Liber Compositae Medicinae* by Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179)

skilldrill

Comparing, selecting and using information from a range of sources as evidence

When conducting a historical inquiry, it is important to locate, compare, select and use information from a range of sources. By doing this, you can be sure that the evidence you gather from these sources is fair, balanced and accurate, rather than biased – that is, only based on the point of view of one person.

There are a number of different methods you can use to compare and select information for your sources; one of the simplest and most effective is to use source evaluation chart. Source evaluation charts can be very simple to create, but will help you quickly and easily decide which sources provide the most useful, relevant and reliable evidence. To create a simple source evaluation chart, follow these steps:

Step 1 Create a table that is four columns wide and has as many rows as required – this will vary depending on how many sources you are using.

Step 2 List your inquiry question at the top of the table, as well as any possible hypotheses you may have developed during your research.

Step 3 In column 1, list the name of the source and where you found it.

In column 2, list the type of source it is – primary or secondary.

In column 3, list all of the positive things (pros) and negative things (cons) about the source. For example, the source may have been written by a very reputable historian (pro); but it may only be very short and not include all the details you need (con).

In column 4, list the details of where you found it, such as an Internet address or book title and author details.

Step 4 Once you have completed your source evaluation chart you will be in a good position to make some decisions about which sources provide reliable evidence and which do not. This will then help you answer your inquiry question.

Apply the skill

- 1 Compare, select and use information from Sources 1, 2, 3 and 4 by creating a source evaluation chart as described. For an example of a source evaluation chart, refer to page 200 of 'The history toolkit'.
- 2 Based on your analysis of the available information, answer the following inquiry questions:
 - a Which sources do you believe present the most reliable evidence of what medieval medicine was like? Why?
 - b Which sources do you believe present the most unreliable or biased evidence of what medieval medicine was really like? Why?
 - c Which of the treatments described or shown in the sources do you think may have been effective and which do you think may have been dangerous?
 - d Which ailments are likely to have been treated effectively during the medieval period and which do you think would have been treated ineffectively?

Extend your understanding

Medieval medicine seems very strange to many people these days, but even today there are many forms of 'medicine' that seem strange to people accustomed to mainstream medical care. Some of these alternative medicines are very effective, and many are not. Despite these failings, people continue to seek treatment from alternative sources.

- 1 Research an 'alternative' form of medicine, or an alternative treatment for a particular disease. You may look at some types of homeopathy, Chinese medicine, or other treatments. Find out what this form of medicine has in common with Western medicine, and what is different.
- 2 Why do you think this form of health care exists and why do people seek such treatments?

10.8 Seeking a cause or cure

Nobody in medieval times understood the real cause of the Black Death, but this did not stop them looking for reasons why this terrible disease was devastating their world. Many thought that it was a punishment sent from God for their sins. These people became more and more concerned with seeking religious salvation by confessing their sins and praying for forgiveness. Others started looking for someone to blame.

Those seeking a cause

Persecution of the Jews

Societies in medieval Europe were dominated by Christian beliefs, so the Jews formed only a small minority of the population. Despite their small numbers, they were often looked down upon because of the Christian belief that Jewish people were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. With the spread of the Black Death, many people were looking for someone to blame for their suffering, and the Jews were a common target.

Massacres of Jews began in the spring and summer of 1348, starting in France. Persecution grew more intense after a Jewish doctor in Switzerland confessed to poisoning the drinking water, thus causing the Black Death. However, he was tortured to obtain his 'confession'. That month all Jews in the town of Basel (in today's Switzerland) were rounded up and burned alive.

Jewish persecution began in Germany in November 1348 and continued for the next nine months. Some Jews managed to escape to Poland where they were offered protection by King Casimir III. Many then moved on to Russia where large Jewish communities were established.

The flagellants

The **flagellants** were groups of radical Christians who roamed through Europe, wearing red crosses on their clothing. Organised in groups of up to 300 people led by a master, flagellants would walk into towns and villages and form a circle to conduct their flagellation rituals. They were known as flagellants because they would flagellate, or whip, themselves believing that this would help them gain God's forgiveness for their sins.

Each person carried a heavy whip tipped with metal studs. After forming a circle, they would strip off the top half of their clothing and the master would walk around, whipping them. Then, they would whip themselves until they drew blood. As they did this, they would cry out to God to forgive them for their sins and to stop the Black Death.

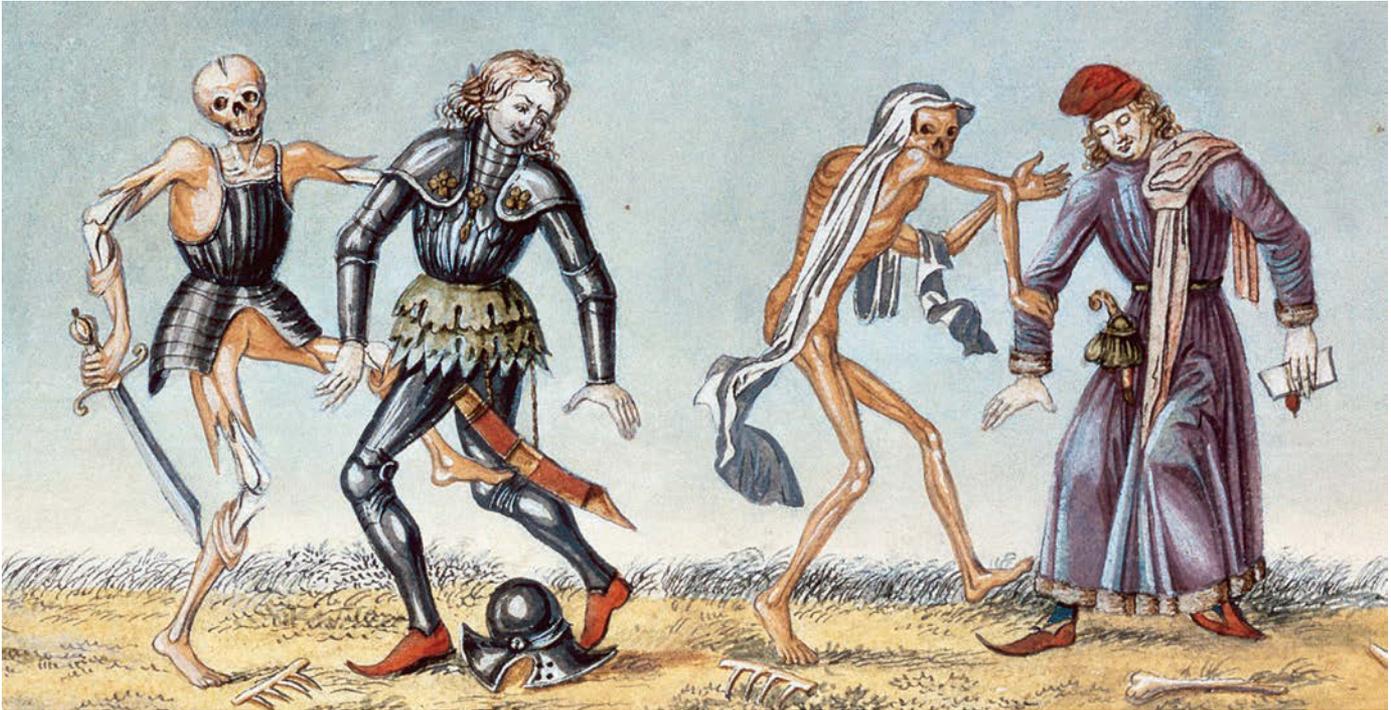
The flagellants also believed that Jewish people were responsible for the Black Death, and encouraged attacks on the Jewish populations in the towns they visited.

The sinners

Some people in medieval Europe became so depressed and disillusioned by what was happening during the Black Death that they gave up caring about religion entirely.



Source 1 A procession of flagellants, painted by the Spanish artist Goya between 1815 and 1819



Source 2 A section of a medieval painting called *Danse Macabre* (or *Dance of Death*)

Without the strict moral guidance and teaching of the Church, some people began to show wild and careless behaviour. Spending all day drinking, laughing, singing and dancing took people's minds off their fear, and eased some of their pain. This mix of emotions (fear and celebration) is well captured in medieval artworks such as the *Danse Macabre*, or *Dance of Death* (see Source 2).

Those seeking a cure

The effect on medicine and public health

The failure of medieval medicine to cure or prevent the spread of the Black Death led to changes in medical practices immediately following the plague. Frustrated with diagnoses and treatments that revolved around astrology and superstition, doctors and scholars began focusing more on clinical medicine and seeking to increase their knowledge of the physical world. This approach led to an increase in autopsies and dissections of human corpses in a desire to learn more about anatomy. This in turn led to a greater understanding of the workings of the human body and new medical texts and treatments. Hospitals developed into places of treatment rather than being places where the sick were sent to die.

After the plague had passed, some towns and villages slowly began to set up local health boards to develop and enforce sanitation procedures. These remained very simple but included such moves as regulations to restrict the dumping of waste and the employment of street sweepers.

Check your learning 10.8

Remember and understand

- 1 Describe the rituals that the flagellants would perform when they entered towns and villages.
- 2 Why and how did Jewish people get persecuted during the time of the Black Death?

Apply and analyse

- 3 Analyse Source 2. What evidence does the detail from this painting reveal about how medieval people were thinking at the time of the plague?

Evaluate and create

- 4 Write or compose a chant or song that might have been suitable for flagellants to call out as they walked around whipping themselves.

10.9 Short-term impacts of the Black Death

Many of the immediate impacts of the Black Death on **society** were the result of death on a massive scale. People from all walks of life, all trades and professions were affected, as were all types of families.

Depopulation

It is difficult to give an exact figure for the number of people who died from the Black Death. Many medieval authors made claims about the number of deaths that occurred in particular areas, but these sources have proven unreliable. Church records also provide us with details about births and deaths in their particular region, but these records also contain many gaps and inaccuracies, and are therefore also unreliable. Many of the **primary sources** that exist do not distinguish between deaths caused by the Black Death and deaths that occurred because of other factors, such as old age or other diseases.

The effects of the Black Death on Eastern societies are not understood as well as they are in Europe. It is believed that in China alone the population dropped from 125 million to 90 million. It is known that

the plague spread into other regions of Asia besides China, including the Khmer region and India. A writer from the period is reported as saying: 'India was depopulated; Tartary, Mesopotamia, Syria, Armenia were covered with dead bodies; the Kurds fled in vain to the mountains. In Caramaria and Caesaria [in modern-day Turkey] none were left alive.'

The most recent estimates suggest the following approximate number of deaths as a result of the Black Death:

- 33 to 40 per cent of the population of Europe, with higher rates of death in rural areas
- 35 million people in China
- one-third of populations in the Middle East
- 40 per cent of Egypt's population.

The effect on towns

Rubbish and raw sewage in the streets of medieval towns was a common sight, even before the plague, but once the plague struck, this filthy situation became even worse. Abandoned houses were left dirty and untended, and muck in the streets piled up. There were few people to tend to the disrepair, even if they had wanted to. Tradesmen and craftsmen died along with cleaners, magistrates and officials.

Impact on religion

Many monks, nuns and priests died as a result of the Black Death. Some others in the general population saw this as proof that the lifestyles of these religious people had displeased God. A few religious centres, such as monasteries, were accused of improper conduct and greed, rather than being places devoted to God. Some priests

Source 1 An illustration from the Toggenburg Bible (1411) showing a couple covered in buboes, symptoms of the Black Death



and other religious figures fled, abandoning their parishioners because they feared becoming infected. Those who replaced them were often poorly trained. Some did not even live in the parishes they were meant to oversee. This added to the disappointment and anger of many ordinary people toward the Church and weakened its position in society.

Burial of the dead

People were dying so quickly, and in such large numbers, that there was no time for proper burials or religious ceremonies. In fact, some Christian priests began refusing to bury victims for fear of contracting the disease. Mass burials became common, with corpses shovelled into large pits and covered with earth.



Source 2 This medieval painting shows nuns caring for the sick at the Hôtel-Dieu (Hospital of God) in Paris. Many nuns and monks contracted the plague by helping others.

keyconcept: Evidence

The Decameron

One of the most significant primary sources of evidence for an insight into how the Black Death affected societies in Europe is *The Decameron*. It was written by Giovanni Boccaccio in the 1350s. Although it was written as entertainment (it consists of a number of lively stories told by young people who flee Florence to escape the plague), it provides key information about life in plague-affected communities.

Source 3

Some thought that moderate living and the avoidance of all superfluity [excesses] would preserve them from the epidemic ... they shut themselves up in houses where there were no sick, eating the finest food and drinking the best wine very temperately [moderately], avoiding all excess, allowing no news or discussion of death and sickness ... others thought just the opposite. They thought the sure cure for the plague was to drink

and be merry, to go about singing and amusing themselves, satisfying every appetite they could, laughing and jesting [joking] ...

Many others adopted a course of life midway ... they did not shut themselves up, but went about, carrying flowers or scented herbs or perfumes in their hands, in the belief that it was an excellent thing to comfort the brain with such odours; for the whole air was infected with the smell of dead bodies, of sick persons and medicines.

... brother abandoned brother, and the uncle his nephew, and the sister her brother, and very often the wife her husband. What is even worse and nearly incredible is that fathers and mothers refused to see and tend their children.

A translated extract from *The Decameron* by Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375)

For more information on the key concept of evidence, refer to page 187 of 'The history toolkit'.

Check your learning 10.9

Remember and understand

- 1 Why is it so difficult to give an exact figure for the number of deaths resulting from the Black Death?
- 2 Explain how the plague led to a loss of confidence in the Church for some medieval Christians.

Evaluate and create

- 3 Carefully read Source 3. In dot points, summarise some of the major effects of the Black Death on people's lives in plague-affected communities as described in this source.

10.10 The end of the world...

This labelled illustration presents some of the short-term impacts of the Black Death on medieval society.

The Black Death caused a huge labour shortage in towns and on the farms. Many feudal manors were largely deserted, either because workers had died or run away.

Source 1 A modern artist's impression of the impact of the plague on a medieval town

The plague caused some people to question their beliefs. Many priests died too, causing some to think that the Church was powerless to stop this terrible epidemic.

There were so many dead bodies (in the streets and houses), they had to be buried in mass pits. Bodies were collected and put on carts that travelled the streets.



Check your learning 10.10

Remember and understand

- 1 Using Source 1, identify five short-term impacts of the Black Death that have hit this medieval town.

Believing the plague was God's punishment for wrongdoing, people known as flagellants began walking the streets whipping themselves in a bid to repent for their sins and ask forgiveness from God.

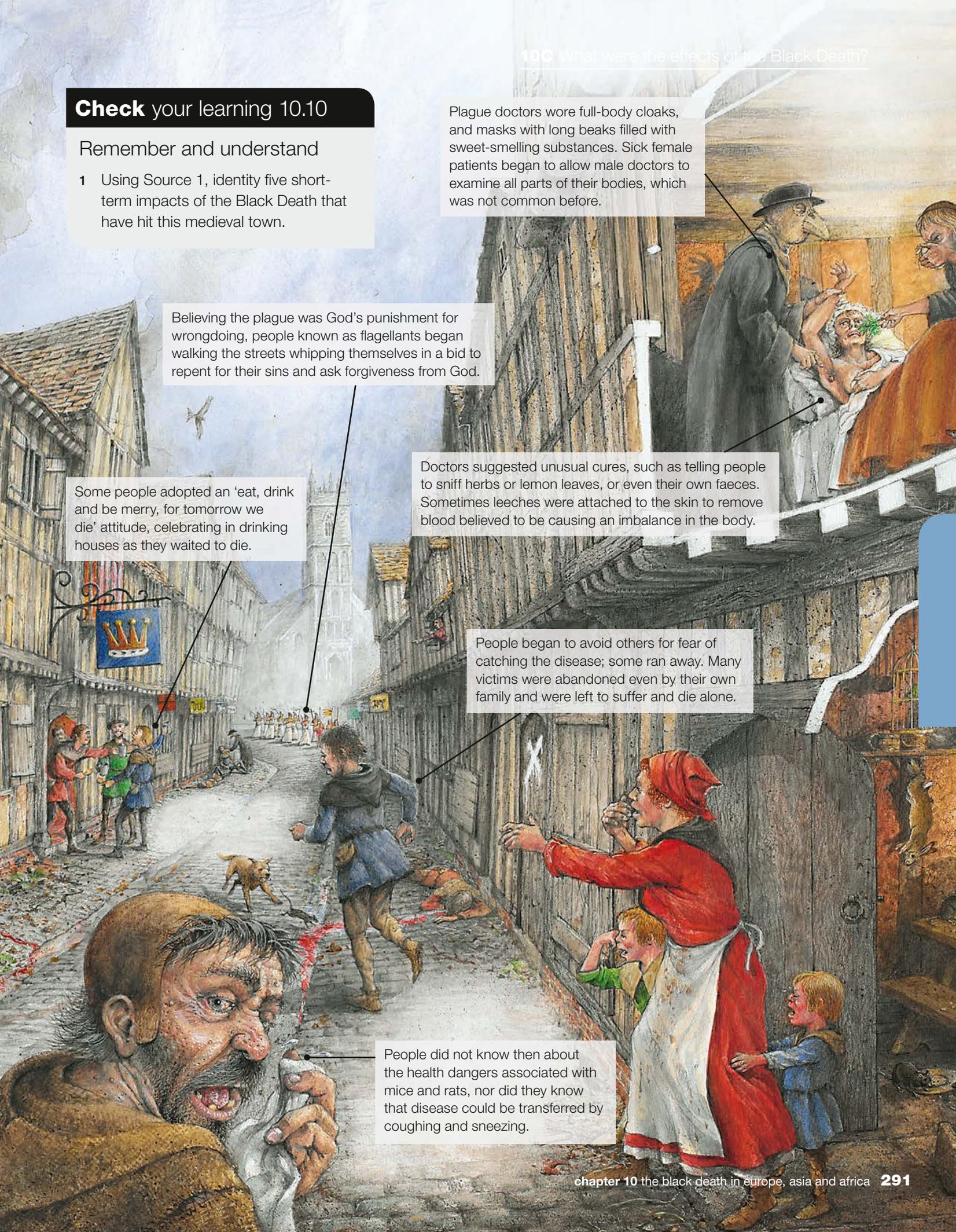
Some people adopted an 'eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die' attitude, celebrating in drinking houses as they waited to die.

Doctors suggested unusual cures, such as telling people to sniff herbs or lemon leaves, or even their own faeces. Sometimes leeches were attached to the skin to remove blood believed to be causing an imbalance in the body.

People began to avoid others for fear of catching the disease; some ran away. Many victims were abandoned even by their own family and were left to suffer and die alone.

People did not know then about the health dangers associated with mice and rats, nor did they know that disease could be transferred by coughing and sneezing.

Plague doctors wore full-body cloaks, and masks with long beaks filled with sweet-smelling substances. Sick female patients began to allow male doctors to examine all parts of their bodies, which was not common before.



10.11 Long-term impacts of the Black Death

It is often only with the passage of time that the long-term impacts of devastating events become clear, and the Black Death was no exception. The Black Death reduced the populations of towns, villages, cities and manors dramatically. In some cases the populations of whole towns were wiped out, leaving the countryside empty. Europe would not recover until the 1500s.

Weakening of feudalism

The massive drop in population drastically affected trade, manufacturing, and the production of food from the land. Skilled labourers and craftsmen were now in short supply. Survivors who had been trained in different trades were highly valued by employers. They had more bargaining power and, hence, more social status.

In time, this situation helped to break down the already weakened system of feudalism. Instead of providing their labour free in return for a lord's protection and support, knights and manor workers could now demand money for their services. In towns, workers could demand higher wages.

The wealth available to survivors of the Black Death is believed to have been at least five times more than it was before the plague struck. Spending increased in towns and cities, increasing the power and social position of surviving members of the middle class. Prices also began to increase in some areas.

Peasant unrest

Concerned by the increase in wages being demanded (and paid), some rulers tried to introduce new laws to keep wages low. They also tried to stop the rising cost of food, then being forced up by black market trading and piracy.

In England, the Statute of Labourers was introduced in 1351. This law made it illegal for employers to increase workers' wages to attract new

keyconcept: Cause and effect

The Peasants' Revolt

The Peasants' Revolt took place in England in 1381. This revolt, which involved separate but related uprisings by peasants, eventually led to the end of feudalism in England.

The lower classes under feudalism were often badly treated. They lived in complete poverty and were enslaved to their lords. Despite their poverty, peasants in England at this time were required to pay taxes to support the king.

By then, the Black Death had severely reduced the population of England, but the king passed a law to ensure that workers could not ask for better employment terms (such as higher wages). When some peasants refused to pay these taxes, they were fined or put in the stocks as punishment. But the discontent was felt in many places, and an uprising swelled across England. The leader of the revolt, Wat Tyler, was eventually killed by the mayor of London.

Although the demands for better working and living conditions were not immediately met, the upper classes realised that they could not rule over the peasants in the same ways they had in the past. They also realised that large groups of workers could be a significant political force to reckon with.

For more information on the key concept of cause and effect, refer to page 186 of 'The history toolkit'.



Source 1 An illustration of Wat Tyler being killed during the Peasants' Revolt



Source 2 A detail from the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican City in Rome, painted by Michelangelo (1475–1564) – one of the more significant works of art from Renaissance Europe

workers. It also made it illegal for workers to travel to other areas for better wages. This law upset many peasant workers. Indeed, it created some of the unrest that led to the Peasants' Revolt of 1381.

Weakening of the Church

The inability of religious leaders to limit the terrible effects of the plague, as well as the deaths of so many monks, nuns and priests, led to a lessening of many peoples' faith in the Church. In the aftermath of the Black Death, people began to question the influence and power that the Church had over society and to openly criticise some of its practices.

In time this would lead to a strengthening of power of the state over the Church and to movements such as the Reformation that would see the establishment of alternative Christian faiths.

Foundations of the Renaissance

After the Black Death had passed, many wealthy survivors in Europe chose to invest in art or literature as a means of expressing their gratitude for being left alive. Some became **patrons**. They funded talented individuals to create paintings, build churches and other public buildings, and to write literature. Some encouraged scientific research, hoping that answers might one day be found to what caused the Black Death. These developments added to the cultural rebirth in Europe at the time. This would later become known as the Renaissance (which means 'rebirth' in French).

The start of the slave trade

One long-term effect on African society was the start of the slave trade. The first Africans brought to Europe as slaves were captured by Portuguese captains Antão Gonçalves and Nuno Tristão in Cabo Branco (modern Mauritania) in 1441. From this point the Portuguese established a steady trade in African slaves. Just over 10 years later, the Spanish also entered the slave trade. Initially established to provide labour in Europe, as European nations began to establish colonies from the 16th century onwards the slave trade increased as labour was needed in these new lands. Africans from the Sahara region began to be taken as slaves in the 14th century, at first to boost Europe's greatly reduced labour force.

Check your learning 10.11

Remember and understand

- 1 The Statute of Labourers was introduced in 1351.
 - a How did it change conditions for workers in England?
 - b What did this law have to do with the plague?
- 2 How did some survivors of the plague help the spread of Renaissance thinking in Europe?
- 3 How can the plague be seen as a factor that led to the start of the African slave trade?

Apply and analyse

- 4 What evidence is there to suggest that the plague had a devastating effect on the population of India at the time?

Evaluate and create

- 5 Write an essay of 500 words explaining what you believe was the most important change in the society of medieval Europe as a result of the repeated outbursts of the 14th-century plague.
- 6 In small groups, role-play for the class an interchange between survivors of the Black Death and either their former lord of the manor or their former employer in a medieval town. Your conversation will focus on how things have changed (for both parties concerned) and will reflect the values and knowledge of the times.

10C rich task

The consequences of population loss

The Black Death had far-reaching effects around the world. One of the most obvious and immediate consequences was the massive loss of life, which affected all aspects of society, culture and the economy.

Source 1 shows one of the consequences of the plague. Of course, this was not the only response to the crisis; in fact the consequences were complex and far-reaching.

Source 1

It was thought that the people ... having seen the extermination of their neighbours and of all the nations of the world ... would become better, humble and virtuous and catholic, avoiding iniquities and sins and overflowing with love and charity for one another ... The opposite happened. Men, finding themselves few and rich by inheritances and successions of earthly things, forgetting the past as if it never was, gave themselves to more disordered and sordid behaviour than ever before.

Observations written in the 14th century by the chronicler Matteo Villani, son of a respected merchant family in Florence

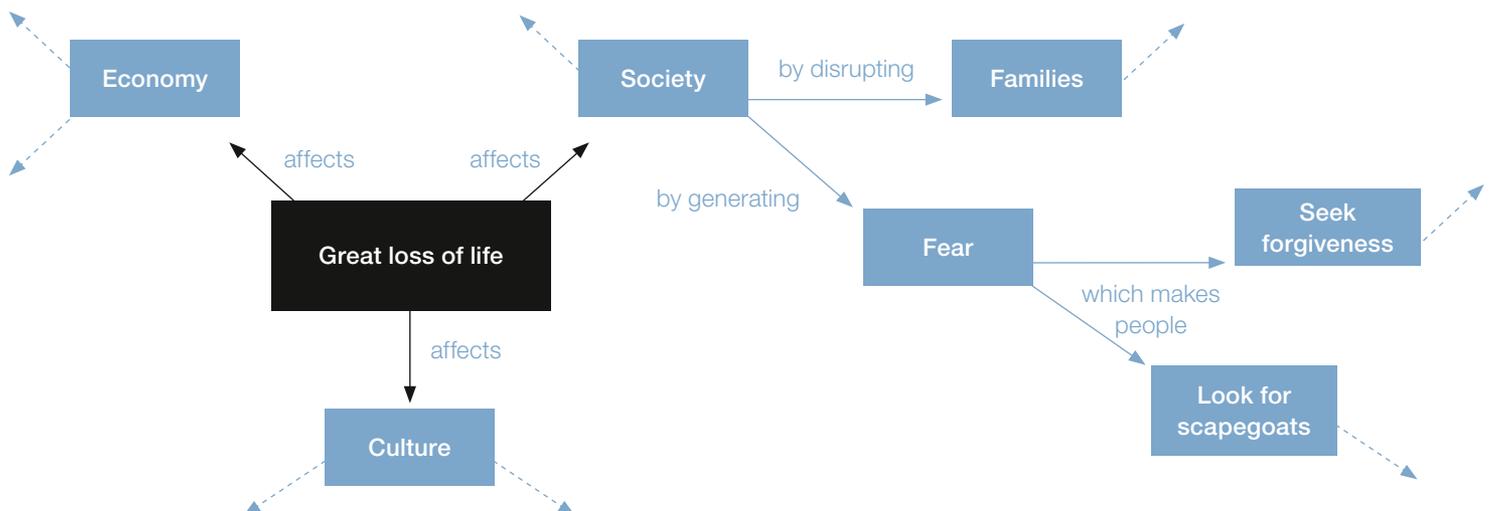
skilldrill

Creating a concept map

Graphic organisers are very useful tools for historians because they can help to compare a range of sources and identify connections between events. One of the simplest and most effective ways to explore connections between events and the consequences of them is to create a concept map. Concept maps are very simple to create, but will help you organise your thoughts and more easily identify the causes and effects of different events. To create a concept map, follow these steps:

- Step 1** Identify the topic or event that you are interested in exploring.
- Step 2** In the centre of a large sheet of paper, write down this topic and draw a circle around it.
- Step 3** Brainstorm the main ideas that relate to the topic and write them around the central idea. Draw circles around each of these ideas and connect them to the main topic. Keep the concepts as concise as possible.
- Step 4** Continue to brainstorm more ideas, and connect them to relevant topics. More important ideas should be put nearer to the centre and less important ones closer to the edges. Identify the relationship between the

Source 2 An example of a concept map



concept groups by using a range of different colours. You can also make different connections clear by using arrows or dotted lines.

Step 5 After you have finished work on your concept map, look carefully at the way it is organised. Check to see that nothing is missing, and that each group of connected ideas is organised logically.

Apply the skill

1 Copy the concept map that has been started for you in Source 1. Complete it in your notebook, or on a computer using a mind-mapping or drawing program. As you create your map:

- think of all the logical consequences of each idea
- draw arrows to a new concept bubble, and put words on the arrow that make a sentence (e.g. Great loss of life – *affects* – society – *by creating* – fear)
- draw arrows between concepts on different parts of the map if you see a link
- use colours to categorise your concept bubbles into sensible groupings once you finish
- create a key to explain what the colours mean.

To generate ideas, you will need to use your own knowledge and information from this chapter. Make the concept map as big as you can, then compare it with a classmate to see what further ideas you can add. Your final map will give you a clearer picture of the many consequences brought about by population loss.



Source 3 A painting of life on a manor soon after the plague ended

Extend your understanding

The consequences of such a large proportion of the population dying were profound.

1 Imagine you are a medieval peasant who has survived the Black Death. Many in your village were not so lucky. The churchyard is full of new graves, houses are empty, and hungry animals roam the roads and fields. No-one is working, and the crops need to be harvested or will soon begin to rot. For the first time, you see how important you and your work are. Without your labour and farming knowledge, the lord and his family will not have food to eat.

Prepare a speech to deliver to your lord, requesting better conditions and pay. Consider the following:

- what you will ask for and why
- the evidence you will use to convince your lord to agree
- the tone you will use – for example, will you choose to present your demands reasonably or use threats to get what you want?