

# The Black Plague

**Instructor:** Carrie Sadik

**Workshop:** International Insects

**Targeted Grade Level(s):** 6<sup>th</sup> grade World History

**Content Area(s) Covered:** England in Medieval Europe/Feudalism

**Anticipated Duration:** two days

**Rationale:** To understand the immediate downfall of a powerful continent within the matter of a few years due to a flea and a rat.

**Objectives:** The learner will be able to gain an insight into causes-effects of population density, disease and invention.

**Sunshine State Standards:**

**SS.D1.3:** The students understand how scarcity requires individuals and institutions to make choices about how to use resources.

**SS.B1.3:** The students understand the world in spatial terms.

**SS.B2.3:** The students understand the interactions of people and the physical environment.

**Resources/Materials Needed:**

1. Notebook paper
2. Slides/transparencies/computer to show pictures of population densities, plague, transmission routes
3. charts to explain transmission/origin.

**Procedures:**

1. Anticipatory set: have slides, transparencies, computer to show the hosts of the black plague, then show the illness itself (symptoms).
2. During “slide show” explain the history of these fleas biting into the black rats that had a disease which transmitted into the flea. Then discuss the effects to their stomach and if they were to bite a human (bubonic), the effects upon the human and if that human with the disease were to cough it causes the plague to be airborne (pneumonic).
3. Then play a game with string to be tossed to people randomly in circle to express spreading of a disease and who is a host. Have students with differently-colored stickers to show if they are a black rat, flea, or human. This should express the idea of how this disease spread.

4. Next, explain through the visual game about how the disease spread quickly within the classroom, a densely populated area, yet the other classrooms in the school were saved. However, if our hosts were to go to lunch with the rest of the school we can begin to see how it can spread faster rather than being contained/isolated in our room.
5. Now, it's lecture time: Discuss how Europe developed the technology of the wheeled metal plow and the idea of using horses rather than oxen to pull the plow, thus being able to plow more land than oxen could (of course they needed to design a new harness). This invention aided a growing population, thus cities were densely packed. As life continues and the need for workers to be given certain jobs to manage the feudal system is strengthened, the transmittance of the Black Plague arrives and spreads through these densely populated areas like wildfire and the people who survive are those isolated from others (away from the urban areas). Also, give facts of mortality rates: bubonic= 30%-75%; pneumonic = 90%-95%. In some cities, over 800 people died daily. These rates, this plague changed trade, economy, church, music, art...life as they knew it.

*Note: If you'd like to take it a step further, the plow/horse made life difficult for overuse of land and therefore, reduced the ability to sustain crops for people (conservation issues). Also, you can extend this further by tapping into how this information relates to the Oriental trading routes and the origin of the oriental flea.*

Informal/Formal Assessments:

Think/Pair/Share: Invite students to consider this question and to write their answer down on a paper to share with their neighbor.

Question to Ask: "Consider your environment, out of the following animals which do you believe to be the most dangerous: shark, flea, alligator, or rat?"