

The Effects of the Black Death in Europe

Student Name _____ Date _____

Group 1

I. Historians generally agree that the bubonic plague caused the disease we call the Black Death. Only in the mid-19th Century did scientists begin to have an understanding of the mechanism for the transmission of such diseases. But you may be surprised to find out that people in the Middle Ages understood that good sanitation and similar precautions could help slow the progress of the plague.

Your assignment is to read and analyze the document [Pistoia, "Ordinances For Sanitation In A Time Of Mortality"](#), from the EDSITEment reviewed [Internet Medieval Sourcebook](#). Approach your reading of each primary source using the following general questions as a guide:

1. What does the document state?
2. What elements within the document have likely connections to the plague and its effects? In what way?
3. In what ways, if any, does the document differ from other first- or secondhand accounts the class has read?
4. What possible sources of bias or unintentional inaccuracy should be taken into account?

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Group 2

I. First, for background read [In the Wake of the Black Death](#)—a link from EDSITEment resource Internet Public Library—from paragraph 7, “Masters and merchants petitioned their governments to intervene” to the end of paragraph 9, “which denounced the corruption of officials and the clergy.” Then read the [Ordinance of Labourers](#) and [The Statute of Labourers](#) (from EDSITEment resource [Internet Medieval Sourcebook](#)). Approach your reading of each primary source using the following questions as a guide:

1. What does the document state?
2. What elements within the document have likely connections to the plague and its effects? In what way?
3. In what ways, if any, does the document differ from other first- or secondhand accounts the class has read?
4. What possible sources of bias or unintentional inaccuracy should be taken into account?

II. The following specific questions should guide your reading:

1. The [Ordinance of Labourers](#) mentions the plague (“pestilence”) in the first paragraph. What does the document say about the connection between the plague and the problems the ordinances are supposed to address?

2. Who is considered a laborer? Who is not?

3. In what ways do the ordinances attempt to regulate laborers?

4. In what ways do the ordinances attempt to regulate tradesmen?

5. In what ways do the ordinances attempt to regulate employers of laborers?

6. Who is responsible for enforcing the ordinances?

7. How/Where are the ordinances supposed to be circulated?

8. In what ways does the Ordinance of Labourers reflect changes in society? In what ways does the Ordinance of Labourers attempt to prevent changes in society?

9. How does the [The Statute of Labourers](#) attempt to enforce the Ordinance of Labourers?

10. What does the The Statute of Labourers suggest about the attitude of commoners toward the nobility?

11. What does the The Statute of Labourers suggest about the attitude of the nobility toward commoners?

12. In what ways do the Ordinance of Labourers and The Statute of Labourers suggest life is different in England as a result of the Black Death?

III. Answering the questions about the ordinances should help you stage an “interview” with the king and another with a laborer.

Your staged interview should provide the following information to the class:

- Explain the purpose of the [Ordinance of Labourers](#) and [The Statute of Labourers](#).
- Give examples of specific ordinances and statutes.
- Discuss how the ordinances and statutes were intended to change the lives of laborers.
- Make clear the ways the ordinances and statutes were likely to be successful or to fail. How would laborers be likely to feel about the ordinances? Those who would employ laborers?
- Make connections for the other students explaining how the Black Death resulted in changes for those who survived.

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Group 3

First, read a brief modern summary of the events, [In the Wake of the Black Death](#)—a link from EDSITEment resource Internet Public Library, starting with the words “the decline in populations and inflation” in paragraph 9 and ending with “although the poll tax was abolished” in paragraph 19.

I. Your assignment is to read accounts of the revolts known as the [The Jacquerie \(1358\)](#) and the [Peasants' Revolt 1381](#) (both from [Internet Medieval Sourcebook](#)) each written by someone who lived at the time. Approach your reading of each primary source using the following general questions as a guide:

1. What does the document state?
2. What elements within the document have likely connections to the plague and its effects? In what way?
3. In what ways, if any, does the document differ from other first- or secondhand accounts the class has read?
4. What possible sources of bias or unintentional inaccuracy should be taken into account?

III. Answering the questions about the accounts should help you stage an “interview” with one of the leaders of each revolt and another with King Richard.

Your staged interview should provide the following information to the class:

- Explain what happened during The Jacquerie in France and the Peasants’ Revolt in England.
- Make it clear to the class what the rebels were demanding.
- Discuss the difference in attitude the peasants had toward the nobility after the plague.
- Make connections for the other students as to how the Black Death related to the revolts that occurred in the years after it subsided.