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# Spread of the Black Death!

Answer the following questions IN FULL SENTENCES.

1. You're an educated modern person who has grown up with knowledge of science. What's your best guess about what caused the Black Death to spread?
2. Now imagine you're a peasant in medieval Europe during the 14th century. What do you think is causing all these people to get sick?

## Medieval Medicine

3. Which of the following were genuine beliefs held by contemporary people in the Middle Ages, regarding what caused the Black Death; and which are made up?

<b><i>Beliefs about the cause of the Black Death</i></b>	<b><i>In your opinion, did they really believe this?</i></b>
"The aerial spirit escaping from the eyes of the sick man strikes the healthy person standing near and looking at the sick"	REAL / MADE UP
Jews poisoned all of the drinking water.	REAL / MADE UP
Dirty homes, sewerage filled streets and soiled food brought disease.	REAL / MADE UP
The conjunction of three planets in 1345 caused a "great pestilence in the air".	REAL / MADE UP
When the sea rose high, the Devil sent forth poison in the air.	REAL / MADE UP
Earthquakes releasing poisonous fumes.	REAL / MADE UP
God was punishing mankind for their sins.	REAL / MADE UP
Close contact to others with the pestilence.	REAL / MADE UP

4. Who were the **flagellants** and why did they do what they did?
5. What other services did **barbers** provide in medieval Europe?



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6. What common medication that we use today is derived from willow bark?
7. Imagine you are a **poor medieval peasant** who has mysteriously fallen ill: who are you going to ask for help?

## So what really caused the Black Death?

8. What causes disease?

What things can cause disease to spread quickly?

9. What are some of the things we do to ensure proper hygiene ...  
At home? At school or in the workplace? On our streets? In public places?  
*Think about ... bathrooms, food preparation, water etc.*

10. Read this description of the floor coverings in English housing:

"... floors are laid with white clay, and are covered with rushes, occasionally renewed, but so imperfectly that the bottom layer is left undisturbed, sometimes for twenty years, harbouring **expectoration**, **vomiting**, the **leakage** of dogs and men, **ale** droppings, **scraps** of **fish**, and other abominations not fit to be mentioned..."

*Source: Erasmus*

Find out what the following mean:

**expectoration**

**abomination**

11. Describe the living conditions of medieval Europeans in terms of hygiene.  
How is it different from your living conditions?
12. Why do you think the life expectancy was so low in medieval Europe?
13. What is the name of the **bacteria** which caused the Black Death?
14. Describe how the **bacteria** was spread.



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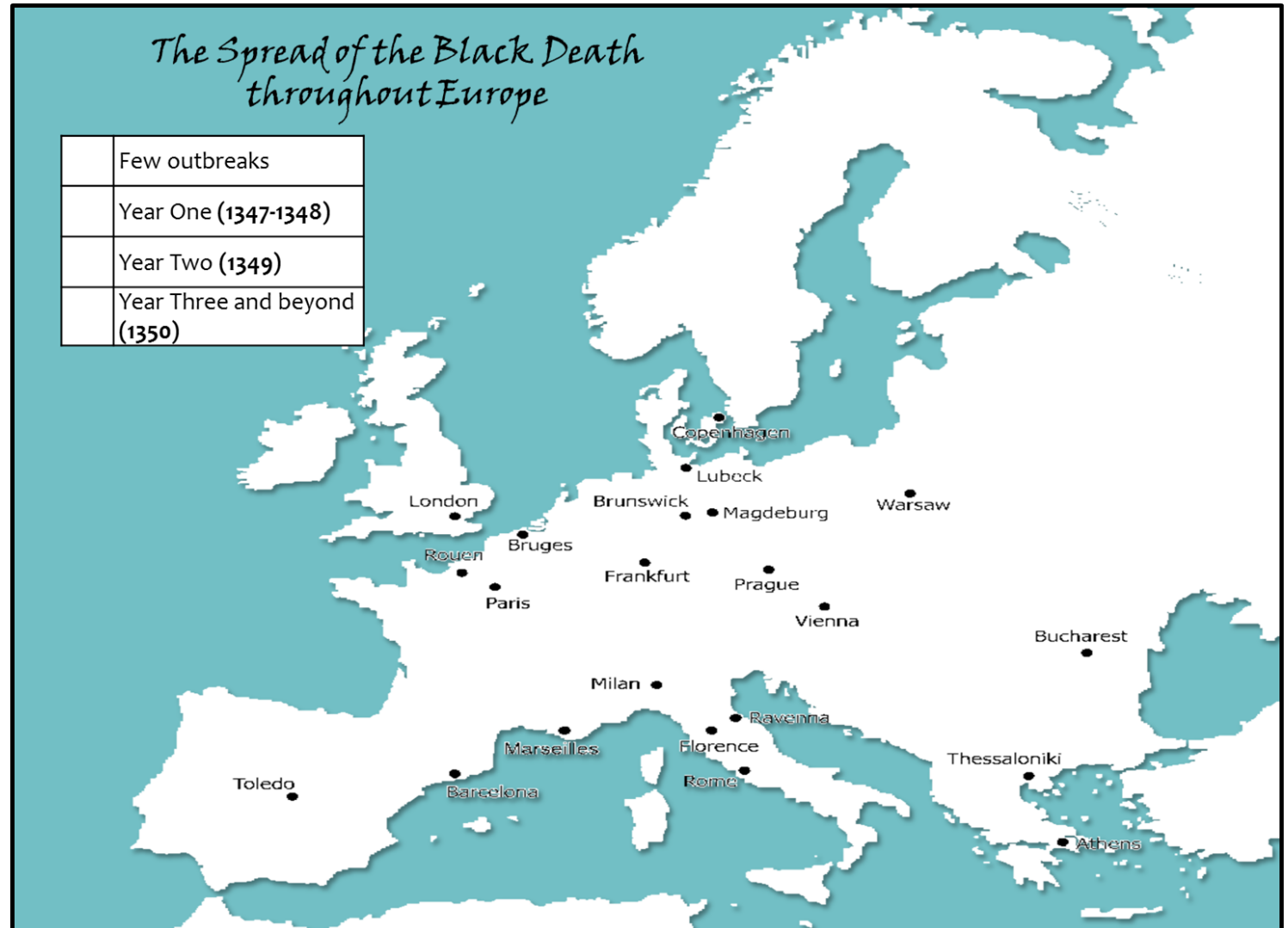
## But where did it come from?

15. Where did the bacteria originate?

16. What do you notice about the spread of the Black Death and common trade routes?

17. Colour this map to show the spread of the Black Death throughout Europe. Match the colours you use with the key.

18. What would be different if the Black Death were to happen today, in modern times?



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## Extension Tasks:

### The Black Death Quiz

Try your luck!

[http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/broughttolife/themes/diseases/black\\_death.aspx](http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/broughttolife/themes/diseases/black_death.aspx)

### Plague ... from your cat!

Read more about the British man who caught the plague from his *cat*!

[http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/jan/31/i-caught-plague-from-my-cat?CMP=tw\\_t\\_gu](http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/jan/31/i-caught-plague-from-my-cat?CMP=tw_t_gu)

### Siege of Caffa/Kaffa:

Read up about the Siege of Caffa/Kaffa, a battle in which people who died of the plague were catapulted (!) over the city walls.

#### **Did it really happen?**

- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feodosia> (go to History section)
- <http://contagions.wordpress.com/2012/06/28/plague-at-the-siege-of-caffa-1346/>
- <http://www.historyinanhour.com/2011/08/05/the-siege-of-kaffa-and-the-black-death/>
- [http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/8/9/01-0536\\_article](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/8/9/01-0536_article)

### The World's Ten Worst Epidemics

Read more about the other worst epidemics: <http://www.discovery.com/tv-shows/curiosity/topics/10-worst-epidemics.htm>

