



You are a group of priests.
You will argue that the plague is a punishment from God.

Some thought that God was punishing them for their sins. They thought that the world had become too rich and greedy and that people weren't praying enough. The Bible has many stories of plague being visited upon people as a punishment.

This led to an increase in a group called Flagellants. Flagellants moved through the streets whipping themselves in the hope that God would forgive them. They held processions through towns that lasted for as long as 33 days, each day representing one year in the life of Jesus Christ. These processions varied in size from just a handful of people to perhaps thousands in the largest processions.

Many priests encouraged people to pray more and beg God for forgiveness, as once the world became a more religious place again, God would stop the plague! You need to convince everyone else that praying is the right thing to do.

You need to explain the reasons for your views and your suggestions for stopping the spread of the disease. Plan your presentation so that everyone says something.

You must be convincing – persuade your classmates!



You are a group of townspeople.
You will argue that your town needs cleaning up.

You believe in something called *miasma* – bad smells that infect the atmosphere and cause diseases. Your town is full of sewage – human and animal poo – which is left out on the streets to rot. It is extremely smelly! You think that this is causing the spread of the Black Death.

So many people are dying that it is hard to bury them all quickly. People are very religious and want to be buried in Church grounds, but there isn't time or space to do this. You need to convince people that the dead have to be buried quickly in one pit so they can't spread the disease. You also want their clothes to be burned.

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You are a group of town aldermen (leaders).

You will argue that your town should be closed off.

You don't believe in trying to cure the plague as nothing seems to work. You think the only thing that can be done is to stop people travelling and spreading the disease. You've heard that some areas in Europe have managed to keep the Black Death away by closing their gates and not letting anyone else in.

You want to order the town gates to be closed but you have to convince everyone that this is a good idea. You also want sick people to be forced to leave the town just before the gates are shut.

You also have plans to shut up any more infected people in their houses with the rest of their families. This will mean that people who haven't yet caught the plague almost definitely will, and the whole house is likely to die. But at least they won't be free to infect anyone else.

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You are a group of apothecaries.

You will try to sell your plague cures to the sick.

Medicine in the Middle Ages was based on ideas from Ancient Greece and Rome. People believed in the four humours: blood, black bile, yellow bile and phlegm. If these became imbalanced, people became ill, and the balance had to be restored.

You secretly know that your 'cures' aren't based on any evidence – but you can't let anyone know this! Your cures are quite creative – ones with exotic ingredients are easier to sell. Maybe they have worked on some people, but this is probably down to luck.

Real examples of plague cures:

Plague patients have too much blood, and this is causing their symptoms. Make a cut and let out a small amount of blood until the patient improves.

The swellings should be softened with figs and cooked onions. The onions should be mixed with yeast and butter. Then open the swellings with a knife.

Carry a bunch of herbs and hold it to your nostrils all the time. (This was popular because many people believed that the plague was spread by bad smells.)

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We buy any cure – Black Death role-play

	Which actions might have helped to combat the Plague?	Which actions were totally useless?
priests		
townspeople		
town leaders (aldermen)		
apothecaries		

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