



THE BLACK DEATH

A bone-chilling investigation!

STUDENTS INVESTIGATE THE BLACK DEATH THAT STRUCK IN 1348 CE TO ANSWER THREE OVERARCHING QUESTIONS!

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Instructions:

1.) Copy the Student Investigative sheet front and back. If you wish, you can give the writing prompt too at this time, but I would until after you have debriefed the activity.

2.) Create 8 (or 9 if you choose the 4 question option) stations around the room. Print out 3-4 exhibit sheets for each station.

3.) I recommend doing this activity in groups of 2-3. Assign or let students choose groups, then have them divide up the different stations. I like to have students assign each team member a number THEN have each number responsible for certain stations. This way it puts the teacher in control of the dividing up the stations for specific people. For example: 1's are in charge of Exhibit A, E, C, H. 2's are in charge of B, D, E, F etc.

You can also have students complete all exhibits individually - have them navigate at their own pace.

4.) Once everyone is clear on their responsibilities, I turn the class loose and let them explore each station that they are assigned. This usually takes around 45-60 minutes. Once teams feel confident with their answers, I have students regroup and share what they learned at each station.

6.) Finally, have students complete the their final writing section after they have analyzed each exhibit! Here, they are writing a report to the US State Department using the details they learned from the investigation.

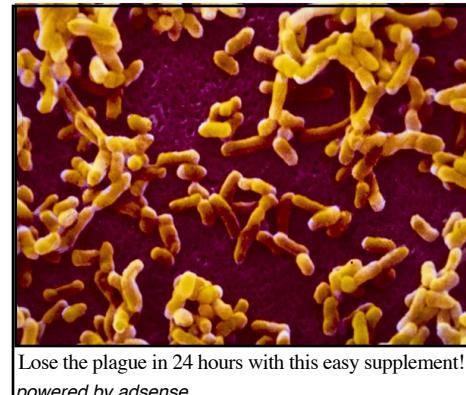
7.) There are two options for this activity - one with 3 overarching questions and one with 4 questions.

Enjoy!

BREAKING NEWS

Centers for Disease Control Director Tom Frieden Confirms Existence of Powerful Plague Bacteria

Today at a scheduled update from the Centers for Disease Control, director Tom Frieden informed members of Congress of the agency's latest attempt to learn more about the Medieval illness known as the Black Death. He was quick to warn the American people, as well as all global citizens, about the dangers that still loom over the human population. "It is easy to ignore the power of bacteria, and how quickly it can destroy human life," Frieden said in reference to the deadly Black Death bacteria. He added, "you must respect bacteria and germs, or they will claim another victim. Most importantly, you have to respect history." Frieden has led the CDC since 2009, but he never stressed the importance of history more than now. "In August 2015 a California man visited Yosemite National Park and contracted the plague. This is evidence that it is always around us and we must learn our history, and respect this disease, or we have reason to fear." We now know that fleas carried the deadly pathogens aboard rats that then transmitted the illness to humans. How should one protect from the disease? Wash your hands often and keep your pets clean.



Lose the plague in 24 hours with this easy supplement!
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Recent news

[Frieden says "Miasma, or bad air, on the table as possible cause."](#)

["Punishment from God for Crusade failure" an interesting way to explain the Black Death, says local professor.](#)

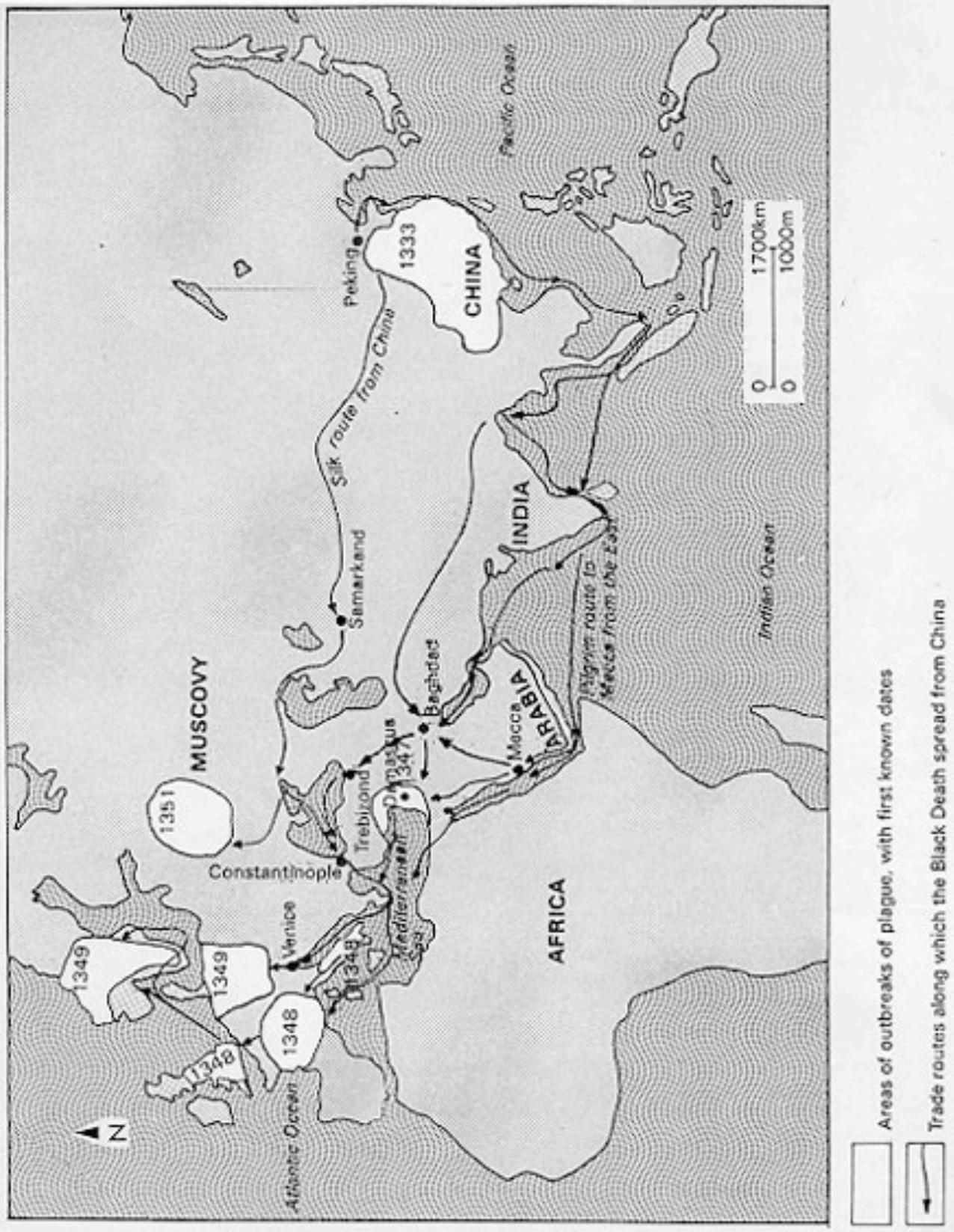
[Experts agree: Hate the fleas, not the rats](#)

EXHIBIT B

EXHIBIT B

EXHIBIT B

First Incidence of Black Death in Europe and Asia, 1333-1369



AUGUST 6, 1348

The weather has been lousy as of late in London. Nothing but rain, rain, and rain! I got to see my Papa today and enjoy a bite together. That's where we were sitting, at lunch, when we say him. A traveler approached our cafe and...well...he just looked odd. He was swollen everywhere and we were sure to keep our distance. We helped him with directions to a doctor; it was the least we could do.

AUGUST 8, 1348

Ugh! I started to feel a little sore yesterday afternoon and by the evening it was accompanied with a blistering headache and fever. I will seek medical attention tomorrow. But it's just so strange; I was fine just a couple of days ago, then all a sudden -- aches, pains, and by the morning these strange sores have appeared. I've heard that there are others like me in town.

AUGUST 9, 1348

The sores have grown, they've even multiplied. People are flooding the streets -- coughing and sneezing everywhere. It noticed it early in the morning on my walk to get help. People are running around in mayhem, some are boarding themselves up in their homes. Have we lost our mind? I've heard some say this sickness is a punishment from God for our failure to reclaim Jerusalem for the Christians. Others have blamed the Jews -- they think they have poisoned the water supply. Nobody truly knows for sure, but I fear for what is coming next...

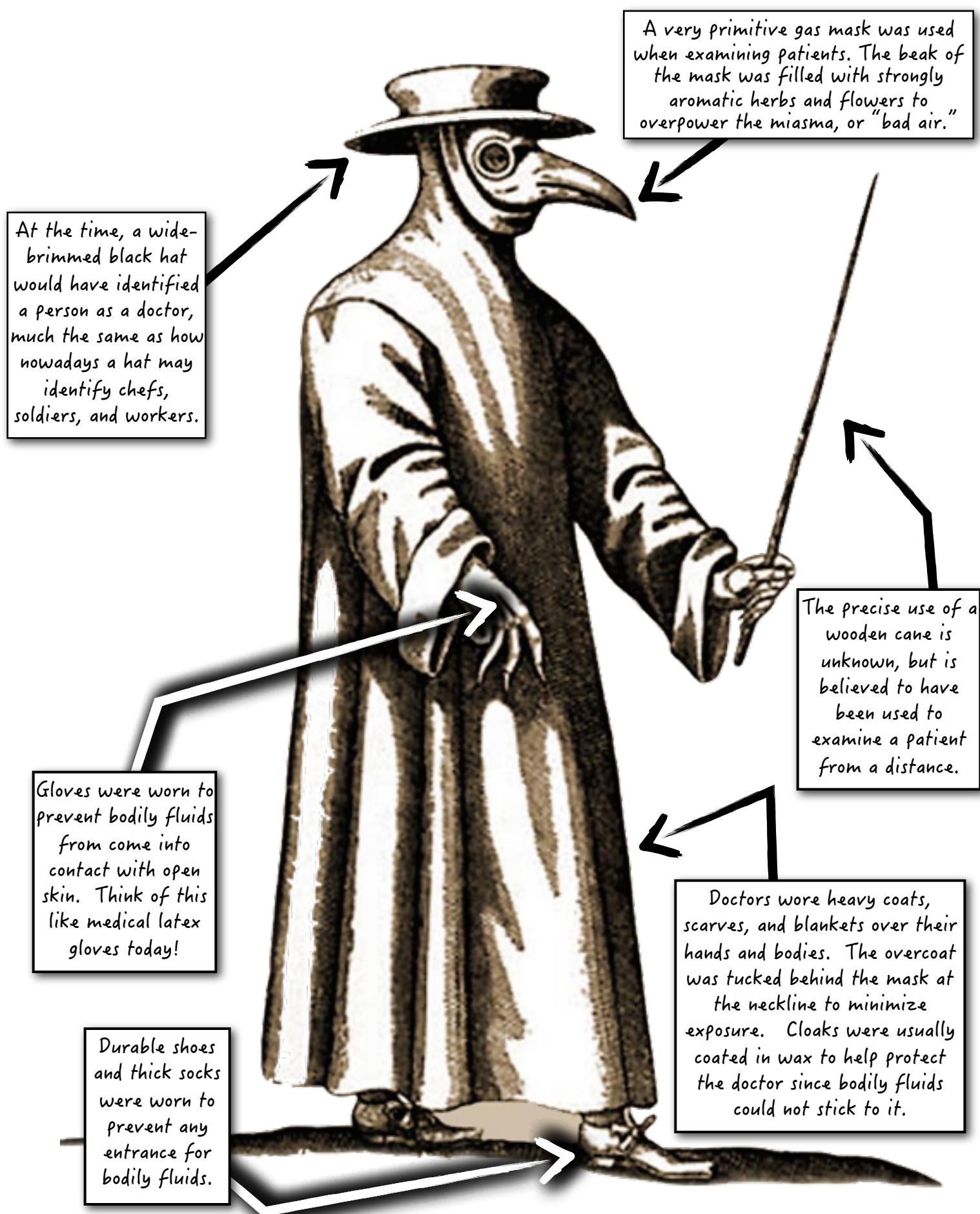
AUGUST 11, 1348

Death is everywhere. They are piling bodies up in the streets. The stench is horrific; when the sores burst open the skin begins to rot. It is so painful. Maybe it is the horrible smell, this bad air, this miasma, that is causing the sickness. I can barely leave the bed and the doctor now visits me in my home; I fear this will be his last visit...

EXHIBIT D

EXHIBIT D

EXHIBIT D





Decoded DNA Reveals Details Of Black Death Germ

October 12, 2011 2:43 PM

RENEE MONTAGNE, HOST: It was more than 600 years ago that the Black Death swept across Europe. Over some five years, millions of people died from the plague, wiping out at least a third of the population. Scientists have long wondered what pathogen caused this deadly outbreak and why it was so virulent. NPR's Nell Greenfieldboyce reports that researchers are now finding the answers to these questions hidden in the DNA of the plague's victims.

NELL GREENFIELDBOYCE: In 1348, after the Black Death reached London, bodies got piled in special cemeteries. Scientists later collected some of the skeletal remains, including teeth. Hendrik Poinar is a biological anthropologist at McMaster University in Canada. He explains that these teeth are like time capsules.

HENDRIK POINAR: Teeth are a great sort of conservator of material because the enamel is such a great protective coating.

GREENFIELDBOYCE: Inside there's the remains of blood and pulp and DNA.

POINAR: That extract that comes from these teeth and these bones that have been buried in these burial pits for roughly 700 years are a mixture, a complex mixture of the DNA of the human, the DNA of the pathogens that that human harbored, the DNA of any bacteria that were symbiotic to the human.

GREENFIELDBOYCE: So it's no easy task to find the DNA from the Black Death pathogen. Most experts blame the plague bacteria Yersinia Pestis, which is still around today. But previous attempts to find its DNA in victim's teeth have had mixed results. In this latest study, researchers used a new and very sensitive technique. Poinar says they took bits of modern plague DNA and used them as a kind of magnet to pull ancient plague DNA out of the tooth extract.

POINAR: And that's the way we actually could fish for a needle in the haystack, so to speak.

GREENFIELDBOYCE: In the journal Nature, he and his colleagues report that not only did they detect DNA from the Black Death bacteria; they figured out its entire genetic code.

POINAR: Really, this is the first ancient pathogen genome isolated from skeletonized remains.

GREENFIELDBOYCE: Poinar says it's very similar to modern strains of plague and looks like their common ancestor.

POINAR: So there is no smoking gun, so to speak, to say, a-ha, we've found the one mutation which caused this tremendous virulence and now we know why it killed fifty million people.

GREENFIELDBOYCE: He says it probably wasn't the make-up of the germ that made it so deadly, but rather the fact that it emerged for the first time right when Europe was dealing with a cooling climate, poor crops, and crowded, filthy conditions.

The new study has impressed Thomas Gilbert of the Natural History Museum of Denmark, who's tried to get plague DNA out of victims' teeth in the past.

THOMAS GILBERT: I mean it's great results. It looks very, very convincing. There's no reason why the data shouldn't be real.

GREENFIELDBOYCE: Gilbert does question the report's conclusion that the medieval Black Death was the first time plague infected humans. If so, it couldn't have caused the Justinian Plague. That's another famous epidemic blamed on this bacteria that devastated the Eastern Roman Empire in the 6th century.

GILBERT: But really, you know, the only way to find out what caused the Justinian Plague is to do the same analyses on the Justinian samples. And I guess that's going to be the next attempt.

GREENFIELDBOYCE: And he says besides looking at plague, other researchers have already started to use these same new genetic techniques to unravel the history of other important diseases, like tuberculosis.

Nell Greenfieldboyce. NPR News.

EXHIBIT F

EXHIBIT F

EXHIBIT F



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internet is
your Cure!"

www.diagnoseanydisease.com



A photo of a modern bubonic plague victim



A drawing of medieval victims of the Black Death

BUBONIC PLAGUE

In bubonic plague, the most common form of plague, bacteria infect the lymph system and become inflamed. (The lymph or lymphatic system is a major component of your body's immune system. The organs within the lymphatic system are the tonsils, adenoids, spleen, and thymus.)

Once exposed to the bacteria, an infected person may display the following symptoms within 48 hours:

"sudden onset of fever, headache, chills, and weakness and one or more swollen, tender and painful lymph nodes (called buboes). Also, muscle cramps, seizures, and bleeding from the ear is common. The bacteria multiply in the lymph node closest to where the bacteria entered the human body. If the patient is not treated with the appropriate antibiotics, the bacteria can spread to other parts of the body and can lead to decaying or decomposing of skin, which creates unpleasant odors."

TOP SECRET
CLASSIFIED DOCUMENT
LEVEL III CLEARANCE REQUIRED



RELEASED FOR VIEWING ON
SEPT 25 2014

NAME: The Baker Family **SEX:** 2 Male, 3 Female **AGE:** Estimated between 4-24 **OCCUPATION:** Baker, Seamstress, Laborer

CAUSE OF DEATH: It appears that all members of this family died from a disease or an infection of some kind.

DATE OF INVESTIGATION: Autopsy initially conducted by the London Examiner in 1349 CE, but reexamination took place by the Centers for Disease Control in 2013.

CASE NOTES:

Artists have recreated the scene surrounding the death of the Baker family in the image to the left. Using bone evidence from the oldest male, it has been determined that he was in his low-20s when he died.

Little physical evidence exists that can help us determine Mr. Baker's cause of death. However, we have uncovered one source that we can use - there was a documented account from Italian writer Giovanni Boccaccio lying by Mr. Baker's bedside. It appears that the Baker family obtained a copy of Boccaccio's account with the hope of curing themselves. Here is what the account describes:

"Here not only the 'burn blisters' appeared, but there developed gland boils on the groin, the thighs, the arms, or on the neck. At first these were of the size of a hazel nut, and developed accompanied by violent shivering fits, which soon rendered those attacked so weak that they could not stand up, but were forced to lie in their beds consumed by violent fever. Soon the boils grew to the size of a walnut, then to that of a hen's egg or a goose's egg, and they were exceedingly painful, and irritated the body, causing the sufferer to vomit blood. The sickness lasted three days, and on the fourth, at the latest, the patient succumbed."

From this, we can assume the Baker family died from the symptoms brought on by the disease described by Boccaccio.

A handwritten signature in cursive ink that reads "Joe Valley MD".

ROSY'S POSIES FLOWER SHOP

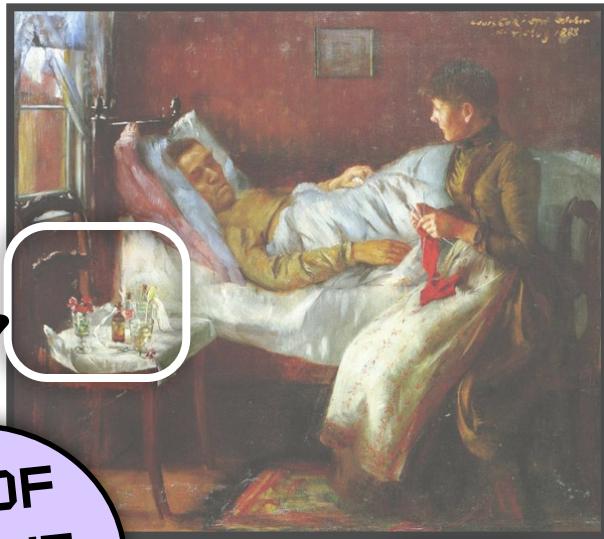
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plague as the
beautiful
aroma will
replace that
wretched
smell of
death!

Version with FOUR overarching
questions.

Directions: As you navigate the materials, your goal is to answer four overarching questions:

- 1.) What was the Black Death? (think about what it was and what it was like)
- 2.) What caused the disease to spread? (think about what encouraged the disease to spread and where it may have originated)
- 3.) What false beliefs did people in that time have about the disease? (think about how people viewed the disease)
- 4.) How has modern science taught us more about the Black Death? (think about how science has taught us more)

At each station, mark the question (or questions) that the material addresses and take relevant notes that will help support your answer.

1.) What was the Black Death? 2.) What caused the disease to spread? 3.) What false beliefs did people in that time have about the disease? 4.) How has modern science taught us more about the Black Death?

EXHIBIT A

1.) What was the Black Death? 2.) What caused the disease to spread? 3.) What false beliefs did people in that time have about the disease? 4.) How has modern science taught us more about the Black Death?

EXHIBIT B

1.) What was the Black Death? 2.) What caused the disease to spread? 3.) What false beliefs did people in that time have about the disease? 4.) How has modern science taught us more about the Black Death?

EXHIBIT C

1.) What was the Black Death? 2.) What caused the disease to spread? 3.) What false beliefs did people in that time have about the disease? 4.) How has modern science taught us more about the Black Death?

EXHIBIT D

1.) What was the Black Death? 2.) What caused the disease to spread? 3.) What false beliefs did people in that time have about the disease? 4.) How has modern science taught us more about the Black Death?

EXHIBIT E

1.) What was the Black Death? 2.) What caused the disease to spread? 3.) What false beliefs did people in that time have about the disease? 4.) How has modern science taught us more about the Black Death?

EXHIBIT F

1.) What was the Black Death? 2.) What caused the disease to spread? 3.) What false beliefs did people in that time have about the disease? 4.) How has modern science taught us more about the Black Death?

EXHIBIT G

1.) What was the Black Death? 2.) What caused the disease to spread? 3.) What false beliefs did people in that time have about the disease? 4.) How has modern science taught us more about the Black Death?

EXHIBIT H



OFFICIAL BRIEFING REPORT - - - - -

The Black Death ravaged Europe in the mid-1300s CE, infecting an estimated 50 million people and killing over 60% of Europe's entire population. Even today we still have so many questions that surround this catastrophic world event. We have high hopes that your report will help us understand the Black Death!



Along with clear organization, punctuation, and grammar, your report needs to provide answers to the following four questions:

WHAT WAS THE BLACK DEATH?

WHAT CAUSED THE BLACK DEATH TO SPREAD?

WHAT FALSE BELIEFS DID THOSE AT THE TIME HAVE ABOUT THE DISEASE?

HOW HAS MODERN SCIENCE TAUGHT US MORE ABOUT THE BLACK DEATH?

Each of the questions needs to be answered with at least two supporting details from your investigation!

To: The U.S. State Department

From: Agent _____

I am writing this report today to explain the major reasons behind the horrific event known as the Black Death that struck Europe in the year 1348 CE. For years this event has been misunderstood. However, after analyzing the evidence in this case, I have some startling news to share. First, I will explain to you **what the Black Death was**. Then, I will share what I believe **caused the Black Death to spread**. Finally, I will explain **several falsehoods people had** at the time surrounding the Black Death.

First, _____

Version with THREE overarching
questions.

Directions: As you navigate the materials, your goal is to answer three overarching questions:

- 1.) What was the Black Death? (think about what it was and what it was like)
- 2.) What caused the disease to spread? (think about what encouraged the disease to spread and where it may have originated)
- 3.) What false beliefs did people in that time have about the disease? (think about how people viewed the disease)

At each station, mark the question (or questions) that the material addresses and take relevant notes that will help support your answer.

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**EXHIBIT
A**

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**EXHIBIT
B**

1.) What was the Black Death? 2.) What caused the disease to spread? 3.) What false beliefs did people in that time have about the disease?

**EXHIBIT
C**

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**EXHIBIT
D**

1.) What was the Black Death? 2.) What caused the disease to spread? 3.) What false beliefs did people in that time have about the disease?

EXHIBIT E

1.) What was the Black Death? 2.) What caused the disease to spread? 3.) What false beliefs did people in that time have about the disease?

EXHIBIT F

1.) What was the Black Death? 2.) What caused the disease to spread? 3.) What false beliefs did people in that time have about the disease?

EXHIBIT G

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EXHIBIT H

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First, _____

