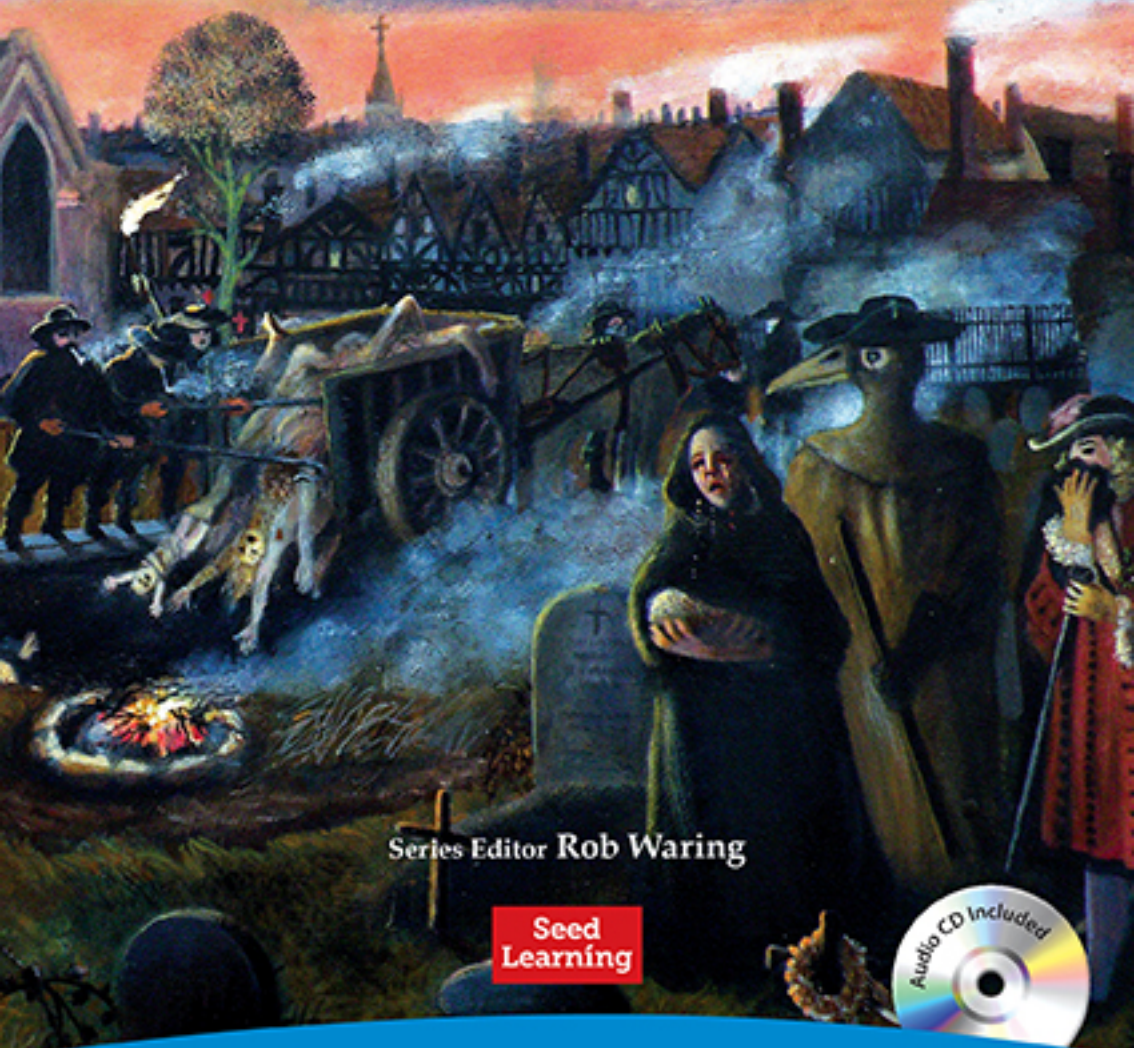


WORLD HISTORY READERS

Level 5 • 2

The Great Plague

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Seed
Learning



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The Black Death

The Great Plague of London in 1665 killed hundreds of thousands of people. This “plague,” or disease, first came to Europe in the 14th century and was known as the “Black Death.” It killed between 30% to 60% of the population of Europe. The Black Death also killed millions of people in Asia. At the time, no one knew why it started or why it ended.

The Black Death mostly disappeared for three hundred years, and then it returned in a big way, killing many more people.

What was the Great Plague, and what happened?



This sign in England marks the entrance of the Black Death in England.

What Was the Plague?

The first signs of the plague were a rash, pain all over the body, and a fever. People also had swelling in their necks, arms, or legs. They became dizzy and felt lost. Soon boils, or bumps, appeared on their skin which could be red, yellow, or black.

The plague was sometimes called the Black Death because of the black boils. These boils caused people to die in great pain within four to seven days of catching the disease. It was a terrible way to die.



Painful boils on the body

The Black Death killed many people.



A man with a fever and a swollen neck



A man infected with the plague



The Black Death Returns!

For nearly 300 years, London was safe from any large-scale return of the Black Death. Then, in 1665, suddenly death was everywhere again. This time it was known as the Great Plague. People were afraid. They knew the Great Plague would kill many people.

No one knew for sure why the plague came back or how people got sick with it. Why did some people get sick, while others did not?

Doctors at the time did not know how to make people better. The doctors' clothes were designed to both help people and scare away the disease.

A plague doctor



The home where a victim of the plague died in 1665



The government tried to stop all the deaths.

The plague spread quickly. About 15-20% of the population in London died. There was one week where more than 7,000 people died in London.

So many people were getting sick and starting to die that the government had to take action. What would they do? What could they do?



What Should the Government Do?

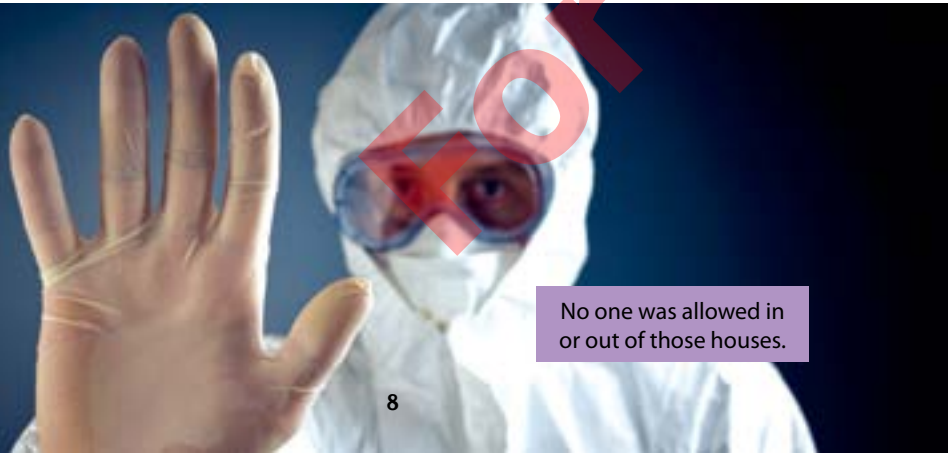
The situation became so bad that in May 1665, the government decided to lock the sick people and families in their homes so the disease could not spread. The government ordered that any house must be closed tightly

for 40 days if there was a person with the plague inside.

In the early days of the Great Plague, many people left the city. However, the government decided to close the whole city of London, which meant that no one else could leave the city. As London was a walled city, closing it was easy.



Houses with the plague were marked with a red cross.



No one was allowed in or out of those houses.

Life During the Plague

Life in the city of London in the summer of 1665 was terrible. The walled city was overcrowded. There was no clean water, rats were everywhere, and the air was dirty. Very few gates led out of the city, so few people could leave.

Everything was hot and dirty. Toilets were emptied in the streets, which attracted flies and fleas.

People wanted to escape the city's walls, but they needed a special paper to get out. The church leaders were the local neighborhood government at that time. These leaders gave out the papers, but usually only to rich friends. Rich people could pay money to the church to get the special papers so they could leave. But poor people did not have that option.



The walled city of London is in yellow. It had 7 gates to get out.

A special paper was needed to go through the gates out of the city.



Comprehension Questions

1. Before the plague was called the "Great Plague," it was called...
 - (a) the White Death.
 - (b) the Great Killer.
 - (c) the Black Death.
 - (d) the Painful Boils.
2. The Great Plague started...
 - (a) in 1665.
 - (b) 300 years ago.
 - (c) in the 13th century.
 - (d) in 1866.
3. How many days was a home closed for the plague?
 - (a) Two weeks
 - (b) Forty days
 - (c) Three days
 - (d) Ten weeks
4. It was easy for the government to close the city of London because there...
 - (a) was a wall around London.
 - (b) were locks on all of the houses.
 - (c) was only one way out of London.
 - (d) was no one who wanted to go into London.
5. The searchers looked for...
 - (a) houses with a red cross.
 - (b) people with the plague.
 - (c) fleas in houses.
 - (d) dead rats.
6. What did England use all of its rat poison to do?
 - (a) To kill dogs and cats
 - (b) To kill rats
 - (c) To kill fleas
 - (d) All of the above
7. Why did the government tell people to smoke?
 - (a) To kill the fleas
 - (b) To keep people inside their houses
 - (c) To cure the bad air
 - (d) To help find the rats
8. What caused the Great Plague?
 - (a) Boats
 - (b) Cats
 - (c) Dogs
 - (d) Fleas
9. What was a sign in London that the plague was over?
 - (a) Red crosses on their houses
 - (b) Special papers that allowed people to travel freely
 - (c) The king returning to live in London
 - (d) Ships coming from Amsterdam
10. What helped the plague spread?
 - (a) Dirty living conditions
 - (b) Not knowing how it spread
 - (c) Killing all the cats
 - (d) All of the above

Glossary

- **breathe** to move air into and out of the lungs
- **breeding ground** a place where animals produce babies
- **bump** an area of raised skin from illness or injury
- **bury** to put something in the ground and cover it with earth
- **dirty** not clean
- **dizzy** having a feeling of too much movement, sometimes leading to falling down
- **fever** a body temperature that is higher than normal
- **flea** a very small jumping insect that feeds on the blood of animals and humans
- **germ** a tiny organism that can cause sickness and disease
- **goods** things for sale or trade such as clothes, fabrics, spices, etc.
- **infected** containing germs or other things that can cause disease
- **large-scale** happening over a large area
- **nearly** almost but not quite
- **plague** a disease that spreads quickly and kills many people
- **poison** something that can harm or kill a living being
- **population** all the people living in a country, area, or place
- **poverty** the state of being very poor
- **swell** to get bigger; to increase in size
- **uncommon** not happening, seen, or experienced often
- **walled** surrounded by a wall