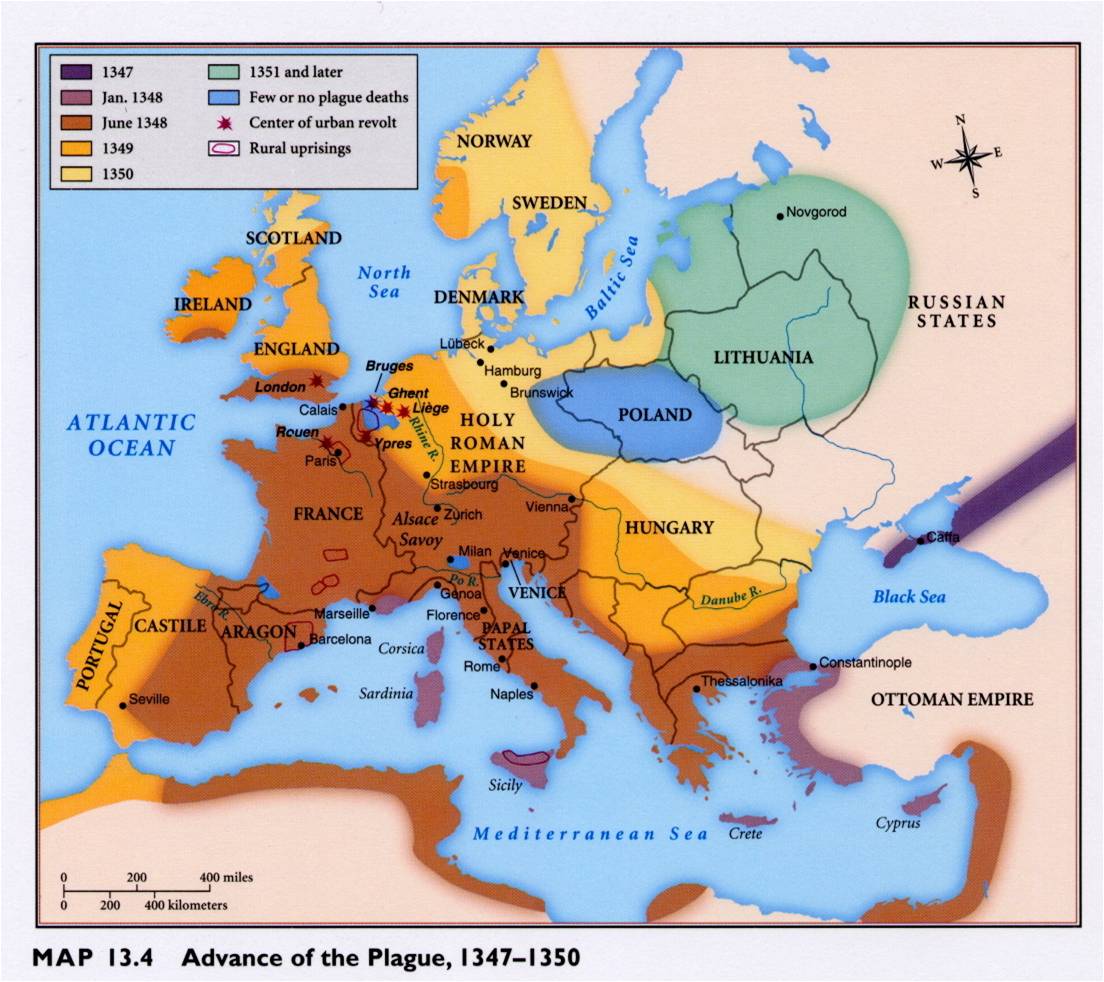
**Spread of the Plague**

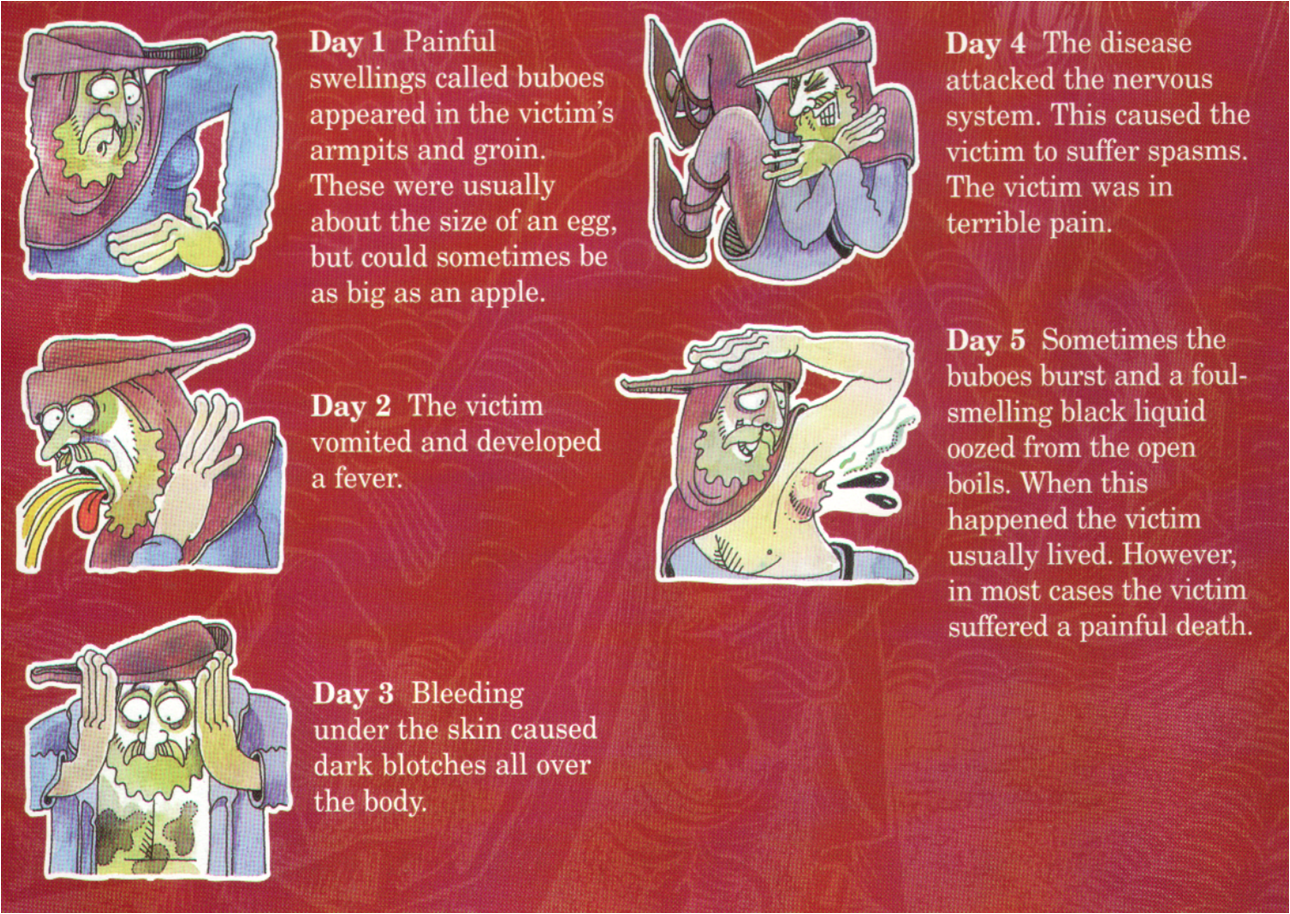


The plague was caused by bacteria carried by fleas that lived on rats. The epidemic probably originated in China, where infected fleas got into the packs of Merchants traveling along the Silk Road. Merchant ships carried the plague from busy Black Sea ports to Sicily. Spreading outward in waves of terror, the Black Death soon ravaged most of Europe.

**Question:**

Describe where the plague originated and how it spread to cities in Europe.

**Symptoms of the Plague**

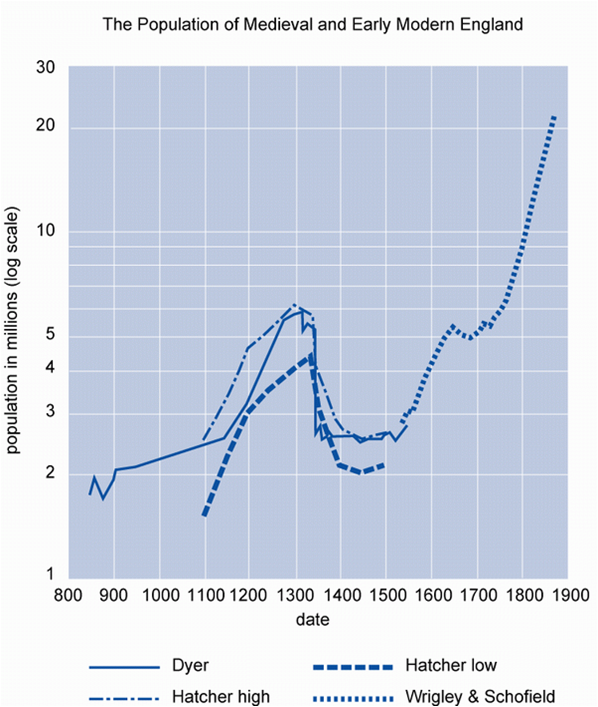


Flea-covered rats thrived in the dirty Medieval cities, and the disease spread quickly. Within hours, victims developed egg-sized lumps under their arms. Fever, vomiting, and black spots caused by internal bleeding followed. Once victims started spitting blood, death was soon!

**Questions:**

1. What were the primary symptoms of the plague?
2. Use the illustration to describe, the day to day progression of the disease.

**Death Toll of the Plague**



As the disease raced through towns, people fled to the countryside. Others hid in their homes. The death toll was so high that gravediggers used carts to collect corpses as they walked the streets yelling out “Bring out Your Dead!” Between 1347 and 1353, the plague, or the Black Death, killed one third of the population of Europe (1 in every 3 people died) – more than 25 million people!

**Questions:**

1. How many people died as a result of the Plague?
2. In your opinion, how would this death rate affect life in Europe at this time?

**Effects of the Plague on Europe**



As the plague continued, the economy suffered greatly. So many farm workers died that crops rotted in the fields. Shortages led to demands for higher wages and peasant revolts. Buildings and roads fell to ruin. And survivors lived in fear of the return of the plague, which came back in waves through the 1600s. The Black Death was a catalyst for the end of the feudal and manorial systems. Labor shortages gave serfs and peasants new options as their labor was in high demand. Lords were often forced to offer them better jobs and pay.

**Questions:**

1. How did the Plague affect life in Europe?

**Persecution During the Plague**



In Europe, the plague brought terror and bewilderment, as people had no way to stop the disease. Some people turned to magic and witchcraft for cures. Others plunged into wild pleasures, believing they would die soon anyway. Still others saw the plague as God’s punishment. They beat themselves with whips to show that they repented their sins. Normal life broke down as people fled cities or hid in their homes to avoid contracting the plague from other people. Some people even blamed the Jews for the plague. This resulted in the mass execution of thousands of Jews.

**Questions:**

1. How did normal life break down during the plague? Provide 3 examples.
2. Which group of people were blamed for the plague? Was this accurate?

**The Bubonic Plague**





What was this disease? Bubonic plague is the medical term. It is a bacillus, an organism, most usually carried by rodents. Fleas infest the animal (rats, but other rodents as well), and these fleas move freely over to human hosts.

The flea then regurgitates the blood from the rat into the human, infecting the human. The rat dies. The human dies. The flea's stomach gets blocked and it eventually dies of starvation. It's a grim disease for everyone.

**Questions:**

1. What is the Bubonic Plague?
2. What animals carry the Bubonic Plague?

Firsthand Account of the Plague

**A Description of the Plague**

*At the beginning of October, in the year of the incarnation of the Son of God 1347, twelve Genoese galleys . . . entered the harbor of Messina. In their bones they bore so virulent a disease that anyone who only spoke to them was seized by a mortal illness and in no manner could evade death. The infection spread to everyone who had any contact with the diseased. Those infected felt themselves penetrated by a pain throughout their whole bodies and, so to say, undermined. Then there developed on the thighs or upper arms a boil about the size of a lentil which the people called "burn boil". This infected the whole body, and penetrated it so that the patient violently vomited blood. This vomiting of blood continued without intermission for three days, there being no means of healing it, and then the patient expired.*

*Not only all those who had speech with them died, but also those who had touched or used any of their things. When the inhabitants of Messina discovered that this sudden death emanated from the Genoese ships they hurriedly ordered them out of the harbor and town. But the evil remained and caused a fearful outbreak of death. Soon men hated each other so much that if a son was attacked by the disease his father would not tend him. If, in spite of all, he dared to approach him, he was immediately infected and was bound to die within three days. Nor was this all; all those dwelling in the same house with him, even the cats and other domestic animals, followed him in death. As the number of deaths increased in Messina many desired to confess their sins to the priests and to draw up their last will and testament. But ecclesiastics, lawyers and notaries refused to enter the houses of the diseased.*

*Soon the corpses were lying forsaken in the houses. No ecclesiastic, no son, no father and no relation dared to enter, but they hired servants with high wages to bury the dead. The houses of the deceased remained open with all their valuables, gold and jewels. . . . When the catastrophe had reached its climax the Messinians resolved to emigrate. One portion of them settled in the vineyards and fields, but a larger portion sought refuge in the town of Catania. The disease clung to the fugitives and accompanied them everywhere where they turned in search of help. Many of the fleeing fell down by the roadside and dragged themselves into the fields and bushes to expire. Those who reached Catania breathed their last in the hospitals there. The terrified citizens would not permit the burying of fugitives from Messina within the town, and so they were all thrown into deep trenches outside the walls.*

*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. As soon as anyone in Catania was seized with a headache and shivering, he knew that he was bound to pass away within the specified time. . . .*