



# The Black Death Hits Europe

In the fall of 1347, Italian trading ships left the Black Sea port of Caffa. They headed for the island of Sicily. During the trip, sailors started getting sick and dying. Soon after the ships arrived in Messina, Sicily, townspeople became sick and died. The Black Death, another name for the bubonic plague, had arrived in Italy. The disease had already killed millions in Asia and the Middle East.

The bubonic plague is a disease that is spread by fleas on rats. It had broken out before in Europe, Asia, and North Africa. A new epidemic, or outbreak, of the disease started in China in the 1200s.



It was normal for rats to be on ships and city streets during the Middle Ages. Flea-covered rats were common in crowded cities. Most people did not bathe, and almost all people had fleas and lice. Fleas carrying the disease jumped from rats onto people. Then, fleas jumped from person to person, spreading the disease quickly. The Black Death followed trade routes. Infected fleas from rats in Chinese cities leaped onto the clothes and packs of traders who were traveling west. In this way, the disease spread from Asia to the Middle East. In 1348 and 1349, the plague spread through France and Germany. The next year, it moved to England and Scandinavia.

After being bitten by an infected flea, black spots appeared on a victim's skin. Then the infected person started spitting up blood. After a few days of painful sickness, the victim of the Black Death died.

As many as 25 million Europeans died of the plague. Entire villages disappeared. People did not understand what caused the plague, and they were terrified. Many believed God was punishing them for their sins. The Church suffered a loss of power because prayers did not help. Some people thought the Jews caused the plague by poisoning town wells. A new outbreak of anger toward Jewish people started, and thousands of Jews were killed.

The plague affected Europe's economy. As workers and employers died, survivors demanded higher pay. Their labor was more valuable now because there were fewer people to do the work. Many noblemen ignored the peasants' requests for higher wages. So, angry peasants revolted, or fought against the nobles, in places like England and France.

One person out of every three was killed by the epidemic in Europe. The bubonic plague spread death and caused many social problems. Western Europe would not fully recover from the effects of the Black Death for over 100 years.



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## Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer, and write the letter in the box.

1. The bubonic plague is spread by \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. fleas on rats
- B. ticks on dogs
- C. flies on horses
- D. breathing infected air

2. As many as \_\_\_\_\_ Europeans died of the Black Death.

- A. 2,500
- B. 250,000
- C. 2 million
- D. 25 million

3. A new epidemic of bubonic plague started in \_\_\_\_\_ in the 1200s.

- A. England
- B. Scandinavia
- C. China
- D. Italy

4. One out of every \_\_\_\_\_ people in Europe was killed by the bubonic plague.

- A. two
- B. three
- C. four
- D. five

5. Some people thought the \_\_\_\_\_ caused the bubonic plague by poisoning town wells.

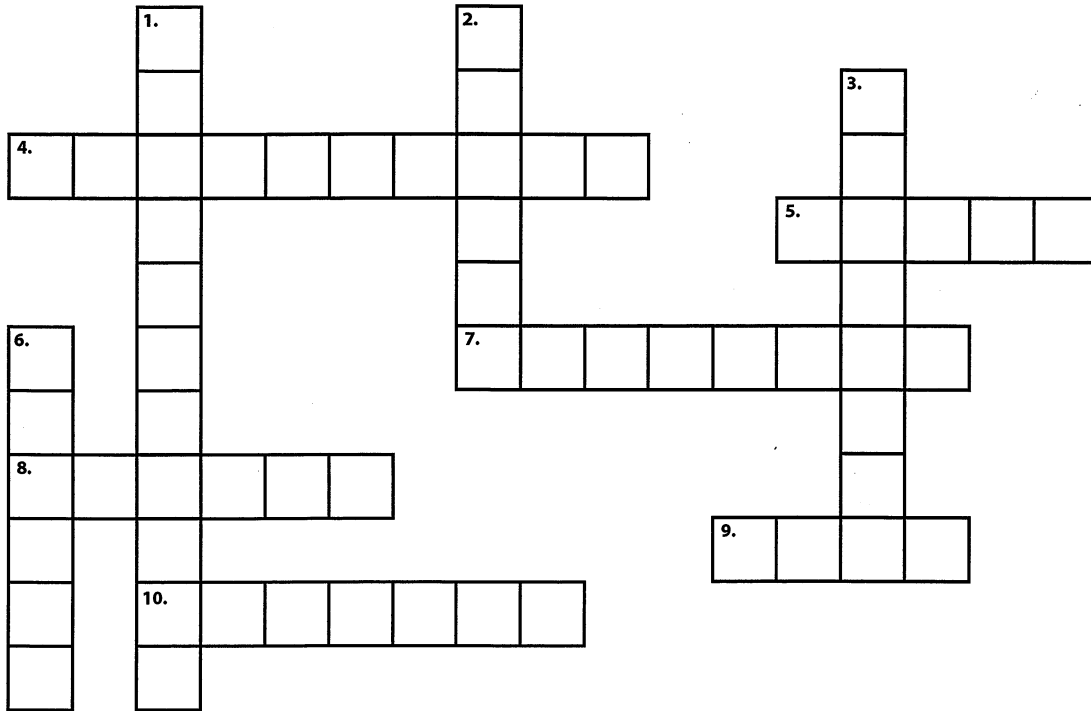
- A. nobles
- B. Jews
- C. Christians
- D. merchants



# The Black Death Hits Europe

## Crossword Puzzle

Write the best answer in each blank, and complete the crossword puzzle.



### ACROSS

4. Western Europe would not fully recover from the effects of the \_\_\_\_\_ for over 100 years.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ spread the disease quickly.
7. A new \_\_\_\_\_ of the Black Death spread through Italy to Europe.
8. The \_\_\_\_\_ suffered a loss of power because prayers did not help.
9. Infected fleas jumped onto the clothes and packs of traders who were traveling \_\_\_\_\_ from China.
10. The plague affected Europe's society and \_\_\_\_\_.

### DOWN

1. The Black Death followed \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Many people believed God was punishing them for their sins by sending the \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The Black Death killed \_\_\_\_\_ of people worldwide.
6. After trade ships arrived in Messina, \_\_\_\_\_, townspeople became sick and died.



## Quiz: The Black Death Hits Europe

### True/False

Decide if each statement is true or false, and write "true" or "false" in the blank.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The bubonic plague is spread by fleas on rats.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The epidemic began in the 1600s in Italy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Many believed the Black Death was God punishing people for their sins.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Europe recovered quickly from the epidemic.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The Black Death killed millions of people worldwide.

### Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer, and write the letter in the box.

6. After trade ships arrived in Messina, \_\_\_\_\_, townspeople became sick and died.

A. Germany  
B. Sicily  
C. China  
D. Russia

7. Because of the Black Death, \_\_\_\_\_.

A. the Church suffered a loss of power  
B. some people thought the Jews had poisoned town wells  
C. Europe's economy suffered  
D. all of the above

### Short Answer

Answer the following question in complete sentences.

8. What fraction of people were killed by the Black Death in Europe?

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