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Joaquim Campos 12/28/12 English 10B The Black Plague In just three short years between 1347 and 1350 one in every four people in Europe died in one of the worst natural disasters in history, the Black Plague. By 1352 it would wipe out a third of Europe's population. Also known as the Black Death, the Black Plague started in China where infected rats passed the disease to fleas that quickly spread it to humans. It quickly killed the majority of victims it touched, usually within mere hours. What might have seemed at first like an epidemic quickly took on pandemic proportions. It was named the Black Plague because of large black boils that would form at the site of glands. However, there were actually three different types of plague: bubonic, pneumonic and septicemic. Bubonic plague was the most common, spread by fleas and rodents. Lymph nodes would swell in the armpits, neck and groin, to the size of an egg or apple, and would turn black from sub dermal bleeding. Flu-like symptoms included nausea, vomiting, headaches, aching and high fever, but often people died with no other symptoms but swollen glands. The Black Death arrived in Europe by sea in October 1347 when 12 Genoese trading ships docked at the Sicilian port of Messina after a long journey through the Black Sea. The people who gathered on the docks to greet the ships were met with a horrifying surprise. Most of the sailors on the ships were dead and those who were alive were very ill. Those sailors who were still alive had a fever and were delirious from pain. They were also covered in black boils that oozed blood and pus thus why their sickness was named the Black Death. The Sicilian authorities had ordered the ships to get out of the harbors but it was already too late. Over the next five years the Black Death would kill more than 20 million people in Europe which is almost one third of the continent's population. The most popular theory of how the

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plague ended is through the implementation of quarantines. This meant staying out of the path of infected individuals, rats, and fleas. The uninfected would typically remain in their homes and only leave when it was necessary. Those who had money would traditionally escape to the country, far away from the Black Death infested cities, and live in the comfort of a lavish estate. In cases where infected persons were sharing living quarters with healthy persons, the entire household was quarantined together and those who weren't infected would also die.