

The bubonic plague

Business



When most people think of sickness, they instantly associate it with negative things. But aren't there positives that come out of every bad situation?

Shakespeare, I'm sure, would agree with this thought. The greatest and one of the most deadly plagues ravaged Europe during his days. This was the Bubonic Plague. It was contracted through contaminated air, and exterminated up to fifty percent of the population wherever it appeared (Magno). Although usually regarded as something utterly horrific, the Bubonic Plague was one of the causes of the Renaissance, the cultural revolution that allowed Shakespeare to jumpstart and sustain his career.

It caused education to migrate to previously illiterate areas of Europe, causing an interest in the fine arts that made Shakespeare the most famous playwright in the history of the world. The distribution of education began with the migration of those who harnessed learning materials. From 1355 until the late 1600s, residents of Eastern Europe steadily migrated to Western Europe. The Bubonic Plague was the cause of this mass migration, and it never loosened its death grip on the highly populous areas of the Holy Roman Empire. According to Boise State University professor E. L.

Skip Knox, "one of the worst effects of the Plague was that it came not once, but over and over." Because of this, many Romans moved away from the disease ridden cities like Byzantium in Constantinople to the countryside of Western Europe, where disease was present, but not violent. This move not only affected the Roman Empire by population loss in addition to that of the Plague (Grendler), but it also changed how the transplanted Romans received education. "Among the refugees [Romans] were a lot of people educated through Greek and Roman works. They . .

. brought along manuscripts of those [literary] works” (Magno). Here marks the arrival of some of the finest literature in Europe in the small, rural communities of England, France, and other Western European Countries. The natives of the Romans’ new homes became interested in the foreign study tools that were now in their villages. By 1450, the uneducated had a desire for learning and knowledge, sparked by the dignified culture of the Roman Empire. This begs the question: where did they acquire books? In 1450, timed conveniently, Johann Gutenberg began mass producing text on his newly perfected printing press, which journalist Alex Magno calls “ the key tool in this revolution [Renaissance].

” But in order for printing to succeed and emphasize education, there had to be enough interested consumers. The educated migration to escape the Plague had set up a perfect consumer situation, and thus the Renaissance was born. With new knowledge, the previously poor villagers wanted more noble occupations. With the Bubonic Plague killing off so much nobility, the commoners moved up in social classes into positions of landowners and, in some cases, even knights. Now with the people having more free time because of lighter workloads, they were able to focus on the fine arts.

Literature became even more important than ever, and music and art were greatly appreciated during the Renaissance. The all-around talented man became known as the Renaissance Man. Shakespeare is a prime example of one Renaissance Man who had humble beginnings, but great aspirations. The Renaissance’s rare opportunity to move up in social class allowed him to amount to a noble individual because of the many sonnets, poems, and plays

he brilliantly wrote. The Bubonic Plague and the Renaissance had a huge impact on Shakespeare's early career and overall success.

Because of the new emphasis on appreciating the leisurely activities of everyday life, people wanted to be entertained. Shakespeare's plays were the perfect form of entertainment for the wealthy and poor alike. Queen Elizabeth herself thoroughly enjoyed his works. Unfortunately, the Bard's theaters were closed occasionally by the government to prevent the spread of the disease, but hisSupremereign of theater continued. In some of Shakespeare's plays, the Plague was actually mentioned.

For example, in his plays " King Lear" and " Twelfth Night" the disease is briefly referenced. There was actually a strategy behind that. The playwright knew that talk of something the audience could relate to would help him sell more tickets. Many things regarded as awful and destructive also can be helpful as demonstrated with the Plague. The Bubonic Plague triggered a Renaissance of the arts and education which provided a loyal fan base for William Shakespeare. The fact that it caused learned people to migrate to the highly uneducated lands of Western Europe allowed a gate to be opened for the achievements of Shakespeare to be appreciated, both back then and in the present day.

" The [Bubonic Plague] gave life to the Renaissance" (Magno), and grants today's learners the privilege of reading Shakespeare's timeless literature.