

Dbq: the black plague

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AP European History August 31, 2012 DBQ: The Black Plague From the late medieval era to the enlightenment a series of plagues devastated European society, economy, and social/political structure. Reaction toward the calamity ranged from rational and proactive to irrational, egoistic, and even criminal. Over all, the human devastation revealed a growth over time in government role and the role of the educated class in serving society, while uncovering a persistent criticism of the upper classes and the common people. The plague illiated a growing rational and proactive response, by the state and educated class.

In 1512 Erasmus, a Christian humanist who prepared a new edition of the Latin and Greek testament, he was also known for his techniques using humanism to write his texts, proposed a scientific explanation blaming uncleanliness for the plague (Doc 2). The plague was carried around by rats which contributed to the dispersion of the bacillus. The areas that were the most susceptible to the plague where those with the most famine. In 1571 Heinrich von Staden, count of the Palestine, observed some of the cardinal consequences of the plague such as roads being guarded so that infected people didn't move from the infected area (Doc 5).

The closing of roads led to a disruption in trade throughout Europe. This had a major impact on economy. Only upper class people were able to afford the expenses required if they got infected. In 1576 Motto of Giovan Filippo, physician who is believed to be the first person to have described chicken pox, concluded that diseased had to be in quarantine, citizens who violated health regulations had to be punished and all infected items had to

be burned (Doc 6). Not everyone could afford to pay quarantine and the ones who could pay for it were those who didn't need it.

The people who were the most affected were the peasants and they couldn't afford it. By the 15th and 16th centuries the educated class started finding new techniques to treat the diseased. In 1630 Father Dragoni, priest, helped by assisting the needed and providing economic supplies (Doc 9). This auxiliary movement was useful to many and made of him an example to others. In 1647 H. de Rochas, French physician, believed that hanging toads around the patient necks would draw out the poison (Doc 10). Many physicians such as Rochas were trying to find a cure.

The plague also brought irrational and egoistic responses by different levels of society. In 1484 a schoolmaster at Deventer, when asked how his school was doing he responded by saying that only 20 of his students were killed (Doc 1). During this period in time only upper class citizens were capable of affording private schools. The rich didn't have the necessity to go out of their houses. For this reason students wouldn't go to school anymore and that way less upper class people were getting infected.

In 1523 Nicholas Versoris, author, pointed out how rich people could fly away of the infected area leaving behind the poor (Doc 3). This type of people didn't care about the rest, they egoistically thought and worried only about themselves. The people left behind were the most susceptible ones to getting infected. During the 15th and 16th centuries the upper class society was still blinded acknowledging reality. In 1656 Sir John Reresby, traveler, decided to travel to Italy knowing about the plague and religiously trusting his god that he wouldn't get infected (Doc 12).

Many upper class people didn't care or didn't take serious the severity of the plague. Most would travel all over Europe without caring if the disease was being expanded by them. In 1624 Lisabetta Centenni, common housewife, proposed that supernatural forces had cured his husband (Doc 7). During this era there were many people that were blinded by the church making them believe in forces out of the human sight and understanding. This kind of reasoning led to people avoiding medical treatment because of religion. Such reasoning was introduced to the population by the church and its over leading power.

In 1635 Nehemiah Wallington, English puritan, gave sight to his egoistic reasoning by listing the way he thought the plague would take his family and by leaving him at last (Doc 8). In 1720 M. Bertrand, physician at Marseilles, is proposing that the plague has been caused by an angry god rather than natural causes (Doc 16). During this era there were many pagan people left that believed that everything was caused by the gods. This way of reasoning that led many to die praying to a god instead of looking for real remedies. People had really strong beliefs towards pagan gods.

To those people the gods were the ones that directed every single part of their life. If some natural disaster occurred this kind of people wouldn't think irrationally and would say their gods were angry at them. Criminal and social collapse was another major cause of the plagues caused by common people and the educated class. In 1583 Johann Weyer, German physician who was one of the first to be against witch persecution, said that people were getting paid to spread the plague so that the heirs of the dead and diseased

obtained their inheritances (Doc 4). Such criminal acts were common and many people died from it.

In 1651 Miguel Parets, Barcelona tanner, published that nurses were abundant during the time of the plagues so they would kill their patients in order to get their payment (Doc 11). Criminal levels were rising and people didn't know who to trust anymore. Most people from the low classes were growing corrupt or with the necessity of having to steal or kill for food. In 1665 Samuel Pepys, English bureaucrat, said that people weren't buying wigs anymore because they were afraid to get infected (Doc 13). Economy was going down because of the plague. People were afraid to buy and many weren't even aloud in the roads.

In 1722 Daniel Defoe, *A Journal of the Plague Year*, said that all trade stopped between them and other trading nations of Europe because they were all afraid of getting infected (Doc 14). Trade had officially collapsed for the infected area. No other nation wanted to risk their citizen's health by buying goods from this area. In 1696 Emperor Leopold commissioned the "Plague Column" in gratitude for the end of the plague (Doc 15). The image shows a man knelt on the right side illustration praying and looking towards the sky were angels and saints are flying. On the left side of the image is a bible.