

# Knowledge Organiser Focus:

Was medieval England a ‘place of fear and decay’?

## I should already know:

How people lived in feudal society

## I will learn:

How illness and disease affected people’s lives in medieval times.  
What people believed caused disease, and their attempts to cure them.

What Plague and the Black Death did to its victims.

The massive impact of the Black Death on Europe, including the heavy death tolls.

The short and long term effects of disease on the feudal system and medieval life, for example the ‘Peasant’s Revolt’.

## This will help in the future:

Religion and healing in ‘Crime and punishment through time’. Industrial revolution illness in Y8

## Key Words

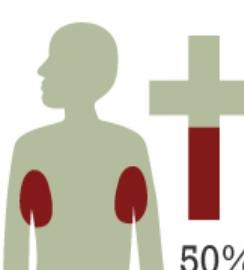
<b>Black Death</b>	One of the worst pandemics in human history. It shocked Europe to its core, killing tens, if not hundreds of millions of people in the 14 <sup>th</sup> century
<b>Buboies</b>	A swollen, puss-filled lump in the armpit or groin. They could fill with a deadly, smelly black goo. If they burst inside you, the toxin would kill you.
<b>Lollard</b>	Led by John Wycliffe, ‘Lollardism’ was a movement of Christians trying to change the Church. It was seen as a threat by the Vatican (head of Catholic Christianity)
<b>Pandemic</b>	A word used to describe the massive and fast spread of a disease over one or more countries
<b>Plague Doctor</b>	Plague Doctors were hired by their local town or city, but were often not proper doctors. They went to areas where plague had taken hold. They were seen as very valuable people.
<b>Symptom</b>	A sign of illness, used to find out what exactly is wrong with someone
<b>Quarantine</b>	Keeping infected people away from others to stop the spread of disease

Estimated death toll for the British Isles and Ireland

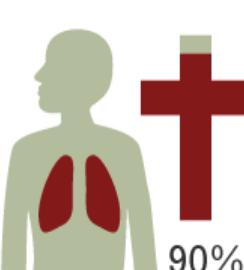
3.2 million



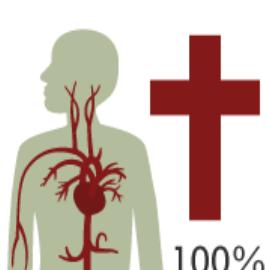
Bubonic Plague



Pneumonic Plague



Septicaemic Plague



## Greater Depth Challenge

What do reactions to disease in medieval times tell us about the power of religion on people’s lives?

## Further Reading

Horrible Histories,  
*‘Measly Middle ages’*

Different types of plague had different ‘mortality rates’, the likelihood of dying

# Knowledge Organiser Focus:

## Was medieval England a 'place of fear and decay'?

### Summarise your learning

Feudal England did not have the medicine and knowledge of health that we have today. Reactions and treatments to illness might seem strange to us. They didn't know about germs back then, and most people thought God was responsible

Trying to cure the plague: Doctors would try to burst buboes (sometimes dog poo was used to bind open sores). 'Blood letting' involved draining veins. Taste testing urine was another option!

Social impacts: Perhaps 60% of Europe's population were wiped out. Bigger houses could be built. The quality of food for peasants could increase slightly.

Economic impacts: The price of food fell, due to far fewer peasants as buyers. However, there were laws passed to stop wages increasing (which should have happened with a smaller population)

Cultural impacts: The shock of the Black Death inspired lots of writing on the topic. It also changed the way people saw the Church, for instance the 'Lollard' movement. A new fascination with a literal 'Death' (i.e. Grim Reaper) emerged in art and literature.

### Chronology: what happened on these dates?

1348	By 1348, the Black Death (a deadly form of plague) had killed over 5 million in China. In June 1348, it arrived in Melcombe Regis, Dorset, South England
September 1348	The Black Death reaches London
1350	The Black Death reaches Scotland, after already affecting the rest of England, Wales, and Ireland
1361-1405	The plague returned many times. Children were especially vulnerable to it.
1381	The 'Peasant's Revolt' may have been caused by the Black Death. Less peasants should have meant the surviving peasants got paid more, but this didn't happen
1666	An unexpected consequence of the 'Great fire of London' was ending the last big outbreak of Bubonic Plague in England



Trepanning is a great example of the superstitious beliefs around medicine



The strange masks of Plague Doctors was to keep them safe from dirty air. (see 'miasma')

### Features of medieval medicine

### What was this feature?

The 'four humours'.

An ancient Greek idea that health was caused by internal 'balance' of earth, air, fire and water. The humours were black bile, yellow bile, phlegm and blood.

Trepanning

Cutting a hole in a patient's skull. This was to release evil spirits hurting one's head

Flagellation

People would hurt themselves, for example by whipping, to confess their sins to God

Miasma

The belief that disease was caused by 'bad air'. We had no knowledge of germs at this time.

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Summarise your learning	Chronology: what happened on these dates?	
	1348	Trepanning
	September 1348	Plague Doctor
	1350	Mortality rate
	1361-1405	
	1381	
	1666	
	The 'four humours'.	
	Trepanning	
	Flagellation	
	Miasma	