

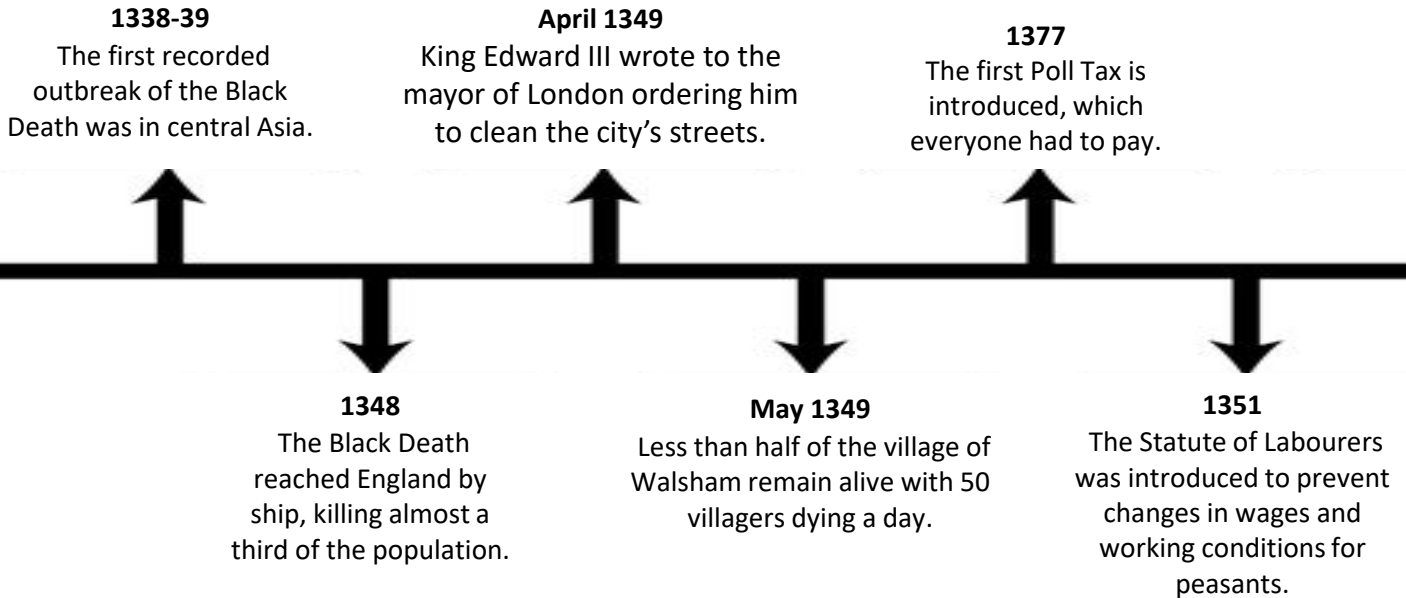
Knowledge organiser: Did the Black Death bring destruction or opportunity?



Topic Summary:

The Black Death killed over a third of England's population and dramatically transformed the long-standing structure of feudalism. The lower classes gained more rights, such as higher pay and freedom to move, whereas the nobility lost their control and power. Historians like Claire Kennan have said that 'despite damage and decay in some areas, there was opportunity and optimism in others' as a result of the Black Death. This unit will look at the **CAUSES** and **CONSEQUENCES** of the Black Death.











Key Dates:



Key people:

Physicians 	A physician would diagnose a patient's illness and recommend treatment after close observation.
Apothecaries 	An apothecary made and sold herbs and medicines.
King Edward III 	Edward III ordered the cleaning of London's streets.
Landowners 	Noblemen would let peasants live and work on the land, in return for taxes and food. The nobility became wealthy from rent raised from peasants they let farm on the land.

Vocabulary:

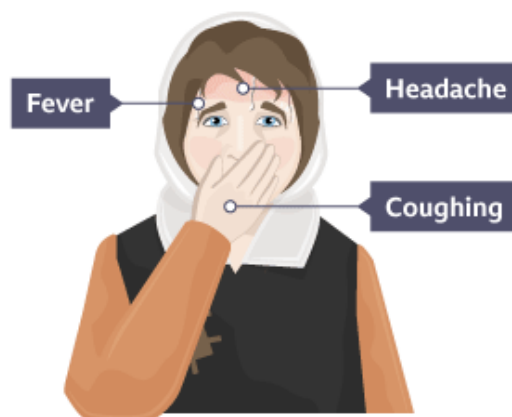
Plague 	A very infectious disease that spreads quickly and kills large numbers of people.
Pandemic 	The worldwide spread of a disease.
Symptom 	A physical or mental change that is caused by a disease.
Prevention 	The action of stopping something from happening.
Contagious 	A disease spread from one person to another, typically by direct contact.
Population 	All the people living in a country, city, or area.
Damage 	Destruction or harm to a person, village or country resulting from an action or event.
Decay 	To become slowly destroyed, worse, or less than it was before.
Opportunity 	A situation that makes it possible to do something that you want to do or achieve progress.
Optimism 	The feeling of being hopeful that good things will happen and that the future will be successful.

Core Knowledge:

Lesson 1: What was the Black Death?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Black Death was a highly infectious disease known as the bubonic plague.• The plague was first recorded in central Asia and travelled along the trade routes to Europe, killing 75 million people worldwide.• The infected suffered from five symptoms: painful swellings called buboes, vomiting and fever, bleeding under the skin, the nervous system was attacked causing the victim to suffer spasms, and in most cases the victim suffered a painful death.
Lesson 2: How did people explain the Black Death?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People believed that the Black Death had three causes:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Religious – the most widespread explanation was that the Black Death was sent by God to punish people for their sins.• Scientific – medical students were taught that the Four Humours explained illness.• Superstitious (magical) – the disease was caused by an unusual alignment of the planets and bad air, known as miasma. Sewage piled up in the street, people used the rivers to remove waste, and few streets were paved, so they became very muddy.
Lesson 3: How did people respond to the Black Death?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medical knowledge was limited at the time of the Black Death as germs were not discovered until 1861.• Natural treatments: bloodletting and purging, which attempted to rebalance the four humours.• Religious treatments: flagellants would whip themselves to seek forgiveness from God. Others prayed to God for an end to the plague.• Supernatural treatments: trepanning, where doctors would drill a hole in a patient's head to release bad spirits.• To try and stop the spread of Black Death, finances were introduced for people caught dumping waste in the streets and new jobs were created in London to try and clean up towns.
Lesson 4: How terrible was the Black Death in the short-term?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Black Death killed over 1/3 of the population in England. As there was a shortage of workers farms were abandoned and villages were deserted. Some people believed any day could be their last, so they lived wildly and carelessly.




Bubonic plague
Mortality rate = 50%



Pneumonic plague
Mortality rate = 100%

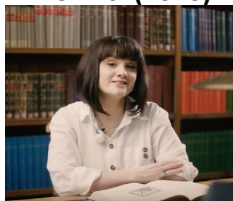
Core Knowledge:

<p>Lesson 5: What was the long-term impact of the Black Death on English towns?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Black Death started to break down the Feudal System. As there were fewer peasants around, they could now demand more pay and choose who they worked for. Landlords were not pleased and began to demand that these changes had to stop.
<p>Lesson 6: How were different groups affected by the Black Death?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Black Death caused fundamental changes to society. • Peasants could now demand pay for the work they did and could choose who they worked for. • Women were allowed to own their own land, run the family businesses, and had greater freedom in choosing a husband. • Landowners could no longer expect free labour from peasants, neighbouring landlords could raise wages to try and attract each other's workers, and as there were fewer peasants around due to the Black Death, landowners received less rent. • The King's power and control over England was declining. He had to stop his war with France as it was too expensive, so he introduced the Poll Tax, which meant that peasants had to pay more tax money.
<p>Enquiry Outcome: How do I complete the enquiry outcome well?</p> <div data-bbox="28 859 442 1149" style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><i>This led to...</i> <i>As a result of...</i> <i>Consequently...</i> <i>These are linked because...</i> <i>In comparison with...</i></p>  </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You need to make a judgement on whether the Black Death brought damage and decay or opportunity and optimism by considering its impact over time. • You will need to think about the different positive and negative consequences of the Black Death and explain how these impacted the lives of people in the Middle Ages.

What do historians say?

How can I find out more?

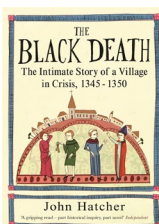
Claire Kennan, 'The Long Term Impact of the Black Death on Towns' (2020)



"Despite damage and decay in some areas, there was opportunity and optimism in others".

Kennan's research into the Black Death focusses on the social and cultural changes experienced by ordinary people in the two centuries following the 1348 outbreak of the disease.

John Hatcher, *The Black Death: The Intimate Story of a Village in Crisis, 1345-1350* (2009)



The book focuses on a small village, showing what life was like for the people living there before and after the disease arrived. Hatcher describes how the villagers went about their daily lives, how they worked, and how they faced the sickness that started to spread rapidly.

- BBC Bitesize – Causes and effects



- In Our Time – The Black Death

