

RESOURCE LIBRARY | ACTIVITY : 15 MINS

Trade and the Black Death

Students will explore the diffusion of the Black Plague from Asia to Europe. Students will explain relationships between the Silk Road and the Black Plague.

GRADES

6 - 12, Higher Ed

SUBJECTS

Biology, Health, Social Studies, World history

CONTENTS

1 Link

OVERVIEW

- Students will explore the diffusion of the Black Plague from Asia to Europe.
- Students will explain relationships between the Silk Road and the Black Plague.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/trade-and-black-death/>

DIRECTIONS

Ask students: *How is Yersinia pestis (Black Death) transmitted to humans?*

1. Click [this link](#) to launch the map.
2. With the Details button depressed, click the button, Content.
3. Click the most southerly black pop-up located in Southeast Asia and read the information provided.

Ask: *What were some factors that might have influenced the spread of the plague?* [Answer: Rodents, fleas, and densely populated areas]

Help students acquire new information through the map by asking: *Where did the 14th century Black Plague spread?*

1. Click the remaining four black pop-ups (from north to south) in East Asia. Read the information provided.
2. Have students determine during which time period the deaths due to the plague occurred in those five cities. [1320-1345]
3. Click the blue "I" Issyk-Kul Lake symbol and read the pop-up. Click the small right arrow to cycle info.
4. Click the "M" (Kharkhorum) symbol and read the pop-up.
Ask: Which direction were the Mongols and the plague traveling? [Answer: Westward from the Mongol capital area, through the Issyk-Kul Lake area.]
5. Click the "K" symbol for the city of Kaffa (Caffa) and read the pop-up.
Ask: What action did Mongols laying siege to Kaffa take to capture the city? [Answer: They flung infested dead bodies over the wall to spread the plague.]

Have students explore the question *Where do you predict Yersinia pestis would diffuse from Kaffa?*

1. Turn on the two layers, Maritime Silk Road and the European Shipping Routes.
2. Click the two layer names (above) to expand the legends.

Ask: How did shipping routes aid in transmitting the plague? [Answer: Infected rats and fleas made way onto ships in contaminated food and supplies. The plague was also transmitted through rat, work animal, and human waste. Ships could efficiently get to other continents as they sailed the seas.]

Have students analyze the problem by asking: *How did Yersinia pestis reach Europe?*

1. Zoom in and click the "C" symbol for the city of Constantinople and read the pop-up.
2. Turn on the layer, European Overland Trade Routes.
3. Click Bookmarks and choose Europe.

Ask: In which direction did Yersinia pestis spread from Constantinople? [Answer: First along the shipping routes to trade ports along the Mediterranean Sea and then overland from the ports into the European interior.]

Have students act on their analysis by asking: *How prevalent was the Black Plague in Europe in the mid-1300s?*

1. Turn on the Black Death Cities: Europe Animation Across Europe layer.
2. Stop the animation and click several of the dots from the Black Death Cities: Europe Animation layer.

Ask: *What was the progression of the disease?* [Answer: From the Mediterranean areas to Western Europe, north to Bavaria and Scandinavia, and then east to Russia]

3. Click the black diamond in Europe.

OBJECTIVES

Subjects & Disciplines

Biology

- Health

Social Studies

- World history

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Explore the diffusion of the Black Plague from Asia to Europe, and explain relationships between the Silk Road and the Black Plague.

Teaching Approach

Teaching Methods

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

National Standards, Principles, and Practices

THE COLLEGE, CAREER & CIVIC LIFE (C3) FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL STUDIES STATE STANDARDS

- Causation and Argumentation: D2.His.14.9-12:

Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.

- D2.His.1.9-12:

Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts

PREPARATION

What You'll Need

REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

- Internet Access: Required
- Tech Setup: 1 computer per classroom, 1 computer per pair

PHYSICAL SPACE

- Classroom
- Computer lab

RESOURCES PROVIDED: MAPS

- Trade and the Black Death

BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

Background Information

Prior Knowledge

Recommended Prior Activities

- None

Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
Black Death	<i>noun</i>	(1345-1400) plague that devastated Europe, killing a quarter of the population.
densely	<i>adverb</i>	heavily or crowded.
diffuse	<i>verb</i>	to spread out or scatter.
expand	<i>verb</i>	to grow or get larger.
plague	<i>noun</i>	very infectious, often fatal, disease caused by bacteria.
Silk Road	<i>noun</i>	ancient trade route through Central Asia linking China and the Mediterranean Sea.



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