Routes and Ripples

Trace the plague's path and its effects on European society.

SS24.8.8b "Trace the spread of the bubonic plague from Asia to Europe and describe the resulting changes that occurred in Europe, including the rise of the middle class."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the places and routes that show the plague's path from Asia to European towns. Then number three changes that connect population loss to the growth of the middle class.

A Disease Travels, Europe Changes

1. In the 1340s, a deadly disease moved along busy trade networks linking Asia and Europe. The bubonic plague, caused by bacteria, often spread when infected fleas bit people. Fleas and rodents could travel with goods and travelers, although the disease also spread in other ways. Outbreaks reached the Black Sea region from parts of Asia. In 1347, ships from that region carried the plague to Messina, a port on the island of Sicily. From Mediterranean ports, the disease spread through other European ports and inland towns.

2. By the early 1350s, the plague had killed a large share of Europe's people. In many communities, fields went unplanted and workshops lost skilled hands. With fewer workers available, some surviving laborers could ask for higher pay or better terms from landowners. Some landowners offered land for rent instead of demanding labor from peasants. Rulers tried to limit wages, but such laws could be hard to enforce. These changes differed across Europe, yet in many western areas they weakened old ties between peasants and lords.

3. Towns also changed. Some survivors inherited property, while higher earnings gave some workers more choices about where to live or work. People with savings could buy tools, rent a shop, or trade goods. Merchants and skilled craftworkers had formed a middle class before the plague, between wealthy nobles and poor laborers. After the epidemic, new chances for some workers and shopkeepers helped this group grow in parts of Europe. Still, many people remained poor, and the plague did not bring the same opportunities to every region.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Trace the plague's route from Asia to inland European towns.

2. How did travel and trade help the plague move along that route?

3. How did population loss change some surviving workers' bargaining power?

4. How could those changes help the middle class grow in some parts of Europe?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence proposal to Messina's town council in 1350. Trace how the plague reached Messina, suggest a new response to worker shortages that is not in the passage, and explain two likely effects of your plan, including one on the middle class.

Routes and Ripples

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the places and routes that show the plague's path from Asia to European towns. Then number three changes that connect population loss to the growth of the middle class. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Trace the plague's route from Asia to inland European towns.	**It spread from parts of Asia to the Black Sea region, traveled by ship to Messina in Sicily, then spread through other European ports and inland towns.**
2	How did travel and trade help the plague move along that route?	**Fleas and rodents could travel with goods and travelers, and ships carried the plague from the Black Sea region to a Mediterranean port.**
3	How did population loss change some surviving workers' bargaining power?	**With fewer workers available, some survivors could ask landowners for higher pay or better terms.**
4	How could those changes help the middle class grow in some parts of Europe?	**Some workers earned more or gained property, allowing them to buy tools, rent shops, or trade goods.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The plague reached Messina by ship from the Black Sea region after spreading through parts of Asia. I propose that the council pay skilled craftworkers to train new apprentices. This could replace lost workshop skills and help shops reopen. Apprentices who learn a trade might earn enough to join the town's middle class. The council could pay for training with a small fee on market stalls.

Accept routes that name the Black Sea region, Messina or Sicily, and movement into other European towns. For the proposal, accept plausible new plans with effects that follow from the passage, without suggesting that everyone benefited or that the plague created the middle class.