

Routes of Contagion

Trace how exchange networks spread disease and changed societies.

9.6b "Networks of exchange facilitated the spread of disease, which affected social, cultural, economic, and demographic development."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle words or phrases that show how the plague moved through exchange networks. Underline each effect of the plague on population, work, society, or culture.

Trade Routes and the Black Death

- ① In the 1300s, land and sea routes connected Eurasia and North Africa. Those links also helped spread the Black Death, a pandemic caused by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*. Plague can spread through infected flea bites; its pneumonic form can pass through close contact with infectious respiratory droplets. Moving people, animals, and goods created opportunities for infection to travel. Outbreaks spread west from Asia through connected cities and ports to North Africa and Europe. Researchers continue to investigate the exact routes and mechanisms.
- ② The Black Death killed a large share of Europe's population in the late 1340s and early 1350s. Estimates vary, often ranging from about one-third to one-half, and losses differed greatly by region. North African and West Asian communities also suffered. In many European areas, fewer workers meant labor shortages. Some survivors could demand higher wages or leave estates, although rulers and landlords tried to limit these gains. Lost rents, abandoned farmland, grief, and repeated outbreaks changed everyday life.
- ③ Responses differed. Many people turned to prayer, charity, or religious processions; some questioned religious leaders. Fear also intensified existing prejudice. In parts of Europe, Jewish communities were falsely accused of causing plague and suffered expulsion and mass violence. These accusations had no factual basis. The disaster therefore affected more than population: it changed work, religious life, and social relationships. Connected trade networks helped carry infection, while local conditions shaped its effects.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did trade networks help the plague move from parts of Asia to North Africa and Europe?

2 Identify one demographic effect and one economic effect of the Black Death described in the passage.

3 Describe one cultural or social response to the plague. How did fear affect some communities?

4 Distinguish the biological cause of plague from the role of trade routes in spreading it.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a four-sentence cause-and-effect explanation about how the Black Death could affect a Mediterranean port city. Include one exchange network, one way the disease spreads, one demographic or economic effect, and one social or cultural effect.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Circle words or phrases that show how the plague moved through exchange networks. Underline each effect of the plague on population, work, society, or culture. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did trade networks help the plague move from parts of Asia to North Africa and Europe?	Connected land routes, cities, ports, and shipping moved people, animals, and goods, creating opportunities for infection to spread westward.
2	Identify one demographic effect and one economic effect of the Black Death described in the passage.	Europe lost perhaps one-third to one-half of its population. Labor shortages allowed some workers to demand higher wages or leave estates, while some landlords lost rents and farmland was abandoned.
3	Describe one cultural or social response to the plague. How did fear affect some communities?	People sought prayer, charity, and processions, while some questioned religious leaders. Fear led some communities to falsely blame and persecute Jewish people.
4	Distinguish the biological cause of plague from the role of trade routes in spreading it.	Yersinia pestis caused the disease. Trade routes connected places and created opportunities for infection to spread; they did not produce the bacterium.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Ships linked a Mediterranean port to other cities and could transport infected fleas or animals. Infected flea bites could spread plague to people. Deaths reduced the workforce, so some survivors could seek higher wages. Fear could also intensify prejudice and persecution.

Accept accurate connections between exchange networks, supported transmission mechanisms, and effects. For the open response, look for all four requested elements and clear cause and effect; do not imply every region experienced identical outcomes.