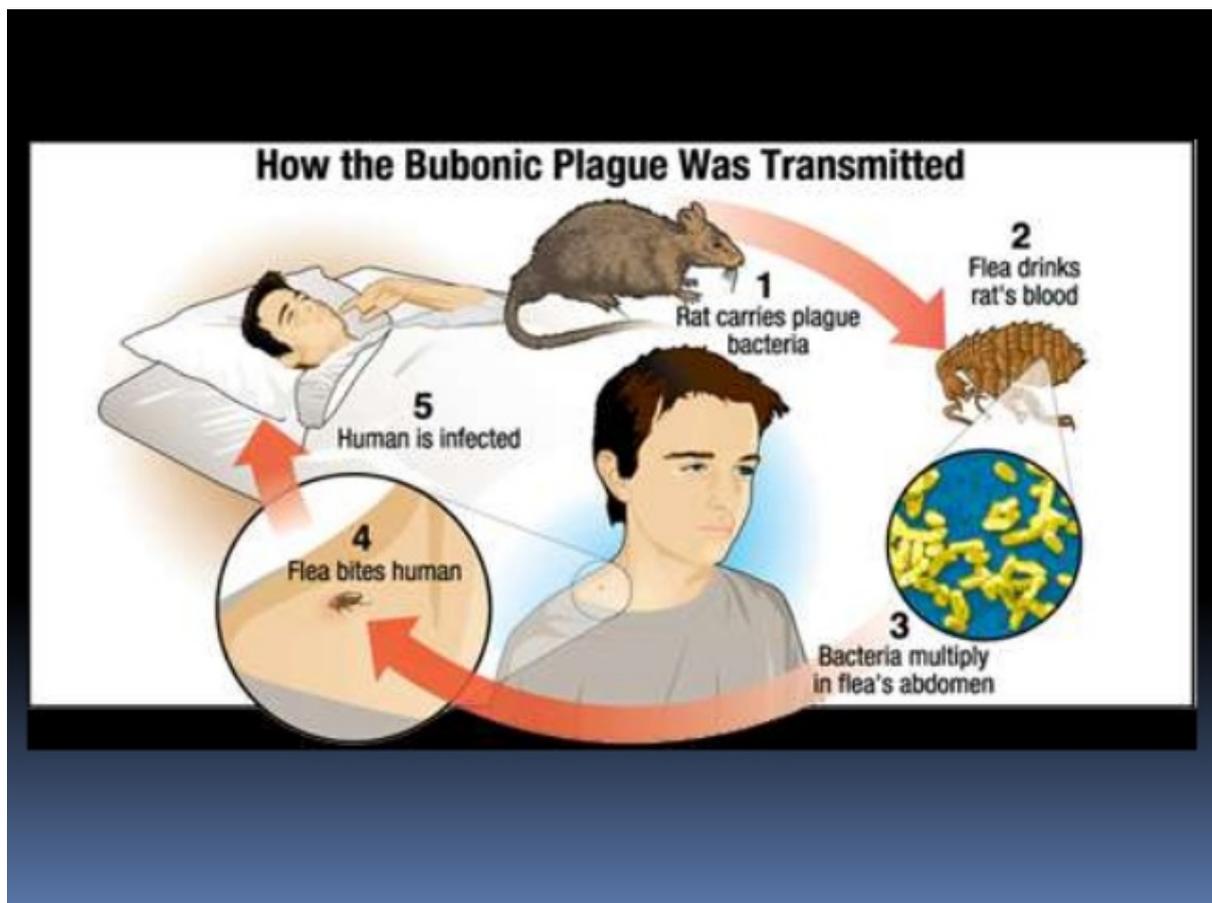


Charterhouse Square Activity, standing on death pit in centre of square.

Ask pairs to think of three words or features which describe the site today and take suggestions e.g. green, surrounded by buildings, has seats and trees, quiet, empty etc. Explain that the square today is an open space that local people or visitors can use for sitting in.

Ask pupils to close their eyes and describe to the group an ideal rural field, how green and pleasant, sweet smelling it might have been etc. Explain that in the Middle Ages the square was a field outside the walls of London. Explain that in 1349 a deadly disease called the Black Death spread to London by bacteria carried by black rats which killed between a third and half the population but that no-one understood how it spread.(The image below could help your explanation).



Bring a volunteer forward and explain the symptoms of the Black Death, asking the pupil to act these out for each stage (these can be found in cartoon form on the Black Death PowerPoint from Slide 5 of the following link www.slideshare.net/jhaney96/black-death-powerpoint - this cartoon could be copied and laminated for use on the site). Despite the fact that this might be done in a comic way, stress the seriousness and sheer terror the Black Death was responsible for. Explain that in 1349 the field which then occupied the square was dug up and cartloads of bodies were brought out from the crowded streets of London. Show the medieval illustration of Black Death burials from this link www.newhistorian.com/2016/12/02/rare-medieval-black-death-burial-pit-discovered-england/ (this could also be copied and laminated for use on site) and explain that although coffins

were used at first it was said that 50,000 bodies were buried in the pit in Charterhouse Square, probably just dumped in. Stress that pupils may be standing feet above the remains of these people.

Give out the seven descriptions of treatments of the Black Death from THE Charterhouse PowerPoint to pairs and ask them to discuss what mark they might give each treatment mentioned out of ten if 10 is really good and 1 is awful. Lead careful discussion, asking each pair to read their card out first and explain their mark for each treatment. Probe the reasons for their judgement and allow others to challenge their conclusions.

Lastly summarise the following comments for each treatment.

Rubbing onions, herbs or a chopped up snake (if you have one) on the boils or cutting up a pigeon and rubbing it over an infected body (the body of somebody who has the Black Death).

Useless in terms of onion or herbs, possibly deadly in terms of animal flesh which could contaminate with infection an already sick person.

Drinking vinegar, eating crushed minerals (rocks), arsenic (a poison), mercury (a poisonous metal) or even ten-year-old treacle (a sweet syrup)!

Useless or deadly if it was poisonous.

Sitting close to a fire or in a sewer to drive out the fever, or making the house smell nice with sweet smelling herb to drive out the bad air the air.

Sitting close to a fire might make a difference because it would keep rats at bay. Sitting in a sewer might accelerate your exposure to rats if not lead to other illnesses. Filling your house with herbs would be useless.

People who believed God was punishing them for their sins (bad things they had done), went on processions whipping their bare bodies to show they were sorry.

Useless

Cut open the swellings (buboes) to let the disease (the Black Death) leave the body. Put a mixture of tree resin (sap), roots of white lilies and dried human sewage on to the wounds.

Cutting open the swellings could kill the sufferer, if only through blood loss or infection. Any bacteria on the materials put on the wound could also lead to infection.

Stop eating food that goes off (bad) easily like meat, cheese and fish. Instead eat bread fruit and vegetables.

Useless

Clean the streets of all animal and human sewage. Take it all on a cart to a field and burn it there. Bury bodies in deep pits and burn their clothes.

Cleaning might make some difference as there would be less for rats to feed off. Burying the bodies and burning clothing might destroy rats in the process.

If time lead discussion about whether medieval people were stupid or not (not since they were limited by available knowledge).

Inside the museum

Ask pupils to gather around the skeleton before pupils have sight of the notice explaining it and think of questions they might want to ask it. Take questions and lead discussion, asking pupils what they notice about the skeleton and what this might indicate about it, for example the state of the teeth. Use the detail on the notice to fill in the background to this individual and lead further discussion about what the information might tell us about this medieval person, about the medieval period in which they lived and about why they might have died.

Ask pupils to gather around the replica of the original document showing how the monastery was supplied with fresh spring water. Again without telling pupils what the document depicts, ask pairs to think of questions about it. Then using the explanatory labels on the exhibit to help, explain how the water was piped from a fresh spring through spliced tree trunks to the monastery for different uses such as washing and cooking. Lead discussion around such issues as, how much water might actually reach the monk`s cells, (some might leak from the pipes) and whether the monks had a better lifestyle than that of the medieval skeleton (they had access to fresh water, he probably drank weak beer as a liquid because he did not have access to clean water in the same way the monks did).