
The Black Plague In Medieval Europe And Its Image In Decameron

The Black Plague was a horrifying epidemic that had a grave impact on the social, economic, political and cultural elements of the lives of people effected. Struck in the mid-1300s originating in China but peaked in Europe between 1348 and 1350. The Black Plague was a devastating epidemic that was first noticed when 12 ships from the Black Sea docked at the Sicilian port of Messina. People gathered on the docks were met with a horrifying surprise: most sailors aboard the ship were dead, and those alive were gravely ill and covered in black boils that oozed blood and pus. Because of these ships, the authorities tried to order the ships out of the harbour which didn't work as it was too late and the Black Plague already made it out and over the next few years killed over 20 million people. The main people who were affected by the Black Plague were European and by the end of 1348, Germany, France, England, Italy, and the low countries had all felt the devastating effects of the plague. Small mammals were the main hosts to the bacteria infested fleas such as rats and mice. These fleas each carried the disease that quickly spread throughout Europe.

Some social impacts of the black plague were how the main Christian population chose to blame the Jews. These Christians chose to believe that the Jewish people (Europe's largest minority group at the time) were poisoning the water from Christian communities, including Christian cities and towns. Thousands of Jews were killed because of this whole occurrence in many European communities. Life in Britain in the fourteenth century was absolutely horrible, and it had been that way for the peasants due to the Feudal Systems for a long time before the Black Plague even hit Europe. Britain in the early fourteenth century was very, very, overpopulated. This was very good for those who were higher up in the Feudal System, as it meant that they had many reserved peasants and everyone lesser than themselves, of whom they could use for whatever they want and force them to work for little to no money. In fact, there was such a high amount of manpower, that most landlords found it convenient to relax the old feudal labour dues owed to them on the grounds that men could always be found to perform them.

The bubonic plague is a deadly disease, having a major effect on the communities affected by the plague. 'Culture is the result of the collective experiences of a community.' (Oxford Dictionary.) This means, the bubonic plague had a vast cultural impact on the wide part of the population effected. 'People abandoned their friends and family, fled cities, and shut themselves off from the world. Traditional funerals became less and less common due to the sheer amount of deaths at the time and work stopped being done. Some had beliefs that the God's wrath was coming down upon them.'(Decameron Web, 12/10/2010) People then began to lose faith in the church and all people could give their own rites including women who gave themselves better rites because they believed their rites weren't fair. This changed the way people lived their day to day lives culturally because the of black plague completely overruling their original religions and beliefs.

The plague had a huge economic impact on Medieval Europe especially in the agricultural field. Economy is defined as 'the state of a country or region in terms of the production and consumption of goods and services and the supply of money.' (Oxford Dictionary). This means

that because of loss of life in humans, animals and crops there was no food for the communities. As a result of so many people dying labour numbers were lower and therefore the poor could demand higher wages and the Feudal system, along with money lost all its value. This is because all of the essentials for living (food, water etc.) were becoming harder to come by which made everything that used to be worth less, or nothing, was now in very high demand. Slowly the fields were ploughed, the crops were replanted, as well as life and economy were slowly restored.

Politics is defined as 'the activities associated with the governance of a country or area, especially the debate between parties having power.' (Oxford Dictionary). The Political impacts that the Bubonic Plague had on Europe and the rest of the world resulted Because so many people died and were lost to the Black Plague. Many of the biggest and best Politicians had diseased, this meant that because there was no one to run the communities, rules and laws weren't enforced anywhere near as much, which in return, the lack of Politicians left parliament in a shamble meaning that random foreign people stepped up and claimed parts of Europe.

The Black Plague produced some great artefacts, such as the Hazmat suits that the plague doctors wore including the masks that resembled a bird's beak. The Black Plague doctors wore these suits because they originally thought that the disease was airborne. They packed their 'bird beaks' with herbs and spices that smelt nice to keep the air around that they breathed through the mask smelling nice. The doctors carried around a tall stick used to push away people that were approaching them that had the disease. The hazmat suits worn by the doctors covered them head to toe.

The Black Plague made huge impacts on mainly Europe and also the rest of the world. The great social, cultural, economic and political impacts that the Bubonic Plague had on the world at the time were devastating. Because of this horrible yet interesting time in history there are many great artefacts that came from the time.