Distance Learning for
World History (11th Grade) - M
Week #10, June 8 - 12

Essential Question:
How do the plagues of the 14th century compare to the plagues of the 21st century?

Instructions:
1. (Packet users) Using the reading packet given to you (articles) answer the following questions on your own paper. Hold your written answers until time to return all your work.
2. (Google Classroom users) Read the information from the articles that are given to you. Answer each question listed below. When you are finished you can submit your work on Google Classroom.
3. **If you are using a packet, please put your completed work in a safe place where you can easily find it when the time comes to collect the work.**
4. The question should be answered using complete sentences in PARAGRAPH form.

Assignment:
When the Black Death reached Europe in the 14th century, it devastated the continent both socially and economically. Millions of people died from this disease and many others were forced to flee, looking for safety. The results of this plague brought massive change to the people even after the disease stopped spreading. People and their governments were forced into new ways of living and working together. Life never returned to the way it was prior to the Black Death.

Just like the Black Death, this current pandemic of Covid-19 (Corona Vivus) will most likely change our lives forever. Read the two attached articles on the aftermath of the Plague in Europe and how China has started to recover from Covid-19. Complete the chart by listing 3 facts you would use to compare and/or contrast the Bubonic Plague to the Covid 19 Pandemic. Each one should have 3 facts/examples. An example has been given to you.

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<th>Bubonic Plague Changes to Society</th>
<th>Covid 19 Pandemic Changed to Society</th>
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<td>Once the plague took the trained priests, the Catholic Church was not trusted as much and therefore lost its prominence in society.</td>
<td>Covid has forced churches to move to online services where people can watch at any time from anywhere, this will result in fewer people attending church in the building.</td>
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How did the Bubonic Plague make the Italian Renaissance possible?

The Black Death (1347-1350) was a pandemic that devastated the populations of Europe and Asia. The plague was an unprecedented human tragedy in Italy. It not only shook Italian society but transformed it. The Black Death marked an end of an era in Italy, its impact was profound, and it resulted in wide-ranging social, economic, cultural and religious changes. These changes, directly and indirectly, led to the emergence of the Renaissance, one of the greatest epochs for art, architecture, and literature in human history.

The Impact of the Plague of Italy

There is no firm data on the impact of the plague on the population of Italy. However, some examples show the full extent of the disease in Italy. The plague halved the population of Florence. The population crashed and fell from approximately 100,000 to 50,000. The experience of Florence was replicated across all the major cities of Italy which also experienced similar drastic declines. The death rate in rural Italy was not nearly as high, but there was a significant loss of life. In general, the total population of Italy may have dropped by as much as a third.

The Black Death was also an economic crisis as trade ceased because of fear of the spread of plague. As trade stagnated, businesses failed, and unemployment rose.

The socio-economic consequences of the plague on society came to be profound. The high mortality rate resulted in a drastic decline in the labor force. Wages rose for both agricultural and urban workers. The survivors of the Black Death generally had a higher standard of living than before the plague. This was a phenomenon that occurred in both urban and rural areas. The crisis caused by the Black Death led to many changes in the economy, in response to the fall in the population. Because of the labor shortages, there was a move from labor-intensive farming such as cereal to livestock and increase both in industry and agriculture; more labor-saving devices were employed.

The consequences of the plague resulted in a growing divide between the North and South of Italy that persists to this day. In general, after a period of recovery, much of Italy became very wealthy as a more sophisticated economy emerged, especially in the North of Italy. This was crucial, as the increased wealth of Italy allowed the elite, such as the De Medici’s in Florence to become the patrons of great artists such as Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci.

Religious Consequences

Initially, in Italy, the plague led to a revival in religion among many. The middle ages was a time when people believed that events are a result of God’s will. Many viewed the plague as punishment for God for the wickedness and immorality of the people. There was an upsurge in religious observance, and many sections of the public became swept by religious fervor, as many sincerely believed that the Black Death was a sign that the end of the world was coming. The Church suffered greatly during the plague, many priests and especially monks died.
The monasteries proved ideal breeding grounds for the plague while many priests contracted the sickness as they gave the last rites to the dying.\[13\] The result was a shortage of trained monks and priests. To deal with this, the Church hastily trained new monks and priests to serve the spiritual needs of the community, still coming to terms with the trauma of the Black Death. This meant that many unsuitable individuals became clerics and this led to a drop in standards among parish priests, in particular.\[14\] The Church became corrupt and gradually over time lost the respect of many believers. In the short term the Black Death strengthened the Catholic Church in Italy, but in the long run, an increasingly corrupt institution meant that many people lost their faith. The church had traditionally monopolized education, but after the Black Death, there was more secular education, especially in the cities. This was decisive in the emergence of the Renaissance, with its emphasis on human values and experiences rather than religion.\[16\]

Questioning of authority

The world was turned upside down by the Black Death. The mental outlook of people changed dramatically. Previously, people assumed that the world was fixed and God-ordained. The Black Death overturned old certainties. As we have seen the plague and its devastation undermined religious orthodoxy and beliefs. People at the time were no longer willing to accept the status quo. This change manifested in the numerous political revolts of the time.\[17\] No longer are people as willing to question the old ways of doing things and no longer accepted things because they were sanctioned by tradition. The Black Death led to a great questioning of the old certainties. This led many, especially among the urban elite to use reason to understand the world. They also increasingly turned to the classics to find answers to the problems of life. The new spirit of inquiry helped to ignite the Renaissance, especially in politics and philosophy.\[18\] However, that is not to say, that Italy rejected all traditions, it was still a very conservative society in many ways. However, those who questioned authority and received wisdom, such as the Poet and Scholar Petrarch inspired the Humanist movement, which valued reason and critical thinking. The Humanist are essential in the development and progress of the Renaissance.\[19\]

Cultural Change

Initially, the Black Death led to a fascination with death among many Italians. The loss of life and the suffering led many to become obsessed with death.\[20\] The Dance of Death was a popular motif in art and architecture at this time. The general mood was one of pessimism, and indeed many expected that sooner or later that the world would end. Alongside this fear of death and the general mood of pessimism (looking for the bad in everything), there was a desire to experience the pleasures of life and to seize any happiness that was on offer. This contradictory impact of the Black Death on the culture of the time can be seen in the writings of two of the greatest figures in European literature, Petrarch and Boccaccio.\[21\] These two writers at times wrote in despair about the human condition yet they also wrote about the joys of life and the beauties of nature. This sense that life was fleeting and that every happiness should be seized, led many Italians to seek solace in art and literature and this was one of the factors in the development of the Renaissance. It resulted in a shift in the themes of artists.\[22\] Religious topics remained popular, however, there was also a fascination with secular (non-religious) themes, especially from the classical world. The new interest in secular subjects can be seen in a comparison between Giotto and Botticelli. Giotto painted almost exclusively religious paintings. While Giotto, painted both secular and religious themes, indeed he is best known for his secular works as in masterpieces such as Primavera.\[23\]

Social Mobility

Previously, to the outbreak of the plague, Italy was a rigid and stratified society. The Black Death changed everything. Increasingly, because of the demographic disaster caused by the plague they were able to take advantage of the opportunities caused by the high death rate. In the period after the Black Death, an unprecedented amount of social mobility took place. Laborers became merchants and merchants become members of the nobility. No longer was a person’s destiny to be fixed by their birth. Previously, people assumed that one’s station was fixed at one’s birth and that one had to remain a member of the class you were born into.\[24\] This led to a growing individualism in Italian society. This, in turn, encouraged people to strive and to develop their talents and achieve excellence or virtue. The belief in the individual was central to the Renaissance and it inspired many of the greatest artists, architects, sculptures and writers the world have ever seen to create peerless works.
Decline of the Nobility

One group that was adversely impacted by the Black Death was the nobility. In the aftermath of the epidemic, they found themselves in serious financial difficulties. The loss of population meant that there was no longer a high demand for their land and rents fell.[28]

Many of their laborers simply left the land, and they were not replaced. Many of the nobility found themselves obliged to sell their serfs their freedom or to sell land to merchants from the cities. At this time, many wealthy merchants purchased new estates. The demise of the traditional elite meant that a new elite came to the fore, composed of merchants and self-made men. This new elite is often keen to patronize arts. They were very conscious of their lack of birth and humble origins.[29]

They were keen to use art and to patronize men of letters to compensate for the lack of traditional authority. In order to appear the equal of the old aristocracy, they sought to sponsor artists who would win the esteem of the public.[30] This was one of the reasons for the lavish patronage of the de Medici’s in Florence. They were keen patrons of the arts, to justify their status in society and to impress the general population.

Who benefitted from the Renaissance in Italy?

While the Renaissance may have laid the foundation for broad changes in Europe over the long term, the wealthy in Italy were the primary people who benefited during the Renaissance. While wages for agricultural workers increased after the plague arrived, wages did not increase throughout the Renaissance. Additionally in Florence, life expectancy declined for people during the Renaissance. Wealthy Italians during the Renaissance clearly did benefit. Their wealth essentially funded the artistic achievements of the era, but most Italian peasants probably would have preferred higher wages rather than the Mona Lisa.[31]

Conclusion

The Black Death devastated Italian society in the middle of the 14th century. It led to great socio-economic, cultural and religious changes. After the initial horrors of the plague, Italian society, staged a spectacular recovery. Italy became richer than before. The impact of the plague reduced the influence of the Catholic Church as diminished, and the culture became more secular. The new social mobility meant that individualism came to be respected. The Black Death unleashed the forces in Italian society that made the Renaissance possible.

Life after lockdown: How China went back to work

By Lu-Hai Liang

30th April 2020

Much of the global population remains socially isolated to prevent the spread of Covid-19. But after months of lockdown in China, people are returning to work. So what does life look like?

When Gao Ting left Wuhan in China’s Hubei province to go back to her hometown for Lunar New Year, she was excited about seeing old friends and going out for festive meals. Back then, she recalls that face masks were rare among her colleagues and people on the streets, and she didn’t wear one.

She left the provincial capital, where she works, just three days before it was placed under a strict lockdown on 23 January, after it became clear that the dangerous new virus we now know as Covid-19 needed to be contained. Gao, 34, would go on to spend 68 days trapped in her parents’ apartment in Yichang, a city of four million about 300km west of Wuhan. “We could only stay at home. Every day people would come to take our temperature,” she says. “It felt good to spend more time with family, to eat together, chat together. There were eight of us, including my sister and brother-in-law’s family.”

Over two months later on 29 March, Gao went back to work. “There were a lot of people on the subway,” she says of that first commute back. “Everyone wore masks.” Apart from that, it was business as usual with most people engrossed in their phones. It was almost as if nothing had changed. But the working landscape told a different story.

Money troubles

Gao works in operations management for Chinese conglomerate Wanda Group in one of Wuhan’s most popular shopping areas. Chūhē Hànhjǐē is a long, paved street filled with international and local brands – but business is slow. Part of Gao’s job involves measuring footfall for her employer, which invested in and developed the area:

“We had 60,000 people, on average, daily in 2019. Now it’s around 10,000 people per day.”

Despite this Gao’s job is both busier and tougher, and she is regularly still in the office at 2100. On the weekends she works from home, trying to clear her backlog. Her role also involves calling around local businesses to try to
entice them to move into vacant units. “The brands are not doing good business [on Chǔhé Hànjiē]. We try to help
them. Lots of businesses don’t have money and can’t afford rent. Some are closing down.”

And the businesses that haven’t closed down are having to be cautious not to reignite infection rates. Wuhan’s
restaurants now close at 1900 and people are not allowed to sit inside; very few people wander around after that
time. Instead, Gao’s office orders packed lunches and dinners to be delivered.

**New rules in the office**

For much of February, millions of employees in China were working from home, which for many was a new
experience. **Now some – but not all - have returned to the office, although lower economic activity means that
some struggling companies are reported to be reducing working hours and pay.** Others, like Gao Ting, are
working longer than before as they try to crank their business back into gear.

Local authorities across China have proposed 2.5-day weekends to encourage consumer spending. East China’s
Jiangxi province implemented the plan recently. The new measures however are voluntary, and companies can
choose how to implement them. Other provinces like Hebei, Gansu and Zhejiang have also recommended the 2.5-
day weekend to stimulate the economy.

The presence of Covid-19 is still very much in the back of everyone’s minds as health officials worry about a
potential second wave of infections. **Many office buildings and apartments have security personnel to administer
temperature checks for people wanting to enter.**

Amal Liu, 26, works for a major Chinese state-owned insurance company in southern Shenzhen. At her office, and
in many others, everyone must wear masks and practise social distancing. “In the canteen, we must sit away from
each other,” she says. Liu mentions that some overseas brokers, who she communicates with for work, are now
feeling the effects of their own extended lockdowns. “I didn’t enjoy working from home, I wasn’t as efficient as I was
in the office,” says Liu, who prefers the regularity of the office schedule.

For others, relationships with international clients have also been curtailed. Ariel Zhong, 25, works for a leading
Chinese video game live-streaming platform, Hu Ya, in Guangzhou and is responsible for developing emerging
markets.

Zhong had been based in Mexico, with regular travel between Asia and Latin America, but had travelled back home
to China in late March. On her return she was first placed in quarantine in a hotel and then worked from home for a
week. Since 15 April, she has returned to the office, with some noticeable changes.

**Before Chinese New Year her working hours were fixed but “now we have flexible clock-in and clock-out [times],
as long as we work for a nine-hour period including lunch”, she says.** These staggered hours are partly because
social distancing on public transport causes delays and also to prevent too many people from entering and
leaving the office building at the same time.

Despite not being able to travel overseas Zhong is happy to be back in the office, citing a more efficient work
routine, especially as she requires stable and fast internet speeds. But her pay has dropped significantly, since 60%
of her salary is made up of incentives to travel abroad – something she can’t do under the current circumstances.

**More flexible working?**

Zhang Xiaomeng, associate professor of organisational behaviour at the Cheung Kong Graduate School of
Business in Beijing, has found that **many employees reported reduced efficiency when working from home.**

In a survey conducted by her team, which had 5,835 respondents (drawn from her business school’s employees
and alumni’s companies’ employees), **more than half the participants reported reduced efficiency when working
from home. Nearly 37% reported no difference in their efficiency, while less than 10% said they worked more
efficiently from home.**

Krista Pederson, who works in Beijing for Hogan Assessment Systems, a personality assessment company, says
China is in an ideal position to pivot towards a more flexible workstyle, with the technology and infrastructure to
support this. But this additional flexibility could come at a cost.

“We have also seen an increase in expectations for responsiveness at any and all times, with higher pressure for
employees to respond more quickly or be willing to have meetings at later or earlier times,” she says. However, this trend is not being seen across all sectors.

“We have heard that some of our SOE [state-owned enterprise] clients are digging in and trying to get back to the
previous go-to-the-office traditional work setting that they previously employed,” she says. Pederson believes this is
because “they are highly structured organisations who rely on the structure to get things done”.

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She says that in personality assessments, leaders in these companies often score higher on “tradition” and “security”. “SOE leaders tend to be higher on these values,” she says. “They tend to value doing things the way they always have.” She believes that this makes it harder for companies led by such leaders to change and adapt.

*We can’t say we’re safe*

Not all of China was badly affected by Covid-19 but there were still knock-on effects. He Kunfang, 75, is a retired doctor of traditional Chinese medicine. She lives with her husband in Kunming, in southwestern Yunnan province. “We haven’t been much affected by the virus,” she says. “Food and vegetable supplies are stable. But we used to go swimming three times a week, now we can’t go to the pool.”

**Her daughter, who is in her mid-thirties and usually based in Beijing, is now living with them.** “My daughter is a freelance conference interpreter; her job is affected,” she says. Travel into the country is still heavily restricted and so the international conference business, not to mention tourism, has been hit hard – an after-effect that is being replicated around the world. “She has to pay rent in Beijing as well as other loans, fees and insurance she’s paying on her own.”

**Schools** meanwhile slowly began to resume classes in mid-March after being closed since late January. **With 278 million students, the logistics and timing of this is of huge importance.** It’s being done in stages across provinces, with schools in Hubei province the last to reopen in early May. The same health precautions are being taken in schools as in workplaces with staggered start times, temperature checks, masks and social distancing still in place.

For Yun Tao, who works for a state-owned engineering corporation in Beijing, and her 16-year-old daughter, it hasn’t been easy. “I'm tired of cooking three times a day for my daughter," she says. "In addition to taking care of her life, I also need to spend plenty of time supervising her studying, [and] at the same time deal with my day-to-day job, though I don't feel I'm as productive as when I was at my workplace.”

Yun's only daughter is a first-year student at an international high school in Beijing and has not been at school for over three months. "Online learning due to the lockdown comes with extra difficulties; my kid was not very motivated, and we as parents [have] way more administrative routines than before such as printing handouts, marking daily attendance, solving technical issues, etc. It feels like I don't have any downtime after I've done work and chores," Yun adds. "However, one good thing is that I cook better now than ever before."

Many countries are looking to China to get a sense of what life might be like when stay-at-home restrictions are lifted. But there is still a lot of uncertainty in China and many are anxious as they watch other countries struggle to contain the virus. “We’re still in [the] coronavirus period, not yet post,” says Ariel Zhong, stressing that the endgame of this global pandemic is very much dependent on a worldwide collective effort. “Looking at other countries – [we] can’t say we’re safe... If other countries don’t control it, we will all be affected.”