

THE BLACK DEATH - EVALUATING EVIDENCE

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

DIRECTIONS

Please answer the following questions.

The Black Death occurred in the 14th century and peaked between 1347 and 1350. It spread from Asia throughout Europe and the Mediterranean and killed anywhere from 30-60% of Europe's population.

Suppose you wanted to find out how the Black Death affected just one city in Europe: Florence, Italy. Consider each of the pieces of evidence listed below. In the line provided, write **Y** if you think the source could provide reliable information on the Black Death in Florence, and **N** if you think it cannot provide reliable information. Below each source explain your answer.

_____ A 2011 Hollywood movie starring Leonardo DiCaprio as a young monk in Florence in 1348.

_____ Church records from Florence that list how many people died in 1348.

_____ A history book written in 2008 by a historian who studied medical records in Florence from 1340-1360.

_____ A memoir written in 1398 by someone who lived in Florence during the Black Death, but who was 10 years old in 1348.

_____ A fictional account of a young woman who survived the Black Death in Florence, written by an Italian man in 1360.

THE FLORENTINE CHRONICLE

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

DIRECTIONS

Please read the passage below and answer the following questions.

“[The Black Death] was such a frightful thing that when it got into a house, as was said, no one remained. Frightened people abandoned the house and fled to another. Those in town fled to villages. Physicians could not be found because they had died like the others. And those who could be found wanted **vast** sums in hand before they entered the house. And when they did enter, they checked the pulse with face turned away. . . . Child abandoned the father, husband the wife, wife the husband, one brother the other, one sister the other. In all the city there was nothing to do but to carry the dead to a burial.”

Source: Marchionne di Coppo di Stefano Buonaiuti was born in Florence in 1336 and lived there most his life. He wrote the Florentine Chronicle in the late 1370s and early 1380s.

GLOSSARY

vast
large

QUESTIONS

- (1) When was the Black Death? _____.
- (2) When did di Coppo di Stefano Buonaiuti write the *Florentine Chronicle*? _____.
- (3) What is one reason historians might believe di Coppo di Stefani Buonaiuti’s account of the Black Death?

- (3) What is one reason historians might *not* believe di Coppo di Stefani Buonaiuti’s account of the Black Death?

ASSESSMENT - BLACK DEATH IN FLORENCE

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

DIRECTIONS

Please read the passage below and answer the following questions.

Description of the Black Death in Florence, Italy, in 1348:

“The rags of a poor man who had died of the disease being **strewn** about the open street, two hogs came and . . . took the rags between their teeth and tossed them to and fro . . . almost immediately, they gave a few turns, and fell down dead, as if by poison, upon the rags.”

Source: The passage above comes from The Decameron by Boccaccio. Although Boccaccio was alive in 1348 and witnessed the Black Death, he was not in Florence at the time, and The Decameron is a work of fiction.

GLOSSARY

strewn
scattered

QUESTIONS

(1) Did Boccaccio witness the Black Death?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

(2) What is one reason why Boccaccio’s account of the Black Death is believable?

(3) What is the difference between fiction and nonfiction?

(4) Boccaccio’s account of the Black Death is fictional. Why does this make it less believable?
