Teacher Notes

The Rise and Fall of Medieval Society

Activity 3: The Black Plague

Activity at a Glance

- **Subject:** Social Studies
- **Subject Area:** World History
- **Category:** Middle Ages
- **Topic:** Medieval Society
- **Grade Level:** 9 – 12
- **Prerequisites:** None
- **Total Teaching Time:** 50 minutes – class time; allow students time for research and writing either in class or as homework.

Materials

- TI-84 Plus/TI-83 Plus
- TI External Keyboard
- TI Connectivity Cable
- NoteFolio™ application
- NoteFolio™ AppVar **PLAGUE.8xv**
- Teacher's Reading Guide to Boccaccio's *DeCameron* (optional)

Activity Overview

Students will analyze the cause of the spread of the Black Plague (sometimes referred to as the Black Death) and its historical impact on medieval European society. Students will read an excerpt from Giovanni Boccaccio's *DeCameron* to gain an idea of how life was during the rampage of the Plague. Students will then compare and contrast the epidemic of the Black Plague with the modern-day epidemic of AIDS.

Teachers may use the optional Teacher's Reading Guide to *DeCameron* for background information.

Directions

Before the Activity Begins

1. Develop a coding system for student assignments. The code might be the student number and name of the activity, or the first initial and four letters of the student's last name, in addition to the activity. This coding will allow ease of grading throughout the lesson.

2. Students should be familiar with navigating within the NoteFolio™ application.

3. Guide students through the following websites for research on the Black Plague (or Black Death) and AIDS:

Note: All of these sites were available at the time this activity was produced. You may want to verify that they still exist before providing the list to students.

http://www.byu.edu/ipt/projects/middleages/LifeTimes/Plague.html The Decameron Plague and Public Health in Renaissance Europe

http://www.insecta-inspecta.com/fleas/bdeath/ The Black Death 1347 – 1350

http://www.drguide.mohp.gov.eg/homepage_files/main/News/news1.htm AIDS Worse than Black Death - A comparison between the Black Death and AIDS

http://www.aids.org AIDS.ORG - A non-profit worldwide AIDS organization harnessing the power of the Internet in the battle against HIV

http://www.unaids.org/en/default.asp Joint United Nations Programs on HIV/AIDS - The need for an exceptional response to an unprecedented crisis

4. Download the NoteFolio™ file, **PLAGUE**, to each of the graphing calculators using either the TI Connectivity Cable or the TI-Navigator™ classroom network.

5. Students rename and save their NoteFolio™ answers following the coding, or naming convention, provided by the teacher. The commands for doing this are **File > Save As >** *Type New Name* **> OK**.

During the Activity

Procedure

1. Ask students to open the NoteFolio™ application and file.

   a. Press APPS, scroll until you see **NoteFlio**, and then press Í   . The NoteFolio™ application opens.

   b. Press any key to continue.

c. Press **FILE** (s   key), select **Open**, and
then press Í   . Scroll to **PLAGUE**, and
then press Í   .

```
1:New      ♦N
2:Open... ♦O
3:Save     ♦S
4:Save As...
5:Review ♦R
6:Exit
FILE EDIT WRAP HELP INFO
```

```
         Open...
        CONTRCT2
        CORPLPUN
        HAMMRBI
        PLAGUE
        TALES2
        UTOPIA
   OK              CANCEL
```

```
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Rename and save
this NoteFolio
PLAGUE          MENU
```

2. Ask students to read Boccaccio's excerpt and the information on the Plague within the NoteFolio™ file.

3. Ask students to complete the writing assignment described in the NoteFolio™ file.

4. Ask students to save and rename the NoteFolio™ file to turn in at the end of class. To rename the file, press **File > Save As >** *Type New Name* **> OK**.

Summary

Collect the student NoteFolio™ files using the TI Connectivity Cable or TI-Navigator™ classroom network. Using the NoteFolio™ Plug-in for Microsoft® Word, you may store, edit, print, e-mail, or re-send students' NoteFolio™ files.

After the Activity

Extension Ideas

1. Ask students to fold a sheet of paper in half. On the left hand side, students should write the following:

   "Ring around the rosies, pocket full of posies, ashes, ashes, we all fall down."

   On the right-hand side, students should analyze this nursery rhyme in light of the Black Plague.

2. Invite a local reporter into the classroom to discuss the process of writing a story and help students realize the needs of the media to report the news.

3. Ask students to incorporate into their magazine articles three examples from the medieval period to explain how the Middle Ages led to the birth of the Renaissance.

Teacher's Reading Guide to Boccaccio's DeCameron (optional)

Best known for his *Decameron*, Giovanni Boccaccio was one of the many medieval writers who contributed to the revival of classical literary traditions that would flourish in the Italian Renaissance and later spread to other parts of Europe. Drawn into a circle of court writers around Robert of Anjou, Boccaccio wrote courtly tales of love in Italian verse as well as treatises on history, classical mythology, and geography, in Latin prose. Most of his literary works deal with love and its illusions and delusions, especially faithfulness and treachery. The one hundred stories of the *Decameron* evoke the diversity and energy of fourteenth-century Italy. Boccaccio situates his tales of misadventure within the historical context of the bubonic plague of 1348–1350. Escaping the traumas of the plague, seven young women of good families and three young men establish a sort of alternative society in an estate in Fiesole, where they amuse themselves by telling stories. As it does now, money bought certain privileges in medieval Florence.

Giovanni Boccaccio

Boccaccio was born 1313 in or near Florence, and was a contemporary of Petrarch. He wrote in both Latin and Italian, and his medieval reputation was based at least as much on the Latin works as on the Italian ones. Italian works include the prose romance, *Filocolo*; the verse romance, *Filostrato* (source of Chaucer's *Trolius and Crisede*); the verse epic, *Teseida* (source of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*); the allegorical poem, *Amroroso Visione;* and the romance, *Fiammetta*. Latin works include *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium* (*On the Fates of Famous Men*, *De Claribus Mulieribus* (*Of Famous Women*), *De Genealogiis Deorum Gentilum* (*The Genealogies of the Pagan Gods*).

The Decameron

The *Decameron*, begun in about 1350, has long been Boccaccio's most famous work among general readers. It had an enormous impact on the history of European literature, inspiring the genre of the "novella" and serving as the model for other framed story collections, such as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

The idea behind the *Decameron* is that a group of ten noblepersons, seven women and three men, has left Florence to escape the plague in 1348 and taken up temporary residence in the country. They agree to appoint a "king" for each day and to follow his or her directions, and they further agree that they will each tell a story each day. They spend ten days in the country, and tell 100 stories. On the tenth day, the topic is supposed to be "those who have performed liberal or munificent deeds, whether in the cause of love or otherwise." And the last story of all is the story of Griselda, told by Dioneo. The story of Griselda may have folktale origins. It was translated into Latin by Petrarch, who moralized it as an example of Christian patience, and it became immensely popular in the later Middle Ages, being translated into French, English, as Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale*, and German, for which three or four translations exist.