“The Black Death and Infectious Diseases: An Inquiry Project Incorporating All of the Social Sciences”

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The C3 Framework: “College, Career, and Civic Life”

This 2013 NCSS developed curriculum focuses on developing knowledge and skills via an “Inquiry Arc” that requires developing compelling questions, research, evidence-based claims (not parochial opinions), disciplined thinking, and communication.

The C3 Framework is aligned with the Common Core in Language Arts and Literacy. Thus, collaboration with ELA and other disciplines (art, music, science) is viable and encouraged.

The C3 Framework is interdisciplinary: It can incorporate all of the social sciences, humanities, and STEM disciplines.

The Inquiry Arc has four dimensions:

1. Developing Questions and Planning Investigations: “Students will develop questions as they investigate societal issues, trends, and events.”
2. Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools: “Students will analyze societal issues, trends, and events by applying concepts and tools from civics, economics, geography, and history.”
3. Gathering, Evaluating, and Using Evidence: “Students will work toward conclusions about societal issues, trends, and events by collecting evidence and evaluating its usefulness in developing causal explanations.”
4. Working Collaboratively and Communicating Conclusions: “Students will draw on knowledge and skills to work individually and collaboratively to conclude their investigations into societal issues, trends, and events.” Taking action is crucial to the C3 Inquiry Framework.
The Black Death: Developing a Compelling Question

How did the Black Death (bubonic plague) impact Europe politically, economically, socially, and culturally in the 14th century?

This question reflects a compelling and enduring issue in world history, and students find it an interesting topic for research. Moreover, infectious diseases (smallpox, malaria, yellow fever, influenza HIV/AIDS) have played a major role in history. The study of the Black Death has contemporary implications today (connecting past to present).

Students may have the freedom to take this compelling question in many directions. You may have to guide students in developing supporting questions and direct them to research sources. Beware the Internet!

The WHO, National Geographic, the History Channel and the CDC are excellent resources, as are the books listed in the references for this presentation.
Supporting Questions: STEM

1. Can you explain the Black Death in medical terms?
2. What are the symptoms of the Black Death?
3. What are the effects of the Black Death on the human body?
4. Did the Black Death change the genetic makeup of modern European populations? If so, how?
5. Can you describe how medieval Europeans attempted to treat the Black Death?
6. What are contemporary treatments for the Black Death?
7. Can you explain the differences among the bubonic plague, pneumonic plague, and septicemic plague?
Supporting Questions: History

1. How many people died from the Black Death?
2. How did people in the 14th century respond to the Black Death?
3. Why were Jews blamed and persecuted for the Black Death?
4. How does the mortality rate compare with the 1918 influenza pandemic?
5. What are the similarities and differences between public reaction to the Black Death and the HIV/AIDS pandemic?
6. What caused the Black Death?
The Black Rat
The Triumph of Death, Pieter Bruegel, 1562-1563
Supporting Questions: Economics

1. How did the Black Death impact feudalism?
2. Why did serfs and peasants benefit from high mortality rates?
3. What is the relationship between demography and economic growth?
4. How did the Black Death impact trade among countries?
Supporting Questions: Geography

1. How did the Black Death spread from Asia to Europe?
2. Why were some areas in Europe spared from the Black Death?
3. What role did climate play in the spread and impact of the Black Death?
4. How did the Black Death impact China and India?
5. Can you demonstrate on a map the diffusion of the Black Death in Europe?
6. Can you explain how trade was responsible for the spread of the Black Death from Asia to Europe?
The Bubonic Plague in Europe, 1347-1351
Supporting Questions: Civics/Political Science

1. How did the Black Death impact government in England and Italy?

2. How did the Catholic Church respond to the Black Death?

3. How do pandemics encourage cooperation among countries?

4. What steps have been taken in the United States to prepare for an epidemic or pandemic today?

5. What are the treatments and prevention strategies for bubonic plague today?

6. Why did people lose faith in institutions?

7. How can biological agents, such as \textit{Yersinia pestis}, be transformed into biological weapons?
Supporting Questions: Psychology

1. Can you explain why the Black Death was so devastating for individuals, families, and communities?
2. What was the psychological impact on survivors?
3. Can you describe and explain the different behavioral reactions to the Black Death?
Supporting Questions: Sociology

1. Can you describe how the Black Death impacted different social classes?
2. Why did the Black Death exacerbate anti-Semitism in Europe?
3. What was the impact on marriage and families?
The Dance of Death
A 20 million year old flea carrying an ancient bacteria believed to be an ancestor of *Yersinia pestis*
Procedures for Teachers

1. Divide students into groups of 3-5.
2. Assign each group a discipline (history, STEM, economics, political science, geography, sociology, psychology).
3. Present the compelling and question and assist each group in developing supporting questions.
4. Give students guidance on where to begin their research (you may wish to distribute journal articles, relevant websites, organizations (CDC), and books.
5. Guide their research so they produce a solid piece of empirical research.
6. Each group should present their project to the class (invite adults to attend).
The Final Project

Students could produce:
PowerPoint presentation on any associated issues (with art, music, videos, primary sources, statistics, political cartoons, etc.)
Mock trials (Jews blamed for the bubonic plague, failure of government)
Media coverage of the plague (What if 14th century Europe had social media or television?)
Interviews with survivors
Debates on the causes, consequences, and “treatments” of the plague
Discussion on the plague’s implications for today’s infectious diseases
A medical report on the plague (based on today’s knowledge and technology)
Simulations and role playing (realistic based on empirical data)
Research papers

Your ideas?

Think: How will this C3 Inquiry Project improve students’ knowledge, research skills, writing skills, collaboration, and communication. How will it make them active citizens?
Other Diseases for C3 Inquiry Projects

1. The Great Influenza (by John Barry). The 1918 flu pandemic killed as many as 100 million people in two years.


3. Malaria – kills ca. 2 million annually.

4. Typhus – killed 3 million between 1918-1922. It also killed a large percentage of Napoleon’s army in Russia.

5. Smallpox – The deadliest infectious disease in human history. It killed at least 300 million people in the 20th century alone. Today, it is the only human infectious disease to be eradicated from nature.

All of these diseases have had an enormous impact on history, demography, war, economics, politics, culture, and medicine.

http://www.gohistorygo.com/#!/black-plague-in-europe/c1c4q