

0. SOCIETY BREAKS DOWN - Story Preface

1. HUMAN DEVASTATION

2. WHAT IS BUBONIC PLAGUE?

3. WHAT IS BLACK DEATH?

4. WHERE DID IT ORIGINATE?

5. MEDIEVAL EUROPEANS

6. MEDIEVAL PROFESSIONALS

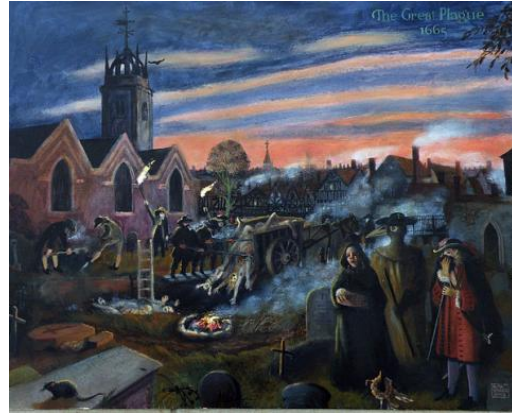
7. PEOPLE FLEE

**8. SOCIETY BREAKS DOWN**

9. SCAPEGOATS

10. LIFE GOES ON

11. WAS IT JUST THE RATS?



Robert Hooke, who lived in England during the seventeenth-century's "Great Plague of London" and drew a close-up of the rat flea since-believed to be responsible for spreading plague at that time, fled the city. Although society did not break down as disastrously as it did during the 14th-century plague outbreak, records show that 68,596 people died of plague in London during 1665. Digitized image of Rita Greer's 2009 painting—"The Great Plague of 1665"—licensed by the Free Art License.

Some people left town altogether and studiously avoided helping the sick. When the Black Death found *them*, their neighbors displayed a similar lack of consideration. Boccaccio's Introduction continues:

*And not all those who adopted these diverse opinions died, nor did they all escape with their lives; on the contrary, many of those who thought this way were falling sick everywhere, and since they had given, when they were healthy, the bad example of avoiding the sick, they, in turn, were abandoned and left to languish away without care.*

Society had fallen apart. Even some parents abandoned their children. Boccaccio is emotional as he describes the breakdown of families:

*The fact was that one citizen avoided another, that almost no one cared for his neighbor, and that relatives rarely or hardly ever visited each other - they stayed far apart. This disaster had struck such fear into the hearts of men and women that brother abandoned brother, uncle abandoned nephew, sister left brother; and very often wife abandoned husband, and - even worse, almost unbelievable - fathers and mothers neglected to tend and care for their children, as if they were not their own. (Decameron, by Boccaccio, page 10.)*

No one was safe. Not in one's home. Not in one's bed. Not in the country. The scourge of the plague (like it would be three hundred years later in London) was everywhere. There weren't enough clerics alive to conduct proper funerals.

The atmosphere was ripe for someone to blame.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/SOCIETY-BREAKS-DOWN-Black-Death)

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### Not Enough Coffins for Plague Victims

Image online, courtesy the [University of Minnesota](#) website.

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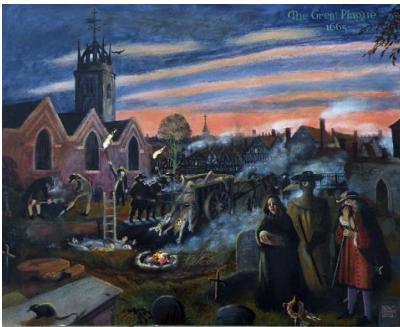
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### Death from Plague

Image online, courtesy the [University of Missouri](#) website.

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