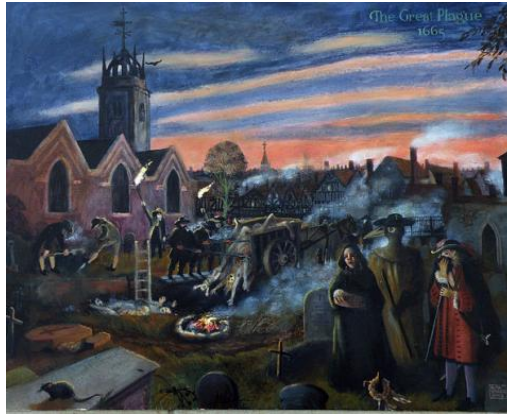




Robert Hooke, an assistant to Robert Boyle (who discovered Boyle's Law), was an inventor who lived in England during the time of the Great Plague of London (1665-66). An extremely talented individual, who invented many objects, Hooke made a microscope with which he discovered "the living cell."

Based on what he observed with his microscope, Hooke wrote a book called Micrographia (which was published in 1665). At the time of publication, Britain was experiencing its last great outbreak of "The Black Death."

Records show that 68,596 people died of plague in London ... in that year alone.

One of Hooke's extraordinary illustrations, in Micrographia, depicts the type of rat flea - Ceratophyllus fasciatus - which scientists believe spread "the plague" during its outbreak in 17th-century London.

Like many others who could afford to do so, Hooke left London when the plague was at its most virulent. Although no surviving portrait of Hooke survives (or was ever created), artist Rita Greer painted her interpretation of what life was like in London when Hooke left.

Greer digitized her 2009 work - entitled "The Great Plague of 1665" - and sent it to the Department of Engineering Science, at Oxford University. It was thereafter placed online. This description is provided for the painting:

Like many who could afford to, Robert Hooke left London for six months during the worst of the bubonic plague. All cats and dogs were destroyed as a preventive measure. This allowed rats to flourish and spread the disease which was carried by their fleas.

The image shows a scene of horror. After sunset carts were driven through the streets to collect the dead. They were taken to the nearest graveyard to be buried in plague pits.

Fires burned to make smoke. Pipes of tobacco were smoked, posies of herbs worn and faces covered with masks. This was thought to be protection against contagion. London was overwhelmed with fear, terror and grief. It is thought that as many as 100,000 perished in London alone.

Plague was not the only disaster that Londoners had to contend with at about this time in history. The Great Fire of London destroyed significant parts of the city in 1666.

Interestingly, however, it was the flames of the Great Fire of London which killed the fleas which were spreading the plague.

Credits:

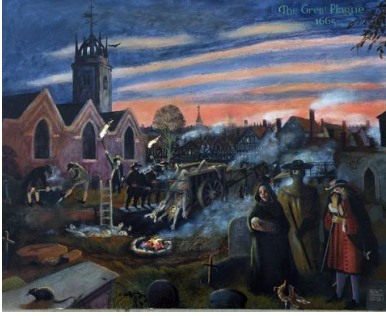
Digitized image of Rita Greer's 2009 painting - "The Great Plague of 1665" - **licensed by the Free Art License.**

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Great-Plague-Fleeing-to-Avoid-the-Illness>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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Great Plague - Fleeing to Avoid the Illness

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