

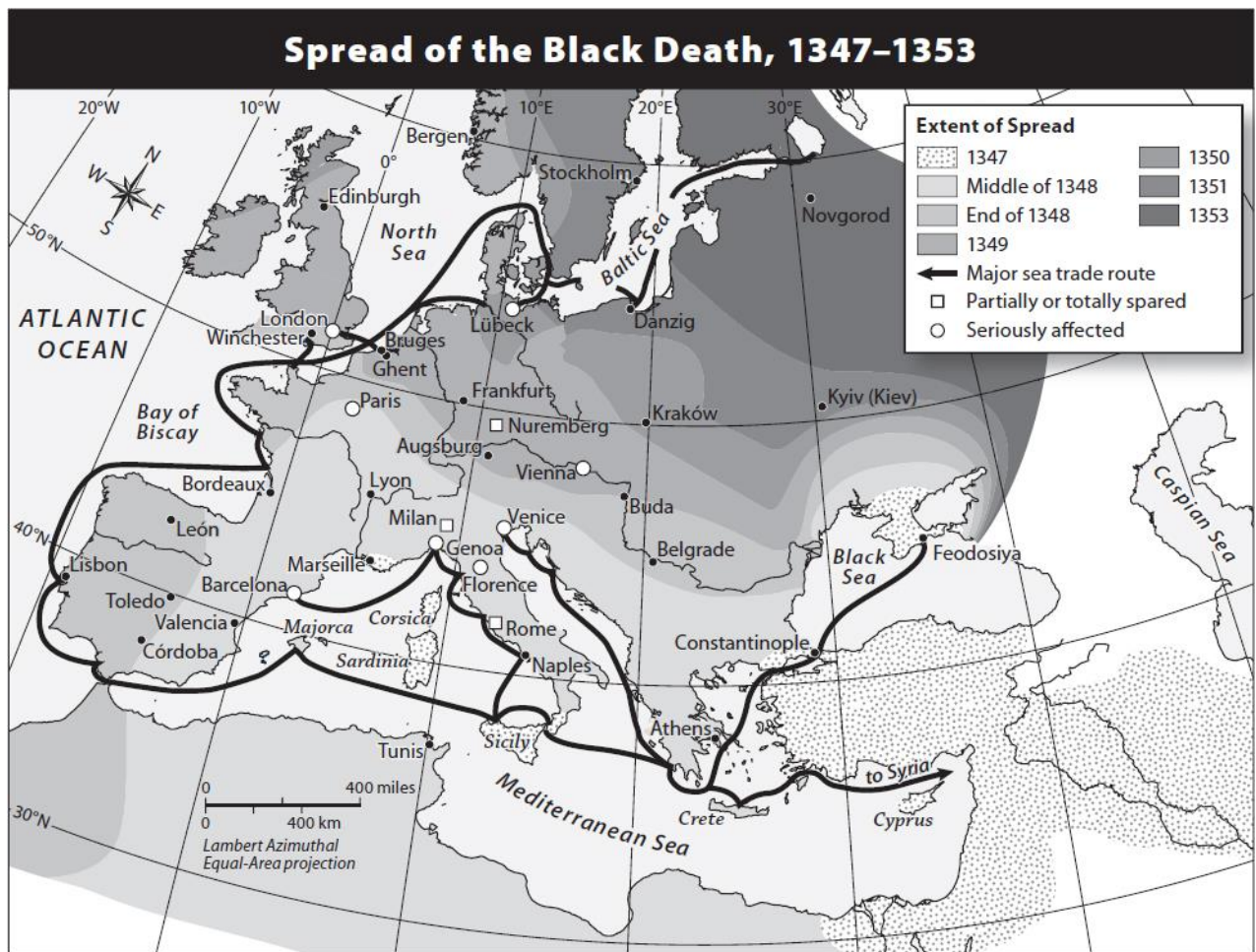
Geography and History Activity



Crusades and Culture in the Middle Ages

The Black Death

Among the things historical geographers study is the way historic events change the environment. **Epidemics** (disease outbreaks that spread quickly among a population) and **pandemics** (epidemics that cover a large geographical area) have devastating effects on human populations, which in turn can adversely affect the physical environment. When the bacterium that caused the Black Death was introduced in Europe, conditions were ripe for an epidemic that soon became a pandemic. If the population had not already been so malnourished because of the earlier Great Famine, people might not have succumbed so easily to the plague. Bad weather conditions had destroyed harvests, and Europeans had been starving for some time. In this weakened condition, people could not resist various diseases, such as pneumonia, bronchitis, and tuberculosis. By the time the Black Death reached the continent, large segments of the population had no chance against it.



Caption: By 1352 the Black Death had spread from the Mediterranean region through Europe and into Russia, killing approximately one-third of the population.

Geography and History Activity *Cont.*



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In geography, the term **movement** refers to the act or process of changing place or position, whether people, goods, or ideas. In the case of the Black Death, this movement originated in China and Central Eurasia. It was transmitted to Europeans by an army that catapulted plague-infested corpses into a Genoese trading post in the Crimea in October 1347. The map shows the **spatial diffusion**, or the outward spread from a smaller to a larger area, that occurred over the next several years. The plague clearly spread along the trade routes in Europe, carried along by the movement of goods and people. The tremendous loss of life resulted in a changed landscape throughout western Europe. The lack of laborers meant that much of the arable land could not be farmed. Many human settlements were abandoned, resulting in deserted villages. In fact, about 1,000 villages were depopulated or totally wiped out by the Black Death. It would not be until the beginning of the sixteenth century that Western Europe's population would not reach its pre-1348 level again until the sixteenth century.

Directions: Answer the questions below in the space provided.

Understanding Concepts

1. **Interpreting** According to the map, where did the Black Death originate in Europe? How did movement affect the outcome?

2. **Explaining** What effect did the Black Death have on the European landscape? Use the term *movement* in your answer.

Geography and History Activity *Cont.*



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3. **Comparing and Contrasting** Complete the following graphic organizer to show how the Black Death spread through Europe from 1347 to 1353, listing one to two cities for each year. The organizer has been started for you.

Movement of the Black Death	
Year	Cities Affected
1347	Feodosiya, Constantinople
1348	
1349	
1350	
1351	
1352	
1353	

Applying Concepts

4. **Analyzing** How did bad weather conditions in the years before the Black Death impact the spread of the disease?

5. **Making Connections** Conditions were ripe for an epidemic that soon became a pandemic. Name another epidemic or pandemic that you know about, and explain the conditions that allowed its spatial diffusion.
