

the cardinals to elect a second pope a few months later. They chose Robert of Geneva, who spoke French. He took the name Clement VII.

Now there were two popes. Each declared the other to be a false pope, excommunicating his rival. The French pope lived in Avignon, while the Italian pope lived in Rome. This began the split in the Church known as the **Great Schism** (SIHZ•uhm), or division.

In 1414, the Council of Constance attempted to end the Great Schism by choosing a single pope. By now, there were a total of three popes: the Avignon pope, the Roman pope, and a third pope elected by an earlier council at Pisa. With the help of the Holy Roman Emperor, the council forced all three popes to resign. In 1417, the Council chose a new pope, Martin V, ending the Great Schism but leaving the papacy greatly weakened.

Scholars Challenge Church Authority The papacy was further challenged by an Englishman named **John Wycliffe** (WIHK•lihfh). He preached that Jesus Christ, not the pope, was the true head of the Church. He was much offended by the worldliness and wealth many clergy displayed. Wycliffe believed that the clergy should own no land or wealth. Wycliffe also taught that the Bible alone—not the pope—was the final authority for Christian life. He helped spread this idea by inspiring an English translation of the New Testament of the Bible.

Influenced by Wycliffe's writings, **Jan Hus**, a professor in Bohemia (now part of the Czech Republic), taught that the authority of the Bible was higher than that of the pope. Hus was excommunicated in 1412. In 1414, he was seized by Church leaders, tried as a heretic, and then burned at the stake in 1415. **A**

▼ This painting, titled *The Triumph of Death*, depicts the effect of the plague.

MAIN IDEA

Contrasting

A According to the different beliefs of the time, what was the true source of religious authority?

The Bubonic Plague Strikes

During the 1300s an epidemic struck parts of Asia, North Africa, and Europe.

Approximately one-third of the population of Europe died of the deadly disease known as the **bubonic plague**. Unlike catastrophes that pull communities together, this epidemic was so terrifying that it ripped apart the very fabric of society. Giovanni Boccaccio, an Italian writer of the time, described its effect:

PRIMARY SOURCE

This scourge had implanted so great a terror in the hearts of men and women that brothers abandoned brothers, uncles their nephews, sisters their brothers, and in many cases wives deserted their husbands. But even worse, . . . fathers and mothers refused to nurse and assist their own children.

GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO, *The Decameron*

Origins and Impact of the Plague The plague began in Asia. Traveling trade routes, it infected parts of Asia, the Muslim world, and Europe. In 1347, a fleet of Genoese merchant ships arrived in Sicily carrying bubonic plague, also known as the Black Death. It got the name because of the purplish or blackish spots it produced on the skin. The disease swept through Italy. From there it followed trade routes to Spain, France, Germany, England, and other parts of Europe and North Africa.



The Bubonic Plague

The bubonic plague, or Black Death, was a killer disease that swept repeatedly through many areas of the world. It wiped out two-thirds of the population in some areas of China, destroyed populations of Muslim towns in Southwest Asia, and then decimated one-third of the European population.

Route of the Plague



- 1 The horse-riding Mongols likely carried infected fleas and rats in their food supplies as they swooped into China.
- 2 The disease came with merchants along the trade routes of Asia to southern Asia, southwest Asia, and Africa.
- 3 In 1345–1346, a Mongol army besieged Kaffa. A year later, Italian merchants returned to Italy, unknowingly bringing the plague with them.

Disease Spreads

Black rats carried fleas that were infested with a bacillus called *Yersinia pestis*. Because people did not bathe, almost all had fleas and lice. In addition, medieval people threw their garbage and sewage into the streets. These unsanitary streets became breeding grounds for more rats. The fleas carried by rats leapt from person to person, thus spreading the bubonic plague with incredible speed.



Patterns of Interaction video series

The Spread of Epidemic Disease: Bubonic Plague and Smallpox

The spread of disease has been a very tragic result of cultures interacting with one another across place and time. Such diseases as smallpox and influenza have killed millions of people, sometimes—as with the Aztecs—virtually destroying civilizations.

Symptoms of the Bubonic Plague


- Painful swellings called buboes (BOO-bohz) in the lymph nodes, particularly those in the armpits and groin
- Sometimes purplish or blackish spots on the skin
- Extremely high fever, chills, delirium, and in most cases, death

Death Tolls, 1300s

Western Europe		20–25 million
China, India, other Asians		25 million
	 = 4 million	



Connect to Today

1. **Hypothesizing** Had people known the cause of the bubonic plague, what might they have done to slow its spread?
 See Skillbuilder Handbook, page R15.
2. **Comparing** What diseases of today might be compared to the bubonic plague? Why?

The bubonic plague took about four years to reach almost every corner of Europe. Some communities escaped unharmed, but in others, approximately two-thirds to three-quarters of those who caught the disease died. Before the bubonic plague ran its course, it killed almost 25 million Europeans and many more millions in Asia and North Africa.

The plague returned every few years, though it never struck as severely as in the first outbreak. However, the periodic attacks further reduced the population.

Effects of the Plague The economic and social effects of the plague were enormous. The old manorial system began to crumble. Some of the changes that occurred included these:

- Town populations fell.
- Trade declined. Prices rose.
- The serfs left the manor in search of better wages.
- Nobles fiercely resisted peasant demands for higher wages, causing peasant revolts in England, France, Italy, and Belgium.
- Jews were blamed for bringing on the plague. All over Europe, Jews were driven from their homes or, worse, massacred.
- The Church suffered a loss of prestige when its prayers failed to stop the onslaught of the bubonic plague and priests abandoned their duties. **B**

The bubonic plague and its aftermath disrupted medieval society, hastening changes that were already in the making. The society of the Middle Ages was collapsing. The century of war between England and France was that society's final death struggle.

The Hundred Years' War

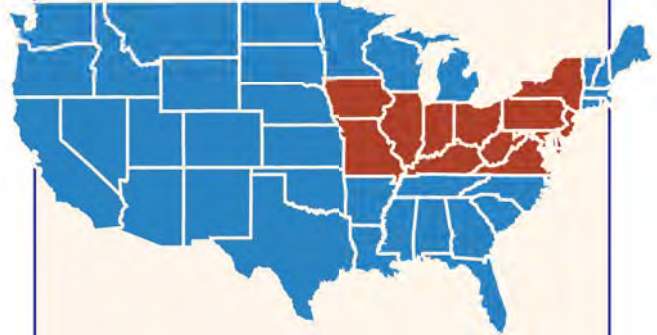
Not only did the people in Europe during the 1300s have to deal with epidemic disease, but they also had to deal with war. England and France battled with each other on French soil for just over a century. The century of war between England and France marked the end of medieval Europe's society.

When the last Capetian king died without a successor, England's Edward III, as grandson of Philip IV, claimed the right to the French throne. The war that Edward III launched for that throne continued on and off from 1337 to 1453. It became known as the **Hundred Years' War**. Victory passed back and forth between the two countries. Finally, between 1421 and 1453, the French rallied and drove the English out of France entirely, except for the port city of Calais.

The Hundred Years' War brought a change in the style of warfare in Europe. At this time some combatants were still operating under medieval ideals of chivalry. They looked with contempt on the common foot soldiers and archers who fought alongside them. This contempt would change as the longbow changed warfare.

If the Plague Struck America Today

The bubonic plague reportedly wiped out about one-third of Europe's population in the 1300s. In the United States today, a one-third death toll would equal over 96 million people, or the number living in the states represented by the color **■**.



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Charts

1. **Clarifying** How many states on the chart would have lost their entire population to the plague?
2. **Drawing Conclusions** How might the chart help explain why many Europeans thought the world was ending?

MAIN IDEA

Recognizing Effects

B Which of the effects of the plague do you think most changed life in the medieval period?