Further Reading: The Black Death

Match the Medieval ideas for what caused the Black Death with the descriptions on the right. Write in your book the number and letter – e.g. 4-H.

You may be able to match more than one letter to the four numbers, e.g. 4-H-I. AND sometimes one letter can be matched to more than one number!

Medieval idea for what caused the Black Death

1. Bad air
2. Person to Person contact
3. The actions of God's enemies
4. God's anger at people's sins

Medieval descriptions of the spread of the Black Death (or 'plague')

a) In 1347, twelve galleys (boats) entered the harbour of Messina (in Sicily, Italy). In their bones the sailors bore so virulent a disease that anyone who only spoke to them was seized by a deadly illness.

b) In 1348 that memorable mortality happened here in Florence. It was sent upon us by the just anger of the almighty. The city was cleansed of much filth, and sickly persons were banned from entering.

c) Jews were burned in Strasbourg in 1349. It was believed that the Jews had caused the plague by poisoning drinking water.

d) In 1345, in China and India, fire fell from heaven and stinking smoke, which slew all that were left of men and beasts. By these winds the whole province was infected.

e) Flagellants whipped themselves in Germany early in 1349. They believed the plague was sent as a punishment for human sin. They were punishing themselves for these sins.

f) 1349. To the Lord Mayor of London. Order to cause the human dung and other filthy lying in the streets to be removed. The city is so foul with the filth from out of the houses that the air is infected and the city poisoned.