

## How did people explain why the Black Death spread?

### **Brian – Peasant**



The Black Death is sweeping across my village. The other day old Cleg down the road died, and his family came soon after. Who knows where it will strike next! If I die my family will have no one to look after them and they will starve or have to beg.

### **Sir John de Caldicot**



The Black Death killed Lord Stephen over in Holt last week. I guess I might be next. Right now, though, I'm more concerned that the Black Death is killing off all my peasants. Who will farm the land if they go? I'll have to get people in from the next county, if they're not dead as well. And the piles of dead bodies on my land are starting to smell.

### **Oliver the Priest**



The Black Death is a warning from God! He is punishing us for our sins! If people don't get better and live their lives according to what God wants then more people are going to die. When the world ends God will judge us all – we should all be afraid of that!

### **Tom the Messenger & Merchant**



I make my money by taking expensive goods all over the world, even as far as Africa. But on one of my ships everyone caught the Black Death and died. Now no one wants to send their expensive goods abroad any more and I'm losing lots of money. If the Black Death does not end soon then I'm going to go out of business!

## Fears and ideas

To medieval people, the Black Death must have seemed like the end of the world. People were desperate. Different people had different ideas about what should be done. Here, people are punishing themselves with whips. This picture shows people whipping themselves in Rome. The Black Death was feared all over Europe.



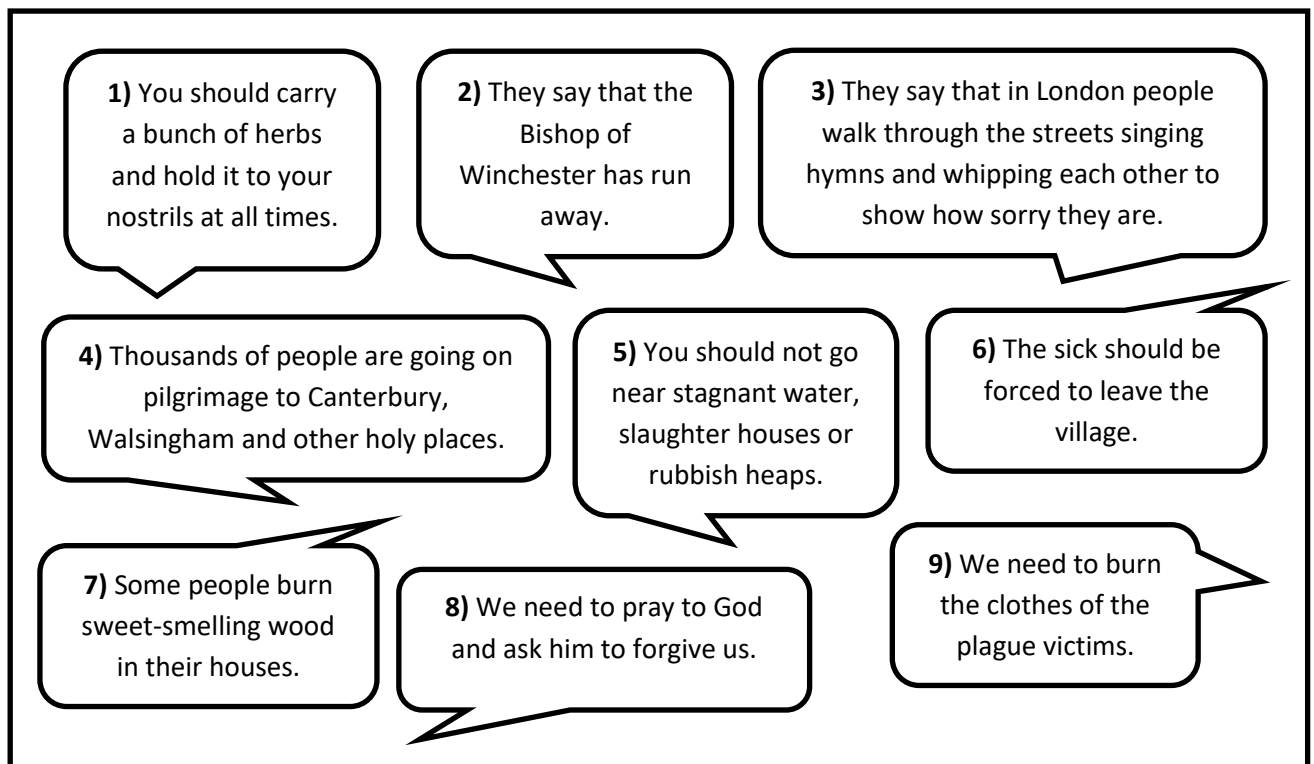
**Question:** Why did people think that by whipping themselves they would make the plague go away?

People usually thought that the plague had been caused by one of three things:

The evil planets of Mars and Saturn have moved closer together. This has turned the air bad. If we breathe in the **bad air**, we will catch the plague

**God** has sent the plague because he is angry with us. We have spent too much time gambling, fighting and drinking.

The plague passes **from person to person**. Plague sores give off a terrible smell. If you breathe this in, you will catch the plague.



**Task:** How did what people *believed* affect what they *did*?

Draw the table below. Write down the things people did (above) in the correct column. Numbers needed only.

Sent by God	Bad Air	Person to Person

**Task:** Now write the second part of your story.

Many people are dying and the villagers meet in the church to decide what to do. What does Brian say at the meeting? Do other people share his views?

**Sentence starters (1349)**

It's got so bad here that **Oliver the Priest** called a meeting in...

After over 10 families died, a meeting was called to...

At the meeting in the Church, **Hum** said...

Then **Will** agreed and said we should also...

I disagreed because I thought we should...

Then **Wat** had this ridiculous idea that people should...

*Other names: Tanwen, Ruth, Slim, Jankin, Howell, Merlin, Lankin...*

**Success Criteria** - Have you described:

- At least TWO reasons why the Black Death spread (according to the people)?