Year 8 History: Cause and Effect in Medieval Europe - Research Task

Explain the factors that contributed to the catastrophe of the Black Death in 1348-9 and summarise its impact on medieval Europe. Use the explanations below to guide your research.

Delve into both books and internet sites. Make notes in your own words and draw or find pictures and symbols to decorate your work.

Origin • Causes • Contributing Factors • Exacerbating Factors

**Fill in the missing words:**
- bacterium
- devastating
- dissection
- exacerbated
- prejudice
- scientific
- Silk Road
- vulnerable

**Cause:** The most direct and obvious cause of the disease was Yersinia Pestis, the __________ that lived on the Black Rat. Find out more about this micro-organism and the three different kinds of plague.

**Origin:** The trade routes from the East allowed the bacteria to be carried westwards from China, where it is believed that the disease was first seen. The power of the Mongols and their conquests had opened up the __________ trade route; the bacterium that caused the plague was one of the travellers.

**Exacerbating Factor:** Poor hygiene in Europe made it easier for the disease to take hold there. These living conditions __________ the situation (this means: made it worse).

**Contributing Factor 1:** The poverty of a large proportion of the population and the hunger the peasants commonly experienced, meant that the plague struck a population that was already __________ and therefore less resistant to the plague.

**Contributing Factor 2:** Another critical factor was the lack of medical knowledge in Christian Europe. The Roman Catholic Church did not allow the __________ of bodies, so knowledge of anatomy was limited. In addition to this, the approach taken by Christian doctors was generally superstitious, unsystematic and ignorant, in contrast to the more ______________ approach of the Islamic doctors, who were scientifically and medically more advanced at this stage.

**The Influence of People's Beliefs:** People tended to jump to conclusions about the cause of the plague. Many assumed that the plague was a punishment from God, while some concluded that bad air (a "miasma") was the cause. Many blamed the Jewish people and persecuted them mercilessly. Ignorance and __________ stopped people from reacting to the plague in a reasonable and effective way.

**Effects • Results • Impacts • Outcomes • Consequences**

**One Impact:** Once the plague had struck, the most obvious and immediate effect was the __________ loss of life. It is believed that about 1/3 of the population in Europe died. In the short term, this led to a period of panic and chaos, with some people choosing to live only for the present, others secluding themselves and many trying to invent and sell remedies that achieved nothing or conceivably made matters worse.

Roslyn Green – Year 8 History – Research Task: Cause and Effect in Medieval Europe
Fill in the missing words below:
Flagellants • hierarchy • hygiene • murderous • persecution • population • serfs • shaken

One Effect: In the towns, attempts at improving ________ shook broke down. The streets became even more filthy.

A Short-Term Effect: The Brotherhood of ___________ fanatics who whipped themselves to pacify God's anger and to show their remorse for their sins, came into being. They walked from town to town and flogged themselves in each town marketplace, whipping up mass hysteria (so to speak).

An Effect with Lasting Consequences: Prejudice against minorities, always stronger in times of anxiety and panic, took the form of ___________ of the Jewish people, who were accused of poisoning wells and causing the plague. The consequent attacks on the Jews were brutal and ___________ and many Jewish communities were forced to flee.

A Long-Term Impact: Since there were fewer labourers to harvest the crops, the Black Death had an impact on the agricultural system and gradually undermined the ___________ of the feudal system. Many bonded labourers (called ___________) began to demand wages. Although the powerful lords fought back against these claims, the ___________ changes placed pressure on the accepted social structure and contributed to its gradual breakdown.

An Influence on Beliefs: Given that the Roman Catholic Church was powerless to prevent the plague and protect sufferers, people’s faith in its doctrine was ___________. The Church remained powerful and dominant, but there was now a question mark over the assertions made by popes and priests.

Key Phrasing
Some key phrases for describing causes:
- The filthy living conditions contributed to…
- The Church’s stance influenced…
- This exacerbated the situation/crisis… (made it worse)
- Ignorance of the cause of the plague led many people to…
- This situation produced…
- Fear and prejudice gave rise to…

Some key phrases for describing effects:
- A consequence of the reduced population was that…
- As a result of the reduced number of labourers, …
- This had a long-term impact on…
- One effect of medical ignorance was that…
- The outcome of the persecution of the Jewish people was that…