Some Beliefs About the Causes of the Plague

Write the letter of each belief beside its corresponding explanation. Refer to pages 308-309 of your text to read more about these ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belief</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a Changes in the heavens</td>
<td>Toxic fumes that people were breathing were assumed to be the cause of the infection.</td>
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<tr>
<td>b Bad air, also sometimes referred to as a “miasma”</td>
<td>Bad odours were believed to trigger infection. People therefore carried sweet-smelling herbs to ward off disease.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c Unpleasant smells</td>
<td>Many people believed that the movements of the planets could trigger changes on earth.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A Plague Doctor’s Garb

Write descriptions on the picture of a plague doctor’s dress below by referring to the description provided at the bottom of page 308. Then fill the spaces in the description below the image.

Gap-Fillers: burning • contracting • herbs • odours • praying • victims

Plague doctors often wore a strange outfit that might well have frightened some sufferers of the disease. Inside their bird-like beaks, the doctors would place sweet-smelling _______ and flowers. They did this in the belief that it would protect them from infectious _______ (smells). By wearing this costume, the doctors hoped to avoid _______ (catching) the plague. In reality, however, they could do very little for the _______ (sufferers) of the plague, apart from _______ (asking God for help) and _______ sufferers’ clothes.
3 Contrasts Between Medical Care in Medieval Europe and Modern Societies

Match the sentences starts about medieval Europe with the sentence ends about modern societies. Each completed sentence refers to a contrast between the two periods. Refer to pages 308-309 for the information on which this exercise is based.

**Medieval Europe**

While no one during that period in history knew of the existence of bacteria,…

Despite having a university education, medieval doctors were largely ignorant of anatomy,…

Poor people then were often treated by monks and healers,…

Bizarre and unscientific remedies were common in those days,…

The operating tools at that time included unhygienic saws, knives and hot irons,…

People simply had to endure the pain of surgery in those days,…

**Modern Societies**

…whereas modern medical professionals have a thorough knowledge of how the human body functions.

…while in most modern societies, all sick people, rich and poor, have access to trained doctors.

whereas now, treatments are based on careful research and evidence.

…but now doctors can use anaesthetics to ensure a pain-free operation can occur.

…modern medical practitioners can identify different types of micro-organisms and offer antibiotic medicines.

…whereas nowadays all implements used in surgery are carefully sterilised.

4 Pointless Remedies

Match up the pictures and the descriptions of remedies below by writing a-e beside the pictures. Which remedy do you think is the most likely to be effective and why?

**Remedy a:** Take a soothing potion. Some potion recipes could well have led to a swifter death. Here is one such dangerous recipe: take one ounce of gold and 11 ounces of quicksilver; dissolve and let the quicksilver escape; add 47 ounces of water and drink.

**Remedy b:** Smell something horrible: work in a hospital, latrine or toilet, where the smells will somehow fortify you against the plague.

**Remedy c:** Open the buboes with a sharp instrument and then apply a substance to draw out the poison. One recipe for such a substance was a plaster made from gum resin, roots of white lilies and dried human excrement.

**Remedy d:** The patient should be bled to release the bad blood.

**Remedy e:** People should seclude themselves from others and keep away from the infected air.

5 Write a paragraph to sum up the differences between medieval and modern medicine. Use the information in Question 3.

Medicine at the Time of the Black Death – Year 8 History – Roslyn Green