

- Some remedies from the Middle Ages are becoming increasingly popular in the world of modern medicine. As gross as it sounds, the use of leeches is one such treatment that is making a comeback! Send members of your class with strong stomachs to the following Web site: [teacher.scholastic.com/researchtools/articlearchives/humanbody/grossmedicine.htm](http://teacher.scholastic.com/researchtools/articlearchives/humanbody/grossmedicine.htm) for more information about this medical trend. Students can then write a radio or television advertisement for doctors using one of these remedies in their medical practices.
- With all this talk of disease, students may want to learn more about the human immune system! Students can research this important system of the body by using resources like Faith Hickman Brynie's *101 Questions About Your Immune System You Felt Defenseless to Answer ... Until Now* (Twenty-First Century Books, 2000) and [www.brainpop.com/health/immune/immune/](http://www.brainpop.com/health/immune/immune/). Using this information, encourage students to create a comic strip that illustrates the process that the immune system undergoes to fight disease.
- Encourage students to read the works of ancient doctors like Hippocrates and Galen, who provided the foundation for the medical beliefs of medieval doctors. (See [www.ea.pvt.k12.pa.us/medant/hyprtxts.htm](http://www.ea.pvt.k12.pa.us/medant/hyprtxts.htm) for links to their works.) Create a Venn diagram that compares these ancient beliefs about medicine and health with today's beliefs.

### Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our Web site at [www.LibraryVideo.com](http://www.LibraryVideo.com)

- **[www.learner.org/exhibits/middleages/health.html](http://www.learner.org/exhibits/middleages/health.html)**  
This Web site about medieval health discusses who was healed and who did the healing during the Middle Ages. Students can also use the "Medieval M.D." link to try to diagnose and cure medieval patients.
- **[www.skell.org/med.htm](http://www.skell.org/med.htm)**  
"Mostly Medieval" is a Web page that presents information about medieval medicine, focusing especially on commonly used medicinal plants and folk remedies of the time. Links to medieval medical texts are also provided.
- **[crusades.boisestate.edu/vpilgrim/intro.htm](http://crusades.boisestate.edu/vpilgrim/intro.htm)**  
This "Virtual Pilgrim" site enables students to learn more about medieval pilgrimages while embarking on a simulated version of one! Pictures and details of the trip make students feel as if they are pilgrims during the Middle Ages.

### Suggested Print Resources

- Altman, Linda J. *Plague and Pestilence: A History of Infectious Disease*. Enslow, Springfield, NJ; 1998.
- Cushman, Karen. *Matilda Bone*. Clarion Books, New York, NY; 2000. This story describes life on "Blood and Bone Alley" in a medieval English village. Information about medieval medicine is provided through the eyes of Matilda, who works as an apprentice to a bonesetter.
- Cushman, Karen. *The Midwife's Apprentice*. Clarion Books, New York, NY; 1995. This fictional account details the experiences of a homeless girl in 14th-century England, who is taken in by a midwife and learns much about medieval midwifery and healing.
- Dunn, John M. *Life During the Black Death*. Lucent Books, San Diego, CA; 2000.

#### TEACHER'S GUIDE

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## THE DOCTOR

This guide is a supplement designed for teachers to use when presenting programs in the video series *Life in the Middle Ages*.

**Before Viewing:** Give students an introduction to the program by relaying aspects of the summary to them. Select pre-viewing discussion questions and vocabulary to provide a focus for students when they view the program.

**After Viewing:** Review the program and vocabulary, and use the follow-up questions and activities to inspire continued discussion. Encourage students to research the topic further with the Internet and print resources provided.



Program Summary

Bloodletting, dried toads and garlic — do these sound like the kind of prescriptions you are likely to get from your physician? Probably not, but these were common treatments for illnesses during the Middle Ages! Medicine was practiced by four main groups of people in medieval times: doctors, barbers, folk healers and members of the Church, like monks and nuns. Doctors during the Middle Ages were often men with university educations who studied ancient medical textbooks. They believed that the human body consisted of four humors and that maintaining a balance of those fluids maintained a person's health. Barbers often performed the surgery that was prescribed by medieval doctors while local folk healers usually prescribed herbal remedies for healing. During the Middle Ages, people also often looked to religion for healing, by praying or embarking on pilgrimages to seek cures for their illnesses. Monks and nuns often formed hospitals in which they cared for sick Christians. Despite these medical options, the Middle Ages was a time of rampant disease, and very little was actually understood about medicine and the functioning of the human body. All of these healers did their best to help those in need, but none was a match for the devastating epidemic known as the Black Death.

Vocabulary

**Middle Ages** — Also known as the medieval period, the time period that stretched roughly from the 5th to the 15th century. The term was coined to describe the era in between the time of ancient Rome and the Renaissance.

**humors** — Fluids in the body that medieval doctors believed caused illness if unbalanced. The four fluids were considered to be blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm.

**barber** — A person during the Middle Ages who not only cut hair, but also performed some of a doctor's functions such as bloodletting, surgery and dentistry.

**penance** — An act, usually involving hard work or suffering, to which people subject themselves to make up for their sins.

**atone** — To make up for. People during the Middle Ages often atoned for their sins by making a pilgrimage.

**pilgrimage** — A journey to a sacred or holy place for the purpose of penance.

**shrine** — A sacred place that often contains holy relics, which are objects that are honored because of their connection with a holy person. People during the Middle Ages often made pilgrimages to holy shrines.

**folk healer** — A person who heals using herbs or other natural remedies.

**astrology** — The study of the influence of stars and planets on people and their health.

**anesthesia** — A loss of sensation, especially of pain, caused by special drugs.

**Black Death** — An epidemic disease that caused a high rate of mortality during the Middle Ages. The Black Death appeared in 1347 in Sicily and continued to recur in Europe until the mid-17th century. Some of the symptoms of the plague were lumps on the skin, dark bruises covering the body and aches and chills.

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**monasteries** — These residences are places where communities of monks vow to live their religious lives. Communities of nuns also often live in monasteries.

**monks** — Religious men dedicated to a simple life devoid of luxuries. Medieval monks were devoted to study, prayer and manual labor, and were forbidden to possess personal property.

**Church** — The organization of believers in the Christian religion.

**Christian** — A person who believes in the religion derived from the life, teachings and death of Jesus Christ.

**nuns** — Religious women who take vows of poverty and service.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- Sanitary conditions were extremely poor during the Middle Ages. Encourage students to speculate what it might have been like to live in a medieval city with overcrowded housing and human waste and trash dumped in the streets.
- The plague called the Black Death spread quickly throughout Europe, killing millions of people. Based upon what students know about germs and disease, have them discuss how it might have been possible for a disease to spread so quickly and fatally.
- Only the rich members of medieval society could afford to see university-trained doctors when they became ill. Students can brainstorm about what the rest of society might have done when they got sick.

Focus Questions

1. Describe a typical medieval doctor and his responsibilities.
2. What were the humors and why were they important according to medieval doctors?
3. How did doctors restore the balance of the humors?
4. Who were the medieval barbers, and what important role did they play in medieval society?
5. What were pilgrimages, and what did they have to do with healing?
6. What was the connection between penance and pilgrimages?
7. Describe the typical medieval folk healer.
8. Why were medieval cities prime locations for disease?
9. What was the Black Death? What were the symptoms?
10. Describe how the plague spread throughout Europe.
11. Why did medieval doctors wear masks when they treated their patients with the plague?
12. What do scientists think caused the Black Death?
13. Describe the hospitals of the Middle Ages.

Follow-up Discussion

- Encourage students to compare the medical practices of the Middle Ages with modern medicine. Do students feel they are more similar or more different? Why?
- Discuss with students how the plague was spread. Encourage students to brainstorm ways that medieval people could have reduced the spread of the disease.
- Compare the training and techniques of the medieval doctor, barber and folk healer. Discuss with students which medical practitioner they would have sought out if they had become ill during the Middle Ages. Students should justify their choices.

Follow-up Activities

- Medieval folk healers relied on the use of herbs to help sick people during this time period. Share selections from a book about herbal remedies written by a 12th-century nun and healer, Hildegard von Bingen, entitled *Hildegard's Healing Plants: From the Medieval Classic Physica* (translated by Bruce W. Hozeski, Beacon Press, 2001). Encourage students to research more about the herbs used by medieval healers and the healing powers of these plants. (See [www.lehigh.edu/~jahb/herbs/herb-handout.htm](http://www.lehigh.edu/~jahb/herbs/herb-handout.htm) for more information.) Students can even extend this activity and grow popular medieval herbs in a classroom garden.
- Scientists today believe that the Black Death was caused by bacteria passed from rats to humans by fleas. Conduct a class research project on disease-causing bacteria. Encourage students to find out what bacteria are, what they do and how we can avoid them. Based upon the information gathered, students can compare the Black Death with other illnesses, like influenza and smallpox. Students can use James Giblin's *When Plague Strikes: The Black Death, Smallpox, AIDS* (HarperCollins, 1995) as a resource.
- Students can imagine they are city planners in the early 1300s. They should design a plan for improving the health and sanitation of a medieval city, to reduce the incidence of disease.
- In 1347, the Black Death appeared in Sicily, Italy. It quickly spread throughout the villages and towns of Europe. Students can act as newspaper reporters in a European town that has not yet been visited by the plague and can compose an article describing its path of death and devastation.
- Encourage students to compose a resume for a medieval doctor, barber or healer. Make sure students include what kinds of things these medical practitioners can do and what training and experience they have.
- Embarking on a pilgrimage was one way for medieval people to seek a cure for an illness. Share selections with your students from *The Ramsay Scallop* by Frances Temple (Orchard Books, 1994), which describes the adventures of a young couple in the 1300s on a religious pilgrimage. Students then can imagine that they are on a pilgrimage and keep a journal that details the trip.

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