THE BLACK DEATH

Vocabulary List: Important terms relating to medieval culture and the Black Death

Artes Moriendi:	The "art of dying," practiced by some people at the time of the Black Death. The goal of this practice was to approach death with a calm and peaceful outlook and to enter the kingdom of heaven.
Black Death:	Same as Black Plague or Bubonic Plague.
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Bubonic Plague:	A deadly bacterial disease of the lymphatic system, often marked by buboes, which are visibly swollen lymph nodes. Because buboes and other parts of the body often take on a dark cast, the plague came to be called the Black Plague or Black Death. Bubonic plague is typically spread through the bite of infected fleas, which are common parasites on rodents. Plague symptoms usually appear within two to ten days after a flea bite, and rapidly progress for three to five days, leading to death. Symptoms include very high fever, headache, aching joints, and toxic shock, due to bacterial toxins within the system. Today, plague can be treated with antibiotics.
Contagion:	Any disease that is spread from one individual to another by either direct or indirect contact.
Epidemic:	Something affecting many people at the same time; refers especially to disease.
Medieval Era:	The period of Western European history between the fall of Rome, around 476 A.D., and the beginning of the Renaissance, around 1450 A.D. Also known as the Middle Ages.
Middle Ages:	Same as the Medieval era.
Pandemic:	An epidemic of disease which extends over a large geographic area. The plague epidemics which occurred throughout much of Europe are good examples of pandemics.
Peasant:	An agricultural worker; a poor country dweller.
Pneumonic Plague:	A form of plague that attacks the lungs and is caused by the same bacterium that causes bubonic plague. The coughing that accompanies this form of plague can spread the disease through the air.
Quarantine:	Originally a 40-day period during which the personnel of a ship suspected of having the plague were obliged to wait before being allowed to go ashore.
Scapegoat:	A person or group that is unjustifiably blamed for something. A scapegoat is the object of a psychological or social need to focus blame.