

▼ **SOURCE 5** Public health in London in the fourteenth century

1 There were open sewers carrying refuse to the rivers.

2 1343 – butchers were ordered to use a segregated area for butchering animals.

3 By the 1380s there were at least thirteen common privies (public toilets) in the city. One on Temple Bridge was built over the Thames.

4 Butchers were put in the **PILLORY** for selling 'putrid, rotten, stinking and abominable meat'. The meat was burnt in front of them.

5 In 1345 the fine for throwing litter in the street was increased to two shillings. In 1372 anyone who had filth outside their house could be fined four shillings. Anyone throwing water from a window was fined two shillings.

6 In 1301 four women butchers were caught throwing rotten blood and offal (animal intestines) into the street.

7 By the 1370s there were at least twelve teams of rakers with horses and carts, removing dung from the streets.

8 In 1364 two women were arrested for throwing rubbish into the street.

9 In 1307 Thomas Scott was fined for assaulting two citizens who complained when he urinated in a lane instead of using the common privy.

■ **ACTIVITY**

1 The events described in the nine boxes are hidden in the picture. Can you find them?

■ **DISCUSS**

- Look at Sources 5 and 6. Choose three of the measures taken and explain how you think they would have made London a healthier place.
- Do Sources 5 and 6 prove that people cared whether their towns were clean? Explain your answer.

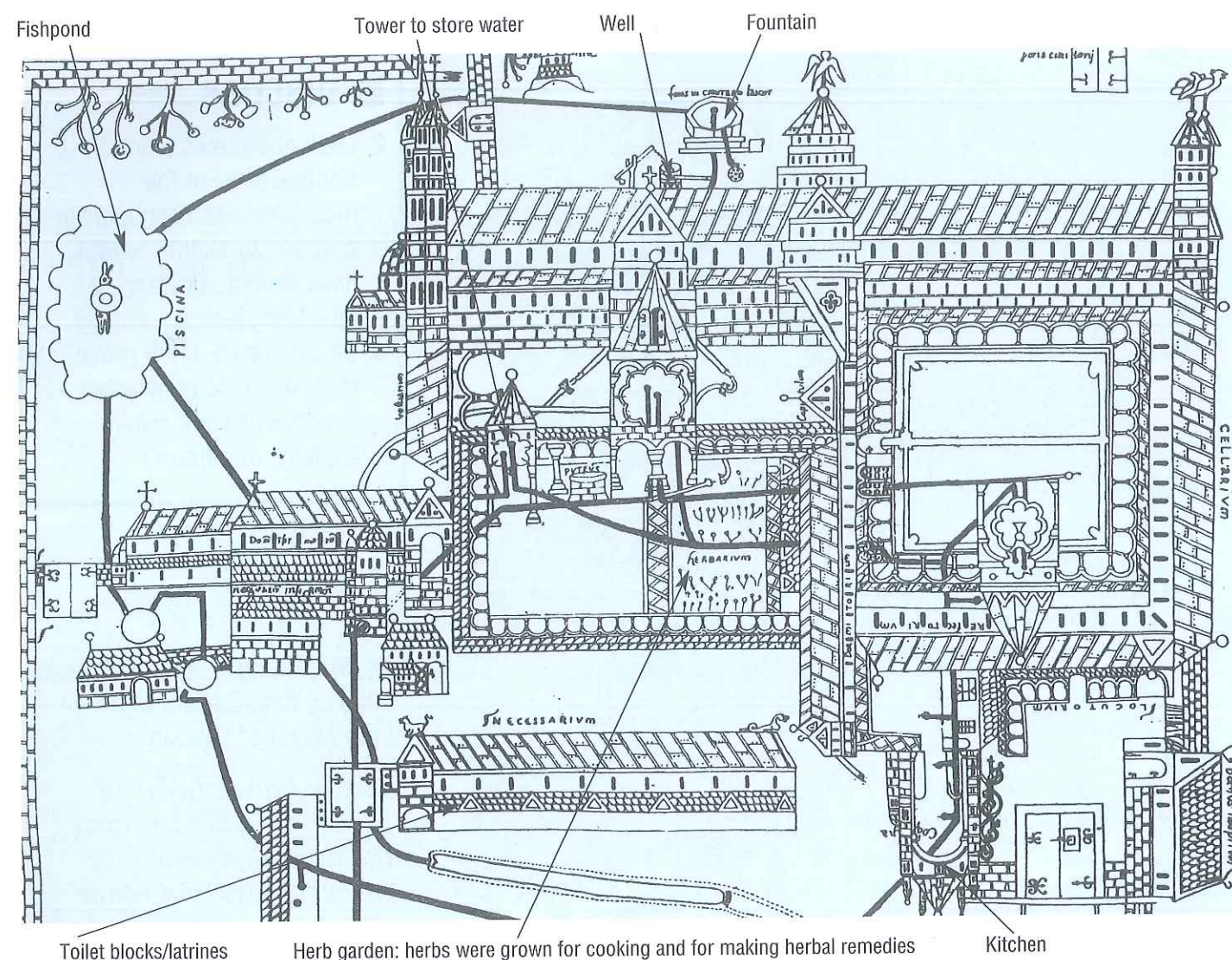
▼ **SOURCE 6** A letter written in 1349 by King Edward III to the Lord Mayor of London

To the Lord Mayor of London. Order to cause the human faeces (excrement) and other filth lying in the streets and lanes in the city and its suburbs to be removed with all speed and the city to be cleaned as it used to be.

The King has learned how the city and suburbs are so foul with filth from the houses that the air is infected and the city poisoned.

▼ **SOURCE 7** A diagram of the water supply to Canterbury Cathedral and monastery. Monks in monasteries taught people that fresh water was vital to good health. Here, water was piped to the kitchen, washrooms, brewery, bakery and fishponds. Waste

water was also recycled to flush the latrines. The Church and its monasteries were very wealthy. They had the money to pay for pipes, fresh water supplies and sewers. This was the nearest anyone came in the Middle Ages to the Roman public health schemes



ACTIVITY 1

- 1 Look at Source 7. Make a list of all the different ways in which monastic life kept its monks fit and healthy.
- 2 What does Source 7 tell you about ideas about public health in the Middle Ages?
- 3 Does Source 7 prove that people in the Middle Ages worked hard to improve public health? Use the source and your background knowledge to explain your answer.

Medicine in the Middle Ages: a summary

Treatments

Most people used herbal remedies. Many of these worked but, if not, there was not much anyone could do – except pray! Surgeons could do simple operations, but there were no safe ANAESTHETICS (pain killers).



Explanations of disease

Nobody understood the true causes of disease. Doctors believed that people became sick when their humours were out of balance. Many ordinary people believed sickness was a punishment from God, or the work of the Devil.



Preventing diseases spreading

Governments made some efforts to keep towns clean. However, they did not have the money or the workforce to build pipes for clean water or for sewers, as the Romans did. More importantly, kings were usually too busy with other things, such as wars or keeping law and order, to spend time and money on public health.



ACTIVITY 2

Work in pairs. Go back in time to interview a medieval doctor.

- 4 Make a list of questions to ask him.
- 5 Swap your list with another pair.
- 6 Answer the other pair's questions as if you were the medieval doctor.

Galen – still the greatest doctor of them all!



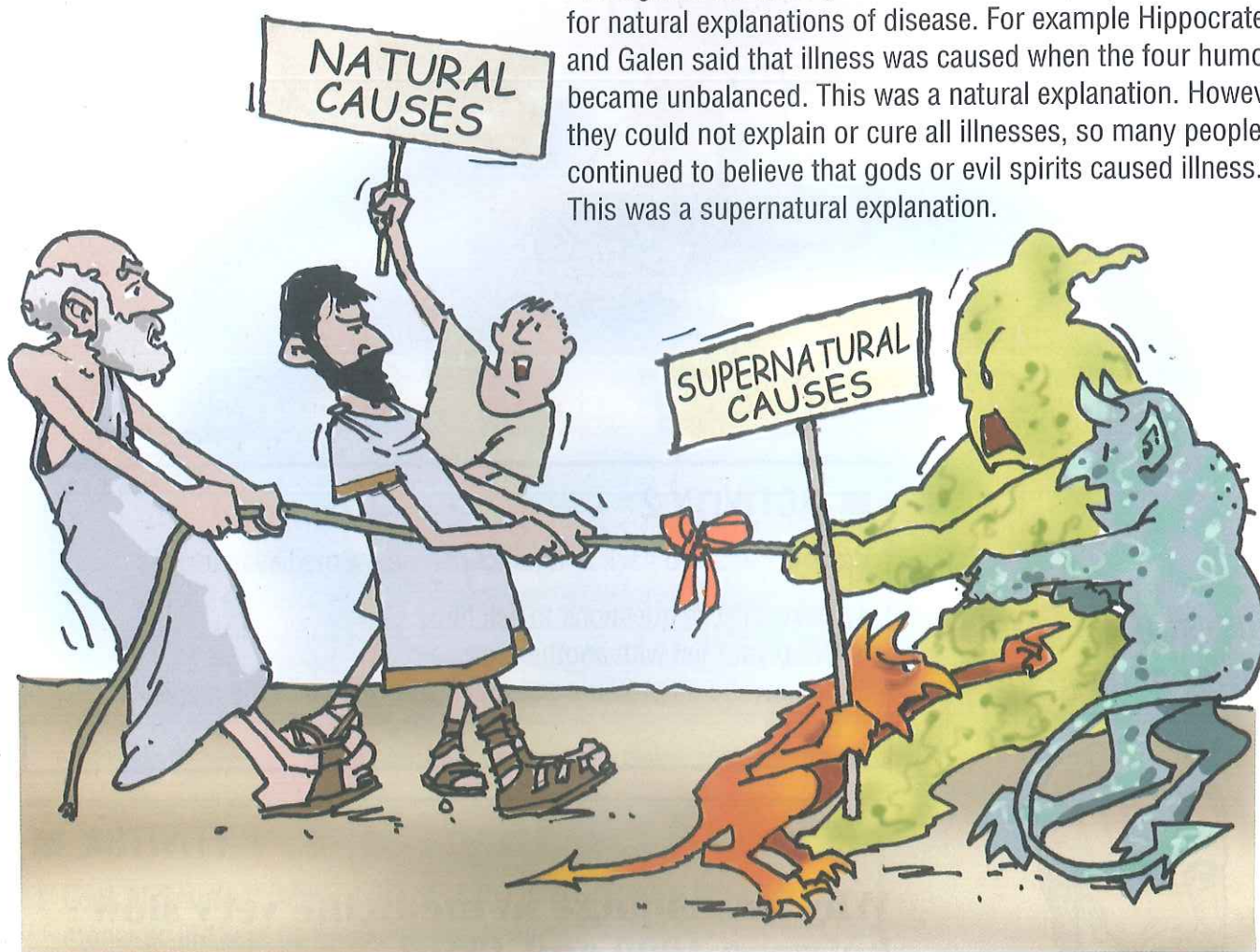
Why was change in medicine very slow between 1000 and 1350?

By 1350 there were some doctors, such as Theodoric (Source 2), who were starting to look for new 'big ideas'. However, most doctors in the Middle Ages did not try to make new discoveries because they believed Galen had all the answers.

2.4 The Black Death – a case study in medieval medicine

In 1348 a terrible disease spread across much of Asia and Europe. In England it was called the Black Death. Over the next four pages you will study the Black Death to find out how people explained it at the time. At the end you will decide whether these explanations of disease in 1350 are similar to or different from the explanations used by the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. You will also practise some important exam skills.

Throughout the history of medicine some people have looked for natural explanations of disease. For example Hippocrates and Galen said that illness was caused when the four humours became unbalanced. This was a natural explanation. However they could not explain or cure all illnesses, so many people continued to believe that gods or evil spirits caused illness. This was a supernatural explanation.



The question you can now investigate is:

Had ideas about the causes of disease changed by the end of the Middle Ages?

What was the Black Death?

In 1348, a ship brought the Black Death to England. Source 1 describes its arrival. Even more people died than the monk thought. Over 40 per cent of the population died during the plague. The Black Death killed rich and poor alike, and it killed swiftly and painfully. The dead were quickly buried in large communal graves.

▼ **SOURCE 1** Written by a monk in Wiltshire in 1350

... the cruel pestilence [plague] arrived on the south coast of England at Melcombe in Dorset. Travelling all over the country it killed people in Dorset, Devon and Somerset. Next it travelled northwards, leaving not a city, a town or a village without killing most or all of the people so that over England a fifth of the men, women and children were carried to burial.



We now know that the Black Death included two kinds of plague:

- **Bubonic plague**, in which painful swelling (buboes) appeared in people's armpits and groin. They got a high fever and headache. They became unconscious and died a few days later in dreadful pain. This type of plague was spread by fleas.
- **Pneumonic plague**, which attacked people's lungs. They coughed up blood and died very quickly. This form of plague was spread by people breathing or coughing germs on to one another. People in the Middle Ages did not know this. Over the page you can find out how they explained the plague.

◀ **SOURCE 2** King Death, a painting from a French prayer book

■ DISCUSS

Look at Source 2. Why do you think death is shown as a king?

What did people in the Middle Ages think caused the Black Death?

ACTIVITY 1

- On these pages you can see six sources and six cartoons. These show different explanations for the Black Death. Match up the sources to the correct cartoons.
- Copy this table and then fill it in, showing which sources give natural and which give supernatural explanations for the Black Death.

Source number	Natural explanations	Supernatural explanations

▼ SOURCE 3 Guy de Chauliac, a famous doctor in the 1300s

The particular cause of the disease in each person was the state of the body – bad digestion, weakness and blockage, and for this reason people died.

▼ SOURCE 4 Guy de Chauliac, a famous doctor in the 1300s

The general cause was the close position of the three great planets, Saturn, Jupiter and Mars. Such a coming together of planets is always a sign of wonderful, terrible or violent things to come.

▼ SOURCE 5 A letter to the Bishop of London, 1348

Terrible is God towards the sons of men ... He often allows plagues, miserable famines, conflicts, wars and other forms of suffering, and uses them to terrify and torment men and so drive out their sins.

▼ SOURCE 6 From an account of the plague by a French doctor, 1349

This epidemic kills almost instantly, as soon as the airy spirit leaving the eyes of the sick man has struck the eye of a healthy bystander looking at him, for then the poisonous nature passes from one eye to the other.

▼ SOURCE 7 From the writings of John of Burgundy, 1365

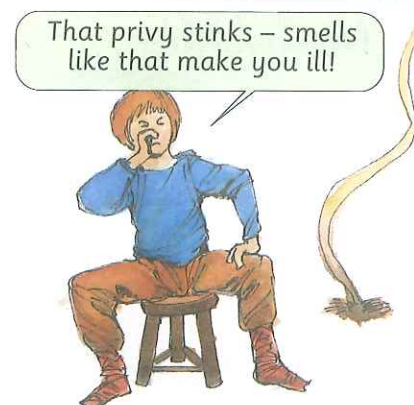
Many people have been killed, especially those stuffed full of evil humours. As Galen says in his book on fevers, the body does not become sick unless it already contains evil humours.

▼ SOURCE 8 From an account by a fifteenth-century Swedish bishop

Sometimes the pestilence comes from a privy [toilet] next to a chamber or any other particular thing which corrupts the air ... sometimes it comes of dead carrion or the corruption of standing waters in ditches.



A The body's humours are out of balance



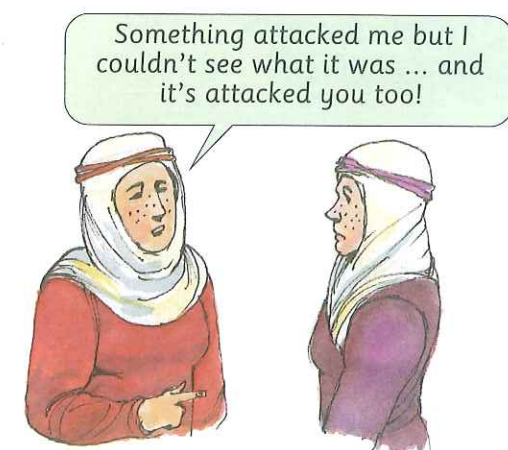
B Common sense reasons



C God's punishment



D Blocked digestive system



E Invisible spirits in the air



F The effects of the planets

DISCUSS

As you discuss the following questions, write down any important points made by people in your class.

- Were ideas about the causes of the Black Death the same as the ideas about disease in ancient times (look back to pages 9 and 16)?
- Why do you think people in 1350 did not understand what caused the Black Death?

ACTIVITY 2

- Use the information on pages 36–53, and any notes that you have made, to help you to write a short essay. Here is the title:

'Ideas about the causes of disease were the same in the Middle Ages as they had been in ancient times.' Do you agree?

This question asks you write about both the similarities AND the differences. Then you must decide whether there were more similarities than differences.

- In paragraph 1 explain what ideas people had about the causes of disease in the ancient world.
- In paragraph 2 give one or more examples of medieval ideas about the causes of disease that were THE SAME as in Greek and Roman times.
- In paragraph 3 give one or more examples of medieval ideas about the causes of disease that were DIFFERENT from Greek and Roman times.
- In your final paragraph write a conclusion stating whether you agree or disagree with the main question. Show that your conclusion is backed up by the evidence you have provided.