

Preparation

- Download “Trade Networks and the Black Death”
- Download “Source Collection—The Black Death”

Purpose

In this activity, you will continue to grapple with cause and consequence and how causal reasoning can be used to help you understand change over time. Causal reasoning can help you develop evidence-based explanations or arguments in response to a causal question that considers human actions, events, and larger structures or processes. You will think about both the causes and consequences of the spread of the Black Death, which will push you from thinking about causation as linear, toward an understanding of the complex relationship between cause and consequence. In addition, by working through the causes and consequences of this pandemic, you’ll begin to understand how, due to an increasingly connected world, the causes and consequences might look similar today.

Practices

Claim testing

Causation requires a great deal of sound reasoning, which is another way of saying claim testing. In order to identify and categorize causes and consequences, you’ll have to use logic, evidence, and (usually) authority to decide if these were long term or short term and if the causes or effects were historically significant.

Process

In this activity, you’ll first identify the factors that may have caused the Black Death to spread so easily. If you need to refresh your memory, review the articles “Trade Networks and the Black Death” and “Source Collection—The Black Death.” Then, you’ll think about the consequences that resulted from the spread of the Black Death and construct a causal map that will help you put all of this into perspective. Historians use causal maps to help them organize historical events or processes. Creating a causal map allows you to see the connections between events over time. In addition, these maps will help you understand that causation is rarely linear.

First, your teacher will either hand out or have you download the Causation—The Black Death worksheet, which includes the Causation Tool. Working together with your class, follow these directions:

1. In the Event box, write the name of the event you’re studying, along with the dates, location, and a brief description.
2. Using what you’ve learned so far in the course about the Black Death, think of all the possible causes that led to the spread of this disease. Your teacher will write these on the board.
3. As you think about the causes listed, decide which should be categorized as long term, intermediate term, or short term. Make sure you’re able to justify your categorizations.
4. Write each cause in the appropriate box of the worksheet (long term, intermediate term, and short term).



CAUSATION—THE BLACK DEATH

We'll get to the other parts of the tool later in the course. For now, categorizing by time will be a sufficient way to understand these causes.

Now, your teacher will assign you to a small group. Look at the causal map for the spread of the Black Death. Think about these questions as you review the map:

- Are all the causes that were written on the board included in this causal map?
- Would you have organized this causal map differently? If so, how?

Working with your group, try to think of all the possible consequences (effects) of the Black Death and add them to your tool. Then, add those effects to your causal map. Fill in the causes circles on the map and add at least three more circles for effects. Next, label your causal maps. For each circle that's a cause, write the letter "C" next to it. For consequences/effects, write the letter "E" next to those circles.

Once you're done, be ready to discuss what you labeled as causes or consequences, and which of those are the most historically significant. You can determine historical significance in several ways. Use the acronym ADE to help you determine if historical events or processes, in this case the causes and consequences of the Black Death, were significant.

- **Amount**—How many people's lives were affected by the cause/effect?
- **Depth**—Were people living in the time period being studied deeply affected by the cause/effect?
- **Endurance**—Were the changes people experienced as a result of this cause/effect long-lasting and/or recurring?

Your teacher will collect your worksheets and use them to assess how your causation skills are progressing.

Causation Tool

Directions: First, add the event you are analyzing (in the middle of the page). Be sure to include dates, location, and a brief description of the event. Then, list your causes (at the top of the page) and use the legend to help you label *type* and *role*. Finally, list the effects of the event (bottom of page), and again use the legend to help you label *type* and *role*. If your teacher asks you to create a causal map, use your answers here to help construct that causal representation.

Causes: Long-Term

Intermediate-Term

Short-Term

Event (include the name, dates, location, and a brief description)

Effects

Legend

Type:

(P) Political (I) Innovation (\$) Economic (C) Cultural (E) Environmental (S) Social

Role:

(*) Triggering Event Necessary Relevant

Sample Causal Map: The Black Death

This sample causal map covers many of the causes of the Black Death but not necessarily all of them. In addition, the causes could be linked in different ways.

