

## ASSESSMENT – BLACK DEATH IN FLORENCE

**Task A – Discuss with a partner:**

- What is the difference between fiction and non-fiction?
- What makes a text reliable?

**Task B – Evaluating Evidence**

You and your friend want to find out how the Black Death affected the people of a European city in the year 1348. Let's choose **Florence in Italy** because it was one of the cities where most people died. Have a look at the following examples (1-5) and say if you think the source could provide reliable information on the Black Death in Florence. Give reasons for your opinion (Yes, because ... / No, because ...).

- 1) A 2018 Hollywood movie about a young monk in Florence in 1348.

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- 2) Church records that list how many people died in that year.

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- 3) A history book written in 2020 by a historian who studied medical records in Florence from 1340-1360.

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- 4) A memoir written in 1398 by someone who lived in Florence during the Black Death, but who was 10 years old in 1348.

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- 5) A fictional account of a young woman who survived the Black Death in Florence, written by an Italian man in 1490.

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name: \_\_\_\_\_

date: \_\_\_\_\_



## ASSESSMENT – BLACK DEATH IN FLORENCE

### M2 The Florentine chronicle

*Marchionne di Coppo di Stefano Buonaiuti was born in Florence in 1336 and lived there most his life. He wrote the Florentine Chronicle between around 1378 and 1386.*

“[The Black Death] was such a frightful thing that when it got into a house, as was said, no one remained. Frightened people abandoned the house and fled to another. Those in town fled to villages. Physicians could not be found because they had died like the others. And those who could be found wanted vast sums in hand before they entered the house. And when they did enter, they checked the pulse with face turned away. . . . Child abandoned the father, husband the wife, wife the husband, one brother the other, one sister the other. In all the city there was nothing to do but to carry the dead to a burial.”

*di Coppo di Stefano Buonaiuti, M. (n.d.). Florentine chronicle (J. Usher, Trans.). (Original work published ca. 1370-1380).*

Retrieved from

[http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian\\_Studies/dweb/plague/perspectives/marchionne.php](http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/plague/perspectives/marchionne.php)

### My glossary

*frightful = horrible, scary*

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### Tasks on M2

1) Note down when Marchionne di Coppo di Stefano Buonaiuti wrote the Florentine chronicle.

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2) Mark any unknown word and look it up in an (online) dictionary. There is one example here.

3) Describe in your own words what the chronicler reports about the plague in Florence.

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4) Give reasons why historians might believe di Coppo di Stefani Buonaiuti’s account of the Black Death. Provide at least one reason.

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5) Give reasons why historians might not believe di Coppo di Stefani Buonaiuti’s account of the Black Death. Provide at least one reason.

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## ASSESSMENT – BLACK DEATH IN FLORENCE

**M3 The Decameron**

*The passage below comes from The Decameron by Boccaccio. Boccaccio was born in Florence in 1313. In 1348 he was not in Florence. However, his parents were there at the time and he witnessed the disease somewhere else.*

Description of the Black Death in Florence, Italy, in 1348:

“The rags of a poor man who had died of the disease being strewn about the open street, two hogs came and . . . took the rags between their teeth and tossed them to and fro . . . almost immediately, they gave a few turns, and fell down dead, as if by poison, upon the rags. . . . It was the common practice of most of the neighbors, . . . to drag the corpses out of the houses with their own hands, aided, perhaps, by a porter, if a porter was to be had, and to lay them in front of the doors, where any one who made the round might have seen, especially in the morning, more of them than he could count”

*Boccaccio, G. (1921). The decameron (J. M. Rigg, Trans.). London: David Campbell. (Original work published ca. 1353.*

*Retrieved from <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/boccaccio2.asp>*

**My glossary**

witness = hier: miterleben

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**Tasks on M3**

1) Decide: Was Boccaccio an eyewitness, an earwitness or neither of these?

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2) Mark any unknown word and look it up in an (online) dictionary. There is one example here.

3) Give reasons why Boccaccio’s account of the Black Death is believable.

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4) Describe in your own words what the writer tells us about the pandemic in Florence.

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5) The Decameron is a work of fiction. It is a collection of short stories told by a group of seven young women and three young men who shelter in a secluded villa just outside Florence to escape the Black Death. Decide and give reasons if that makes the description less believable.

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**ASSESSMENT – BLACK DEATH IN FLORENCE****Reactions**

When the Black Death struck Europe, society didn't know how to treat it. A lot of the treatments were nonsense and made patients even worse. Here are some examples:

- Some mixed vinegar with garlic, herbs, and spices in the hope they would improve the smell of the infected air and the corpses.
- Bloodletting was a common medical procedure. The blood would be drained into a bowl directly from the patient's vein, usually one found in the forearm or the neck.
- Leeches were also used to draw 'bad' blood out of the patient.

However, as no doctor, no medicine and no medical treatment seemed to help, people soon had their own ways of coping with the pandemic. A lot of people thought that God had sent the Black Death as a punishment for their sins.

- Therefore, some tried to stop the disease by whipping their bodies to punish themselves.
- Others tried to escape the disease by fleeing to the countryside or shutting themselves up and thus avoiding the sick and infected people.

**Task: Imagine you are able to travel back in time to the year 1348. Since the Covid 19-pandemic you have become an expert on effective ways of keeping a disease under control or even curing it. Write a short statement about the common reactions used in the Middle Ages. Give tips about what really helps to reduce the spread of the virus.**

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## ASSESSMENT – BLACK DEATH IN FLORENCE

### Differenzierungsmöglichkeiten zu M2/Frage 3

#### Alternative 1 (Mediation)

- 3) Gib kurz in eigenen Worten wieder, was der Chronist über die Pest in Florenz berichtet.

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#### Alternative 2 (True/false)

- 3) Read the source again. Are sentences 1-3 'True' (T) or 'False' (F)? Tick the correct answer and underline the corresponding passages in the text to justify your answer.

	T	F
1 When the Black Death entered a house, everyone tried to stay inside.		
2 Doctors were hard to find because many of them had also died.		
3 Families were separated.		

### Differenzierungsmöglichkeiten zu M3/Frage 4

#### Alternative 1 (Mediation)

- 4) Gib kurz in eigenen Worten wieder, was der Schreiber über die Pandemie in Florenz berichtet.

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#### Alternative 2 (True/false)

- 4) Read the source again. Are sentences 1-2 'True' (T) or 'False' (F)? Tick the correct answer and underline the corresponding passages in the text to justify your answer.

	T	F
1 Two pigs played with the clothing of a man who had died and died soon after.		
2 People tried to keep the dead bodies in their houses to hide them from others		