

## **ENGLISH: YEAR OF WONDERS**

### **'Year of Wonders': Historical and Social Context**

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#### **Internet research task**

#### **'THE BLACK PLAGUE'**

**1. Why was the plague known as 'the black death'?**

Death thrust itself on the city of London in the form of plague. People called it the Black Death, black for the colour of the tell-tale lumps that foretold its presence in a victim's body, and death for the inevitable result.

**2. How was the plague carried?**

The plague germs were carried by fleas which lived as parasites on rats.

**3. Where did the rich flee to, and why?**

The nobility left the city for their estates in the country. They were followed by the merchants, and the lawyers. The Inns of Court were deserted. Most of the clergy suddenly decided they could best minister to their flocks from far, far away. The College of Surgeons fled to the country, which did not stop several of its members from writing learned papers about the disease they had been at such pains to avoid. The court moved to Hampton Court Palace.

**4. What was the sad irony of killing many thousands of killing cats and dogs in London?**

The real effect of this was that there were fewer natural enemies of the rats who carried the plague fleas, so the germs spread more rapidly.

**5. How many Londoners are estimated to have died in the plague by 1666?**

The best guess is that over 100,000 people perished in and around London, though the figure may have been much higher.

**6. How many villagers are believed to have survived the real quarantine of Eyam?**

The villagers, led by their courageous clergyman, realized that the only way to stop the spread of the plague to surrounding villages was to voluntarily quarantine the village, refusing to leave until the plague had run its course. This they did, though the cost was 259 dead out of a total of 292 inhabitants.

#### **'THE ENGLISH RESTORATION PERIOD'**

**7. What is the restoration? What major conflict did it follow?**

The restoration is the time when the English monarchy was put back in place. This followed a time of ruling of Parliament who was in control, but the real power lay with Cromwell and the army. It was just as well that the army was still standing, for Charles' son landed in Scotland, had himself declared Charles II, and invaded England. He was defeated by Cromwell at Worcester (1650) and forced to hide in a tree to avoid capture, before successfully fleeing to France.

Eventually the conflict between Cromwell and Parliament came to a head with Cromwell establishing the Protectorate (1653-58). This was essentially a monarchy by another name, with Cromwell at its head. His rule was a time of rigid social and religious laws on radical Protestant lines.

**8. What were some of the conditions upon King Charles in order for the restoration to take place?**

In 1660 Parliament offered to restore the monarchy if Charles would agree to concessions for religious toleration and a general amnesty. Charles was not as hard-headed as his father, and he agreed to the proposals. He returned to London on a wave of popular support to be crowned Charles II (1660-85).

**9. The restoration was notable for some changes. Name some.**

The Restoration was notable for a relaxation of the strict Puritan morality of the previous decades. Theatre, sports, and dancing were revived.

## **THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT**

**10. What time period is the Age of Enlightenment considered to have covered?**

The Age of Enlightenment, sometimes called the Age of Reason, refers to the time of the guiding intellectual movement, called The Enlightenment. It covers about a century and a half in Europe, beginning with the publication of Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum* (1620) and ending with Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). From the perspective of socio-political phenomena, the period is considered to have begun with the close of the Thirty Years' War (1648) and ended with the French Revolution (1789).

**11. What were the main arguments of Enlightenment thinkers?**

Emboldened by the revolution in physics commenced by Newtonian kinematics, Enlightenment thinkers argued that reason could free humankind from superstition and religious authoritarianism that had brought suffering and death to millions in religious wars. Also, the wide availability of knowledge was made possible through the production of encyclopedias, serving the Enlightenment cause of educating the human race.

**12. What was the meaning of the Enlightenment motto 'Sapere aude!' and why do you think this came to be?**

This motto meant 'Dare to know!' This potentially came to be due to the emphasis on attaining the knowledge and rationalist mentality of the Enlightenment thinkers. It reinforces the persuasiveness of Enlightenment thinkers and their daring people to gain confidence in reason.