

Integrated Task

MODEL TASK 10 (MODEL TESTS, INTEGRATED TASK 4, page 215)

The author asserts that the bubonic plague originated in China during the Middle Ages and disappeared in the seventeenth century. The speaker, on the other hand, explains that the plague may actually have originated in ancient Egypt and that outbreaks still occur today.

According to the author, the worst outbreak of the bubonic plague occurred in the 1300s. The disease started in China and was transported to other parts of the world by rats. The rats carried disease-ridden fleas onto ships. The plague arrived in Europe through Italy in 1347. Over the next five years, it killed 25 million people in Europe and 75 million people worldwide. This led to a breakdown of the social order. The plague continued to recur every generation until the seventeenth century, when it disappeared.

The speaker presents a different theory of the origins of the bubonic plague. She describes the work of an archeologist who found evidence of the plague in ancient Egypt. The archeologist found the remains of fleas at the site of an ancient village. The archeologist then turned up evidence that ancient Egyptians had experienced epidemics which may have been the bubonic plague. The speaker says that rats may have carried the disease from Africa to Europe on ships. She also points out that the bubonic plague has not disappeared. There are still several thousand new cases reported around the world every year.



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(female speaker)

It's widely accepted that the bubonic plague, which devastated the world in the fourteenth century, originated in Asia. There is new evidence, however, that suggests that it may actually have started in North Africa. Outbreaks of the plague still occur in Africa today.

An archeologist discovered evidence of the plague in ancient Egypt accidentally. She was studying insect fossils at the site of an ancient village when she came across human and cat flea remains. According to the archeologist, insect remains can tell us a great deal about how people lived in the past. For example, the remains can give clues about what kinds of animals people kept. In the case of the flea remains, she knew this meant that the plague could have been present in the ancient village. Previous research had turned up evidence of rats living along the Nile River as long ago as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries B.C. Those rats are known carriers of the type of flea that carries the bubonic plague. Many ancient towns and cities were built along the Nile River. Periodic flooding in the area would have driven rats out of their natural homes and into human settlements—an ideal scenario for spreading plague among human communities. Further research brought up evidence that ancient Egyptians had suffered epidemics of a disease that seemed remarkably similar to the bubonic plague. The archeologist suggests that the plague was transported to Europe by rats that carried plague-ridden fleas onto ships crossing the Mediterranean Sea.

The bubonic plague is not only a disease of the ancient world or the Middle Ages. Contrary to popular belief, it did not disappear in the seventeenth century, but still occurs today. In Madagascar, for example, between 500 and 2,000 new cases of the disease are reported each year. According to the World Health Organization, every year there are as many as 3,000 new cases of the plague worldwide. Scientists continue to study the disease. Research on epidemics both past and present help scientists understand how epidemics spread and may help predict when new outbreaks will occur. There are still many mysteries surrounding the bubonic plague. It can disappear for years, or even centuries, then reappear suddenly, and just as suddenly disappear again. Scientists have a great deal to learn about this disease.