

**Describe how the Black Death was caught & how it spread across Europe & particularly into Britain [20 marks]**

**SYK paragraph**

In June 1348 a ship docked at Melcombe Regis on the Dorset Coast. On board was a sailor suffering from the symptoms of a disease that was spreading rapidly across Europe. The Black Death had reached England and within two years it would kill nearly 1.5 million people.

**SWYG paragraph**

This outbreak of Black Death originated in China in the around 1335. The plague then spread across Asia through overland trade routes (spice road) as well as by advancing Mongol armies. The plague then entered Europe through overland trade routes but also via ships from Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea ports.

**Paragraph 1**

Traditionally, Melcombe Regis has been the entry point of the Black Death. Realistically it is likely that the ships carrying the Black rat and infected sailors docked at ports along the south coast such as Bristol throughout June 1348. These ports were busy trade centres and merchants from towns would travel to buy products. At the ports the merchants would become infected or pick up cargo in which was hiding either black rats or the disease carrying flea. As the disease took a week to take hold, the merchant would be home when he fell ill. Thus the plague spread rapidly to other areas of Britain.

**Paragraph 2**

There were three types of plague that affected Britain from 1348 -1351. The most common was bubonic plague caused when a human was bitten by a rat flea carrying the bacterium. The second, pneumonic plague could be spread from human to human through coughing and sneezing or inhaling the dried faeces of infected fleas. This was less common was far deadlier. The third and least common but deadliest variant was septicaemic plague spread through touch of infected objects.

**Paragraph 3**

The rapid spread of the disease was also help by other factors. Firstly, people at the time had no idea what caused the plague and their attempts to prevent and cure the disease often made matters worse. Crowded, unhygienic living conditions also provided an ideal environment for the disease to thrive. Finally, climatic conditions favoured the disease. The temperature and humidity during the summer of 1348 allowed the disease to take a rapid hold on Britain.

**Conclusion/summary**

Plague was nothing new to Britain but this outbreak would make its mark in British history. Britain would never be the same.