

Mir, Braden – Period 5

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The Bubonic Plague and COVID-19

COVID-19 was the first serious global pandemic since the Spanish flu. Even though COVID-19 was not as deadly as the Spanish flu, the bubonic plague, also known as the Black Plague, was way deadlier than both these diseases. The Black Plague was the deadliest disease in history. The plague has the highest death count and can't even be compared to COVID-19. Not only did the Black Plague have the highest death count, but the plague and COVID-19 both had an impact on trade. The Black Plague and COVID-19 also had their own effect on the economy.

First of all, the Black Plague has the highest death count compared to COVID-19. The plague killed about 25 million people, which turned out to be almost a third of Europe's population.¹ COVID-19 has only killed around 6.53 million people worldwide.² The Black Plague was mostly spread by the bite of an infected flea or rodent. When people were bitten by something infected, one of the symptoms that occurred were blood and pus coming out of weird pustules on the body. This was followed by many other symptoms like fever, chills, vomiting, and diarrhea and then would usually result in death.³ COVID-19 would spread when an infected person breathes out small particles that contain the virus. These particles can be breathed in by other people or land somewhere on their body. They are also able to contaminate surfaces that they touch. So, the reason that the Black Plague spread and killed so many more people than COVID-19 is because of how the fleas and rodents that were

¹ <https://www.nationalgeographic.com>

² <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/coronavirus-death-toll/>

³ <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-ages/black-death>

carrying the disease were attracted to the food supplies, which contaminated the people that ingested the infected food and then spread it to other people and so on.

Second of all, both the Black Plague and COVID-19 had an impact on trade. Since it was very difficult during the Black Plague to obtain goods through trade, the prices of goods produced in Europe went up. Another effect of the plague was the disturbance of the demand for goods. The cities that were hit with the plague got smaller, which led to a decrease in demand for goods, as well as services. Eventually, laborers were able to demand for higher wages. The destruction that was caused by the Black Plague led to many declines in trade all over Africa, Asia, and Europe.⁴ In 2020, trade in services declined because of COVID-19. They started to recover at a slower pace than the goods could be traded. Because of COVID-19, travel and tourism trade services dropped, but trade in technology increasingly went up.⁵

Finally, COVID-19 and the Black Plague had their own effect on the economy. The effect that the COVID-19 pandemic put on the global economy was huge. It has been estimated that the median global GDP dropped by 3.9% from 2019 to 2020, which makes it the biggest economic drop since the Great Depression.⁶ Because of the spread of the Black Plague, the economy went through extreme and unexpected inflation in European society. After a few years when the plague began to die down, 10% of the population lost their hold

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<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/world-history/medieval-times/disease-and-demography/a/disease-and-demography>

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<https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/international-trade-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-big-shifts-and-uncertainty-d1131663/>

⁶ <https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/issue-brief/economic-impact-of-covid-19-on-pepfar-countries/>

on 15% and 20% of their overall wealth. This decline lasted a long time, as the 10% did not reach the wealth they had before the Black Plague outbreak until many years later.⁷

In conclusion, the Black Plague affected the world badly in so many different ways that it makes COVID-19 look like a smaller pandemic, compared to the plague. COVID-19 and the Black Plague may have killed millions of people, but the plague has taken way more lives than COVID-19 has. And if taking lives wasn't enough, both the plague and COVID-19 had a massive impact on trade. To tie it all together, COVID-19 and the Black Plague both had many effects on the economy. This argument matters because it shows that the Black Plague had so many consequences to society that are unlike the consequences of COVID-19.

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<https://www.historyandpolicy.org/policy-papers/papers/the-economic-consequences-of-plague-lessons-for-the-age-of-covid-19>