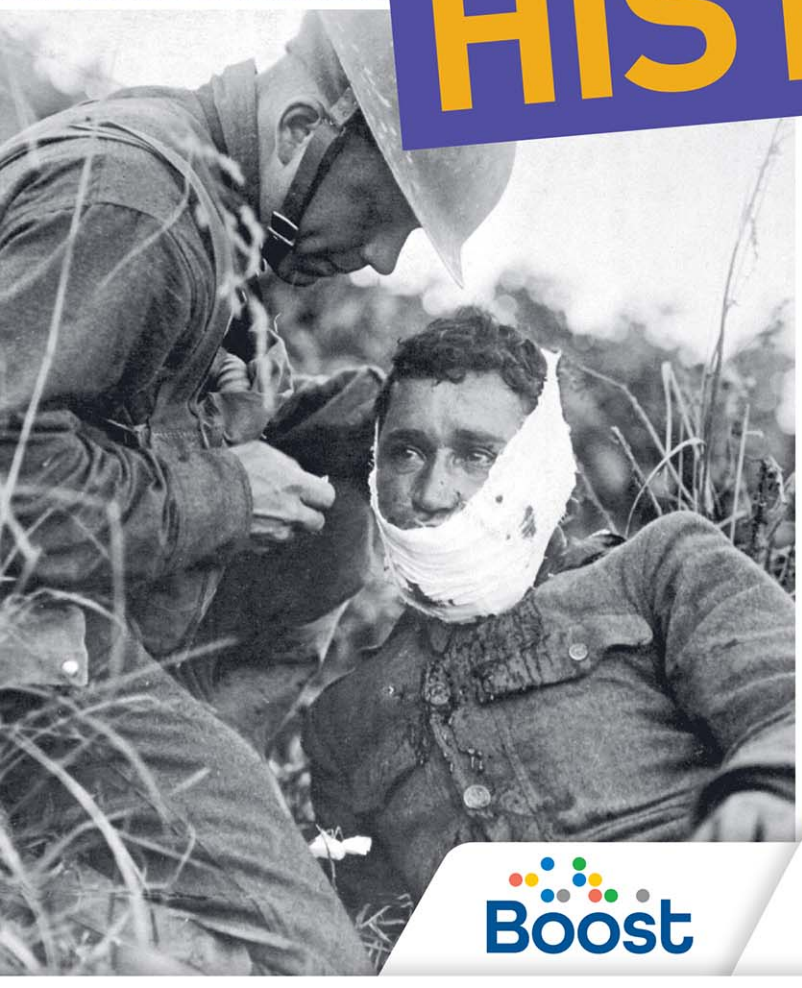
BEN WALSH HISTORY



PEARSON EDEXCEL GCSE (9-1)

- Medicine in Britain
- Crime and Punishment in Britain
- Anglo-Saxon and Norman England
- Early Elizabethan England

Boost

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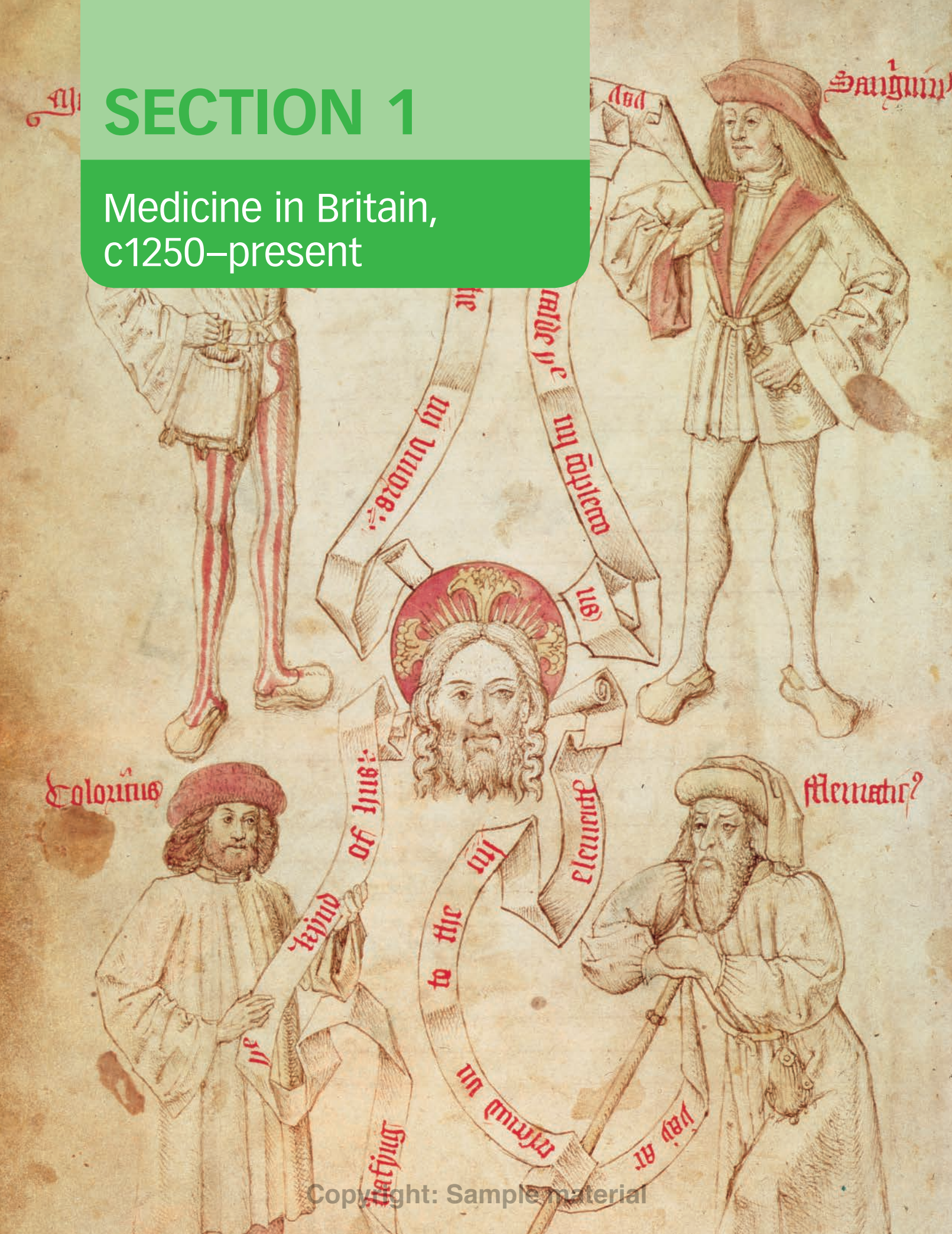
SECTION 1

Medicine in Britain, c1250–present



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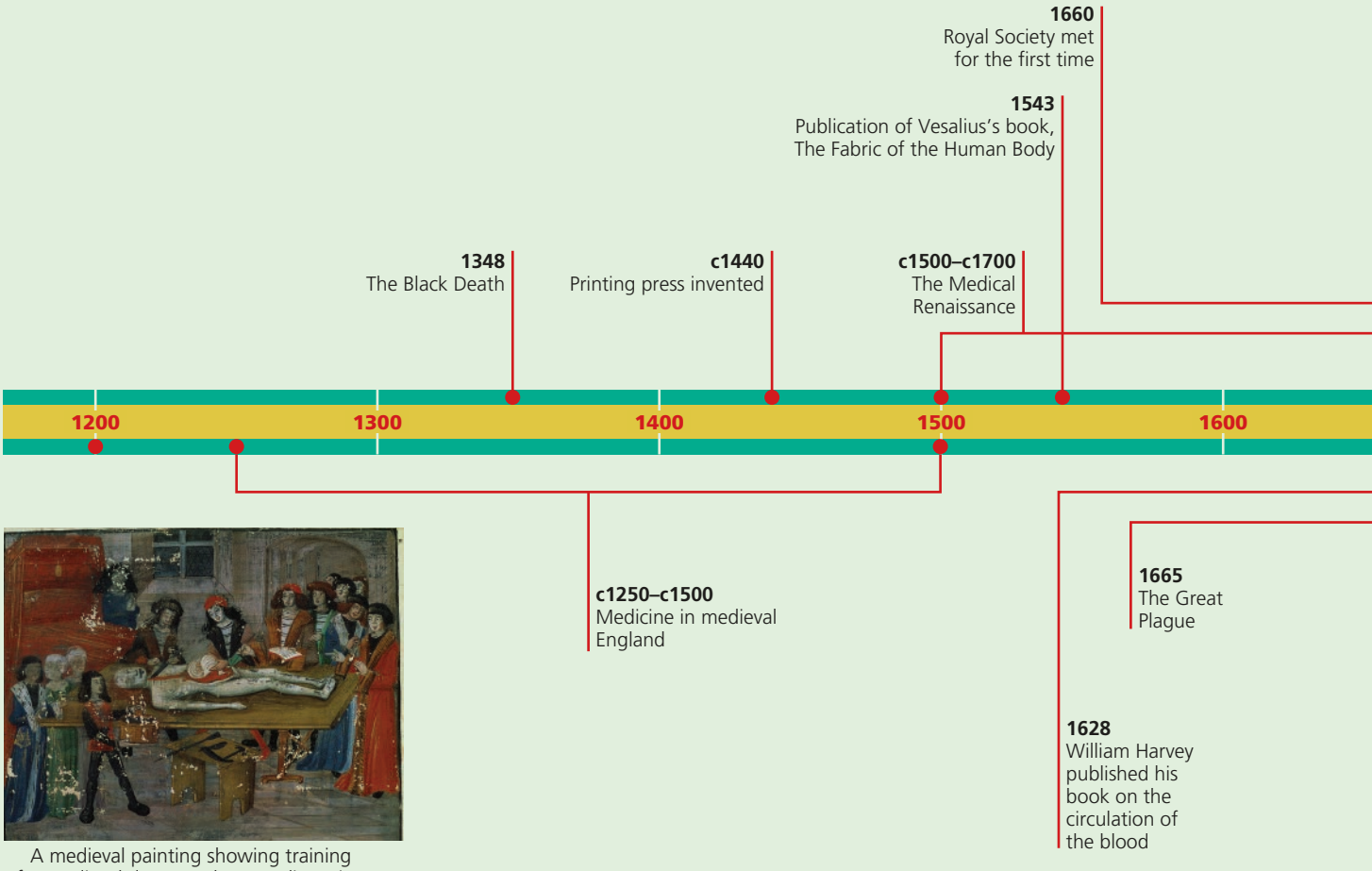
SECTION 1

Medicine in Britain, c1250–present

In this part of your course, you are going to be looking at the history of medicine in Britain (c1250–present). It is a long story that covers nearly one thousand years. A lot of things happened!

In Key Topic 1, you will look at medicine in medieval England (c1250–c1500), studying the ideas about the cause of disease and illness, and the effect these ideas had on the approaches to prevention and treatment. You will also look at a case study of the Black Death.

A medieval painting showing training for medieval doctors. They are dissecting a body while the supervisor is reading from Galen's text



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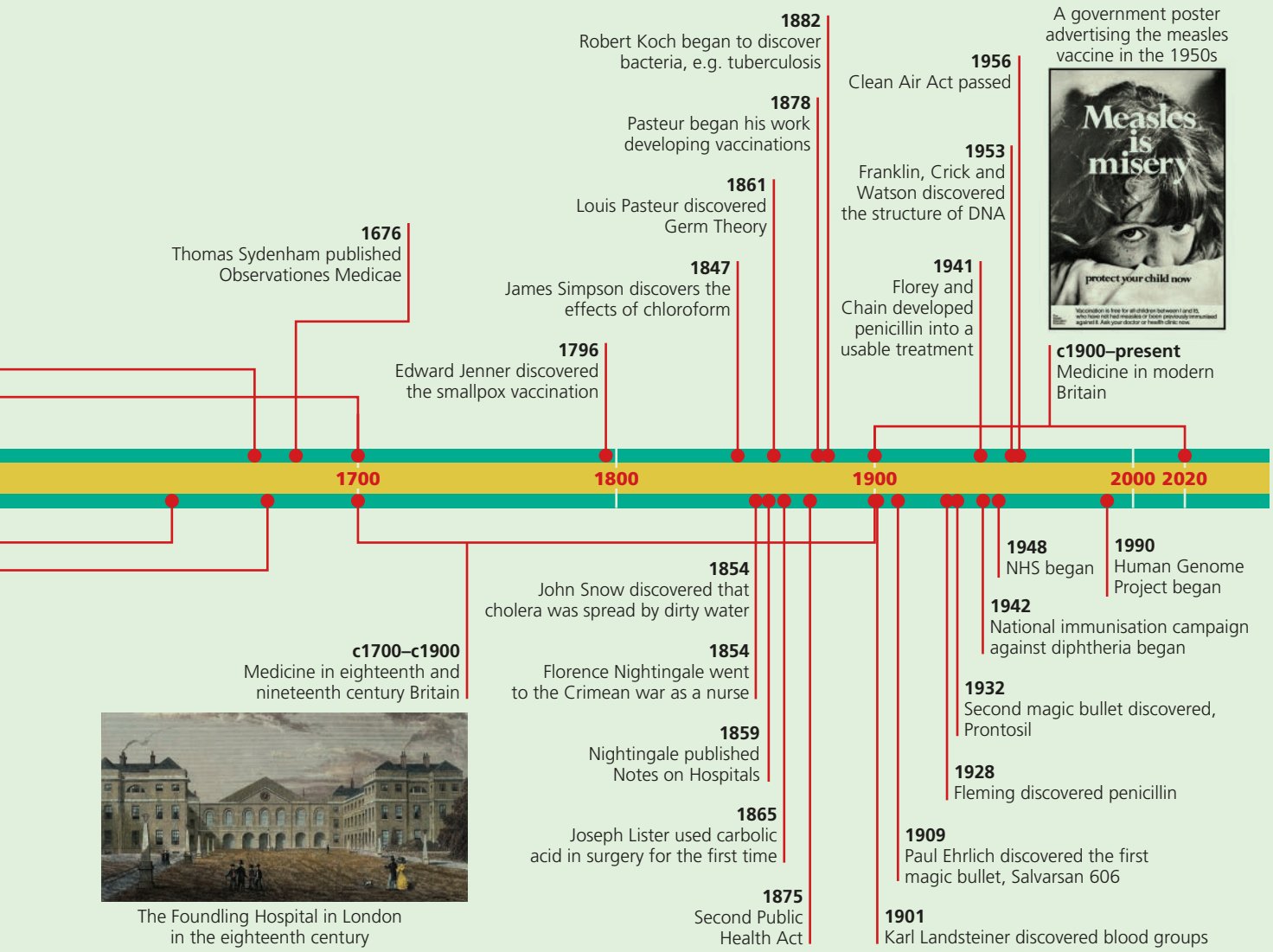
In Key Topic 2, you will look at the Medical Renaissance in England (c1500–c1700). You will examine the ideas about the cause of disease and illness during this time and look at the effect these had on the approaches to prevention and treatment. You will also look at a case study of the Great Plague in London and the importance of William Harvey's work.

In Key Topic 3, you will examine the changes in medicine in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain (c1700–c1900). You will investigate the new ideas about the cause of disease and illness and consider the extent of change these had on approaches to prevention and treatment. You will also look at the fight against cholera in London and the importance of Edward Jenner's work.

In Key Topic 4, you will examine the changes in medicine in modern Britain (c1900–present day). You will continue to investigate the new ideas about the cause of disease and illness and consider how these changed the approaches to prevention and treatment. You will also look at the fight against lung cancer and the importance of Fleming, Florey and Chain in the development of penicillin.

The main focus of this part of your course is change: why change took place or whether things did not change (which we call continuity). You will be asked to think about what changed, why it changed, how much it changed and what factors brought about change, including individuals and institutions (Church and government), science and technology, and attitudes in society.



The Foundling Hospital in London in the eighteenth century

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KEY TOPIC 1

Medicine in medieval England, c1250–c1500

SUMMARY OF SPECIFICATION CONTENT

Ideas about the cause of disease and illness

- ✔ Supernatural and religious explanations
- ✔ Theory of the Four Humours; the miasma theory; the influence of Hippocrates and Galen

Approaches to prevention and treatment

- ✔ How ideas about the cause of disease influenced treatment
- ✔ Attempts to prevent disease
- ✔ Religious actions
- ✔ Bloodletting and purging
- ✔ Purifying the air
- ✔ Natural remedies
- ✔ Hospital care
- ✔ The role of the physician, apothecary and barber surgeon in treatment

Case study

- ✔ Dealing with the Black Death, 1348–49

FOCUS

Medieval England was dominated by the ideas of the Christian Church. Medieval people wanted to secure their place in heaven and avoid hell. In this section you are going to find out about how religion was used to explain disease and illness. You will also consider the early alternatives to these ideas.

The first part of this course looks at the medical ideas in medieval England and how these were used during the Black Death.

In 1.1, you will look at the ideas about the cause of disease and illness. You will consider the supernatural and religious explanations that existed, alongside the more rational explanations. You will set out your own ideas about why ideas changed and how far they changed.

In 1.2, you will examine the approaches to prevention and treatment and their connection with ideas about disease and illness. You will also consider the hospital care available in the thirteenth century. You will explain why the Church was so important in medicine and health in this period.

In 1.3, you will use your understanding of medieval medicine to analyse the actions taken during the Black Death to treat its victims and prevent its spread. You will evaluate what we can learn about medieval medicine by studying how people responded to the Black Death.

1.1 Ideas about the cause of disease and illness

Key features of medieval life

The Church

The Roman Catholic Church was central to medieval life. The head of the Church was the Pope in Rome. In England, the head of the Church was the Archbishop of Canterbury. Every region had a bishop and every parish (usually one or two villages) had a priest. People attended services regularly and were expected to give a sum of one tenth of their income, a tax known as a tithe, to the Church each year.

It is very important to realise just how much people loved and respected the Church. For most people, it was the link between them and God. They were baptised in the Church, they were married there and they were buried in the graveyard of the Church. The Church cared for their souls in life and prayed for their souls after they died. As well as looking after their souls, the Church employed very large numbers of people as it owned huge

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amounts of land. The Church also cared for poor people and sick people. Any new laws or taxes or important news like the birth of a royal child was announced in Church.

The king and his government

The king's main role was to keep the country peaceful. This included protecting the country in wars or attacks and to punish rebels. Taxes were only raised to pay for wars. Keeping the streets clean and healthy was the responsibility of local councils, but they did not always have the money to pay for this.

Work and food

The vast majority (90 per cent) of people were peasants, who worked in the fields and farmed to grow the food needed by everyone. If there was a poor harvest, people went without food. As a result, most people spent their lives carrying out long, hard physical labour in the fields. Archaeological evidence shows that the skeletons of many medieval people were marked by illnesses and injuries, probably from accidents. Many suffered from problems such as arthritis due to the hard work they had to do.

SOURCE 1

An image from the Luttrell Psalter showing peasants working in the fields

SOURCE ANALYSIS

1. What can you see the peasants doing in Source 1?
2. What can this source tell us about the daily life of a peasant in medieval England?

Education and communication

The Church controlled education. Physicians were trained in Church-controlled universities. Relatively few people could read, especially in the countryside. Even in the towns it was rare. By the fifteenth century (the 1400s), less than half of the people in large towns could read. Those who could read would commonly read prayer and other religious books. Large libraries could be found in monasteries where monks read. Books were written out by hand until printing came to England in the 1470s. This meant that there were few books and knowledge was slow to spread.

RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

1. *Give two reasons why the Church was important to people.*
2. *What was the main role of the king?*
3. *Where did most people work?*
4. *Why was knowledge slow to spread?*

Attitudes

People were taught to respect what was written in the Bible. The Church discouraged people from thinking for themselves and from challenging traditional ideas.

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Religious explanations of disease and illness

SOURCE 2

A drawing from around 1250 showing how natural disasters were seen as coming from the sky, in other words from God. This drawing was from Europe but people in England would have held very similar beliefs

Disease, illness and injuries caused by accidents or hard work were common in medieval England. In fact they were very much a part of everyday life. They could be devastating. If a child was injured or killed it was emotionally devastating. If a parent was killed or crippled then the family faced massive hardship and maybe even starvation. In these harsh times, people looked for the Church to explain to them why terrible things happened. The usual explanation was that disease or injury was a punishment from God. To most people this made sense, as God created and controlled the world. Today we know that many people fell ill because of a lack of food, or a lack of good quality food, or overwork.

Supernatural explanations

The alignment of the planets and stars was also considered important when explaining and diagnosing illness. This was known as astrology. A physician would use the timing of a patient's birth and illness to consult star charts to decide what was wrong. This might seem superstitious but there was a logic behind it. It was obvious that the sun and the moon had a direct

RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

1. What was the most popular explanation for disease and illness in medieval England?
2. Why was this idea not questioned?
3. What was the cause of most illness during this time?
4. How were star charts used by a physician?
5. When did astrology become a more popular explanation for disease and illness?

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impact on life. The sun brought warmth and light and the seasons of the year. The moon affected the tides of the sea. So it seemed sensible to assume that the smaller stars and planets had some impact on people too, even if it was harder to be sure what this impact might be. People believed that God controlled the planets and so gave more importance to this idea.

Rational explanations

Another very popular idea, one that was not religious or supernatural, was the Theory of the Four Humours. This idea was first believed by the Ancient Greeks. The theory argued that the universe was made up of four basic elements – fire, water, earth and air – and so the body must be made up of four humours that were created by digesting different foods. The four humours were blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile.

FIGURE 3

Hippocrates' Theory of the Four Humours

It was believed that the four humours must be balanced and equal. Illness was caused by an imbalance in these humours. The theory also argued that each humour was linked to certain characteristics of illness. For example, a person suffering from a cold was thought to have too much phlegm because they would shiver and excess phlegm would run from their nose. Phlegm was a cold and wet element. The theory then linked the humours to seasons. In winter it is cold and wet and so it was thought the body produced too much phlegm leading to coughs and colds.

Another theory that existed was that miasma, bad air filled with harmful smells, was the cause of illness. This theory was often referred to as a 'corruption of the air'. This theory was linked to the religious ideas of the time. People believed that God allowed the air to be poisoned as part of his plan to cleanse the people of sin. Of course, a major cause of bad smells was usually poor systems of dealing with waste. In the towns in particular, it could be difficult to dispose of rubbish and other waste. One of the biggest problems was waste from butchers. Animals were taken to towns to be killed for food. Butchering animals left a great deal of refuse – the insides of animals that were not eaten might be thrown into the streets or dumped in a river. Horses were used as transport and their dung added extra waste to the streets.

RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

6 What were the four humours?
7 According to this theory, what caused illness?
8 What was the miasma theory?

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The continuing influence in England of Hippocrates and Galen

In medieval England, people respected traditional ideas. Doctors followed the ideas of Hippocrates and Galen. Hippocrates had lived in Ancient Greece and developed the Theory of the Four Humours. Claudius Galen worked in Ancient Rome 500 years after Hippocrates. He wrote over 300 medical books that were still used by doctors in medieval England.

Both Hippocrates and Galen believed that people became ill when the four humours in their bodies were out of balance. Galen developed the Theory of the Four Humours with his Theory of Opposites. This was to balance the humour with an opposite. For example, if a patient had too much phlegm, linked to water and the cold, it could be balanced by something hot such as peppers. This theory was popular because it was detailed and could be used to explain most illnesses. Doctors often fitted what symptoms they saw in a patient to fit the theory. As you can see from Sources 4 and 5, the ideas of Hippocrates and Galen remained important for over 800 years after they were written.

SOURCE 4

A diagram from around 1250 showing the four elements and the four humours. The writing is in Latin

SOURCE 5

A diagram from around 1450 showing the four humours

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There were two main reasons why Galen's ideas proved so long-lasting:

- Galen's ideas were supported by the Church. He argued that the body was designed for a purpose and believed in the idea of a soul. This fitted with the ideas of the Church that God created humans in this way. As a result, they promoted the ideas of Galen and, because they were linked, Hippocrates. The Church made copies of Galen's books in monasteries, Church libraries always had copies of Galen and Galen's books were used in Church medical schools.
- There was a lack of scientific evidence to support alternative ideas about the cause of disease and illness. Dissections were mostly illegal because the Church argued that the body needed to be buried whole for the soul to go to heaven. Occasionally, physicians could dissect executed criminals. However, their findings were used to support the ideas of Galen and not to challenge them. Any evidence that the body was not how Galen described it was explained by arguing that the criminal was imperfect. The dissection was carried out by a barber surgeon, with the physician sitting far away. This meant that the physician never carried out an examination and so was unable to challenge Galen's ideas.

RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

1 What were the ideas of Galen?
2 How did the Church promote the ideas of Galen?
3 Describe how a dissection was carried out in medieval England.
4 Why did dissection not lead to any new ideas about the cause of disease and illness?

FOCUS TASK

What influenced the ideas about the cause of disease and illness in medieval England?

Here are the ideas about the cause of disease and illness in medieval England. Make your own copy of this table and work out what features of medieval life influenced them. Identify the feature and then explain how it influenced the idea. We have done one for you but feel free to add to it.

Idea about the cause of disease and illness	Why did people think this?	This idea came from
Alignment of the planets	The sun and moon affected the world, so it seemed logical that the stars and planets did too	Some physicians believed they could understand the causes of disease through astrology
A punishment for sin		
An imbalance of the four humours		
Corruption of the air		

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FOCUS

In this section, you will see that, while religious and supernatural ideas were still important in medicine, people also tried out approaches such as purifying the air and herbal remedies, which had some helpful impact. In some areas, such as hospital care, medieval medicine could be quite advanced.

1.2 Approaches to prevention and treatment

Approaches to prevention and treatment and their connection with ideas about disease and illness

As we have seen, in the medieval period there were various theories about what caused disease. These ideas naturally influenced the way people tried to treat disease or tried to prevent it in the first place.

Religious actions

The Church taught that disease and illness was sent as a punishment from God for sin. As a result, people looked for religious treatments. These included:

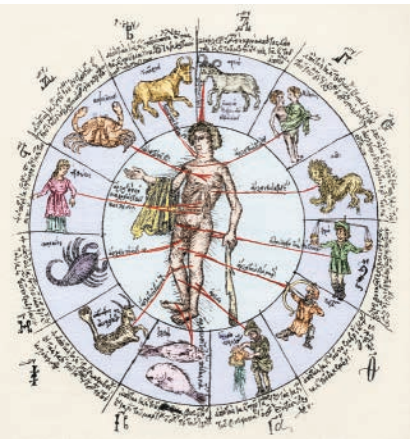
- Prayer
- Charms to ward off evil spirits and diseases
- Fasting (going without food)
- Pilgrimages (journeys) to places of religious importance, such as a shrine or a cathedral. When on the pilgrimage, people would touch holy relics (such as the bones of a saint), pray to God for help, present an offering at a shrine (such as a replica of the body part that needed to be healed or precious jewels) and light a candle
- It was widely believed that the king had the power to heal certain illnesses. According to the theory of Divine Right, the king was God's chosen representative on Earth, and it was believed that God had given him these powers. The king's touch was believed to cure scrofula, a skin disease. During his reign, Edward I aimed to touch around 2000 people with scrofula a year.

Most people believed that the best way to prevent disease and illness was to lead an honest life; one free from sins. People were encouraged to attend church for prayer, confession and to pay their tithes.

Astrology

As well as using star charts to diagnose illness, physicians used them to prescribe treatment. The alignment of the planets was checked at every stage of the treatment, such as gathering herbs, bleeding the patient and operations. Every action had to happen at the correct time according to the stars.

SOURCE 1



A zodiac (star) chart from the fifteenth century

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SOURCE 2

An image from the Luttrell Psalter

SOURCE ANALYSIS

1 What can you see happening in Source 2?
2 What does this suggest was believed to have been the cause of the illness?

RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

1 Describe at least three religious treatments for illness used in medieval England.
2 What was a star chart?
3 Describe the three ways that blood was removed from a patient during bloodletting.
4 How was leftover food removed from a patient?
5 How did medieval people ensure that the air was clean of miasma?
6 How were herbal remedies given to a patient?

Bloodletting and purging

Bloodletting, or bleeding, was the most common treatment for an imbalance in the four humours. It was believed that by removing blood, bad humours were also removed from the body. Bleeding of a patient took place by:

- cutting a vein
- placing leeches on the patient's skin
- placing heated cups over a cut or scratch to draw blood from the patient.

These treatments were performed by a barber surgeon.

It was believed that the humours were created by the food a person ate. As a result, removing any leftover food from the digestive system was used as a treatment to balance the humours. This was achieved by giving the patient something to make them vomit or a laxative to clear out their bowels.

Purifying the air

Medieval people would use many methods to keep the air clean and free from miasma. These included:

- carrying sweet-smelling herbs, such as lavender
- measures to keep the towns clean, such as removing any rotting animals from the streets, employing rakers to clean the streets, passing laws to punish people who threw their waste into the streets, and building wells to provide fresh water.

Use of remedies

Herbal remedies were also used to treat sick people in medieval England. These were usually given in the form of a herbal infusion that the patient would drink, inhale or bathe in. Common herbal remedies included aloe vera, camomile, rose oils and mint. Honey was often used in treatments for cuts and wounds. Today we know that this helped because it contains ingredients which fight infection. Different foods were also recommended to balance out the humours.

Herbal remedies were recorded in books called 'herbals'. These included prayers to say while collecting and mixing the herbs.

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New and traditional approaches to hospital care in the thirteenth century

Most people would have been treated for disease and illness at home by a family member. This responsibility usually fell on the women within a family, town or village. Women would also act as midwives.

Hospitals appeared in towns throughout this period. One of the most famous was St Bartholomew's Hospital in London. Their role was to care for those who could no longer care for themselves, such as older people. The sick were rarely admitted because they could spread infection.

SOURCE 3

An artist's impression of the inside of St Bartholomew's Hospital in the medieval period

Hospitals were run by the Church. Monks and nuns provided food, warmth and prayers. The role of hospitals was 'care not cure' of the patients.

From the thirteenth century, smaller hospitals were founded. These were funded by wealthy townspeople to look after the citizens. By 1500, there were over 1000 hospitals in England.

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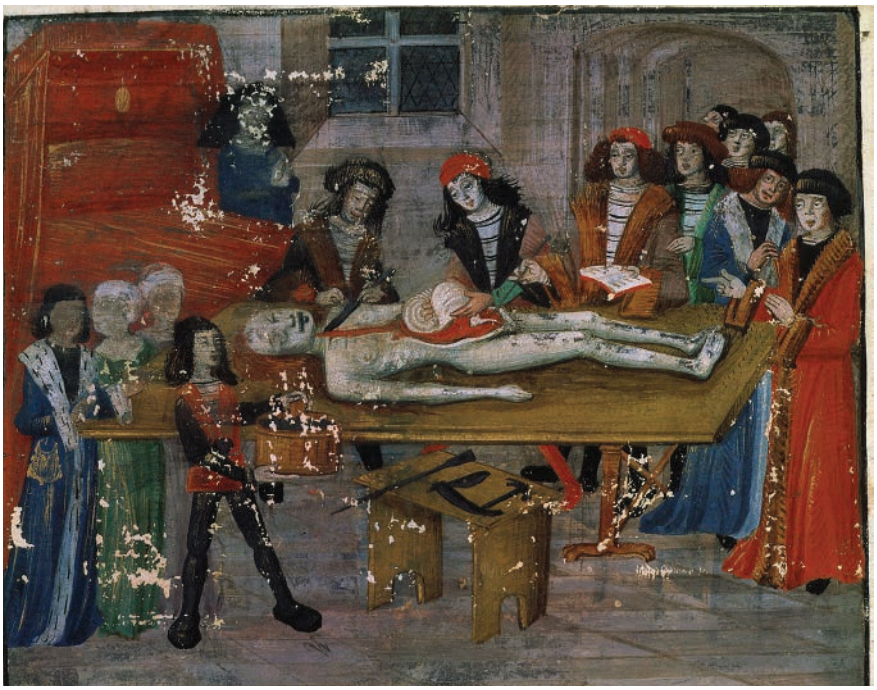
SOURCE 4



A medieval painting showing training for medieval doctors. They are dissecting a body while the supervisor is reading from Galen's text

Physician	Physicians were trained at university for seven years. They would have read the books written by Hippocrates and Galen. It is important to note that there were very few physicians in England at this time because the training was so expensive that only the rich could afford this profession. Women were not allowed to become physicians. The main role of a physician was to diagnose illness and advise a treatment. A physician would diagnose illness using the patient's urine, a star chart and by considering the balance of the patient's four humours.
Apothecary	Apothecaries would make the herbal remedies. They would mix ingredients to make the medicines for the physician. Apothecaries would learn how to mix different remedies from other apothecaries or from family members.
Barber surgeon	Barber surgeons were the least qualified medical professionals and were trained by watching others as an apprentice. They did not go to university. Barber surgeons would have performed basic surgery such as bleeding, removing growths and tumours and sewing up wounds. Occasionally, they would have to amputate a limb without an **anaesthetic** and so it was important that they had a steady hand. Women could become barber surgeons by working as an apprentice. Barber surgeons would get better with practice!

RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

1. Where were most people looked after when they were sick in medieval England?
2. Who would have been admitted to a hospital?
3. What was the role of a physician?
4. Who would be treated by a medieval physician?
5. What was the role of an apothecary?
6. What training did an apothecary receive?
7. What was the role of a barber surgeon?
8. What was the role of women in the medieval medical professions?

FOCUS TASK

Explain why the Church was so important in medicine in medieval England

Factors you could include: ideas about the cause of disease and illness, education, hospitals.

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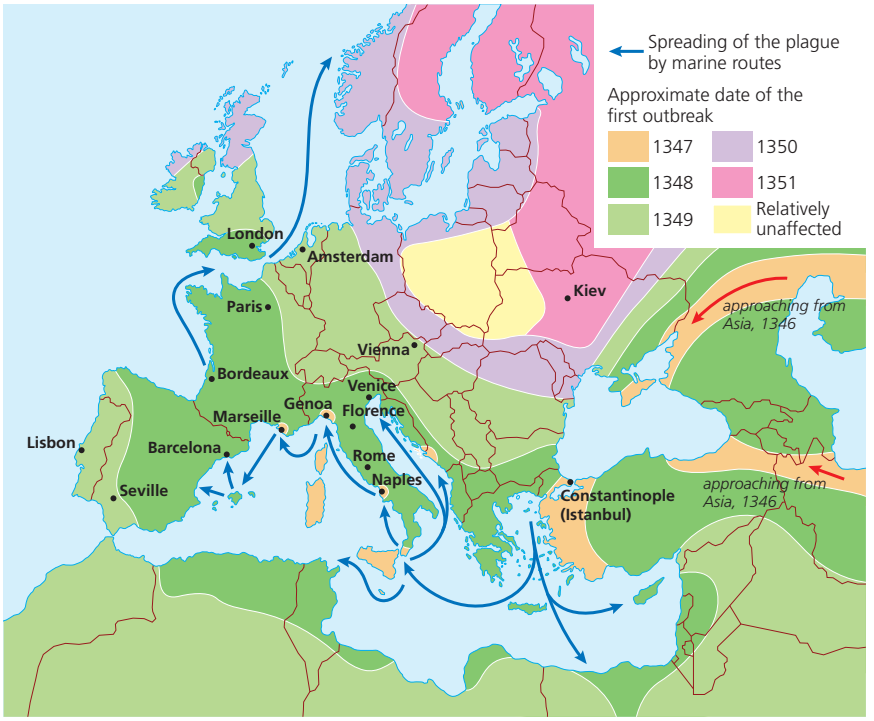
FOCUS

The Black Death was a devastating pandemic. In this section, you will examine what people thought caused the Black Death and how they tried to limit its effects, by both supernatural and practical approaches.

1.3 Case study: dealing with the Black Death, 1348–49

FIGURE 1



A map showing the movement of the Black Death into and through Europe

SOURCE 2

In 1348 the cruel pestilence arrived at a port called Melcombe in Dorset. It killed numberless people in Dorset, Devon and Somerset and then it came to Bristol where very few were left alive. It then travelled northwards, leaving not a town, a village or even, except rarely, a house, without killing most or all of the people there. There was such a shortage of people that there were hardly enough living to bury the dead.

An English monk writing in 1349

SOURCE 3

An image from a French prayer book, 1350. The mounted figure with the spear represents death. The caption says that Death is gathering in his harvest

Dealing with the Black Death, 1348–49

The Black Death was an epidemic that killed about 40 per cent of the population of medieval England. It was terrifying. Everyone was affected whether they were rich or poor. Those who caught it died within days. It is believed to have started in China, spreading across India and Europe before reaching England.

Historians are still not sure what this pestilence was. Some argue that it may have been the bubonic plague – spread by infected fleas from rats who then bit humans. Those bitten by these fleas developed painful swellings called buboes under their arms and on their neck. Those who suffered also experienced blisters, a high fever, severe headaches and unconsciousness before death.

SOURCE ANALYSIS

1 What can you see happening in Source 3?
2 What does this source tell us about people's beliefs during the Black Death?

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Attempts to prevent the spread of the Black Death

People in medieval England did all that they could to prevent the plague from spreading. Of course, they were limited by their ideas about what caused the disease in the first place.

God's punishment for sin

SOURCE 4

Flagellants shown in a fifteenth-century woodcut

SOURCE ANALYSIS

What can you see happening in Source 4?

The most widely believed explanation for the Black Death was that it was sent by God as a punishment for sin. People believed that only God could stop the plague or cure it. As a result, those in medieval England believed that they needed to show God that they were sorry for any sins and ask him for forgiveness.

- Church services were held daily where people could pray for forgiveness.
- Prayers were also said to ask God to help friends and family.
- People lit candles in churches as an offering to God.
- People fasted (stopped eating) to show God that they were sorry for any sins they had committed.
- Many people went on pilgrimages.

Some people punished themselves in public. One group were flagellants. Flagellants walked barefoot twice a day wearing a linen cloth. They whipped themselves to show God that they were sorry for their sins and to ask for forgiveness.

The movement of the planets

Some people also believed that God controlled the planets and that the planets could cause illness by poisoning the air or infecting people directly. The best response to this was similar to the response to the idea that the plague was a punishment for sin. Essentially people prayed to God and hoped that he would show mercy on them.

RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

1. How many people in medieval England died from the Black Death?
2. What did people think caused the Black Death?
3. Describe at least two ways people in medieval England tried to prevent the Black Death.

An imbalance of the Four Humours

As you have seen, the ideas of Galen and his theories about the Four Humours were still very influential. Many physicians claimed that the Black Death was caused by evil humours in the body. They recommended to their patients that they should do all they could to keep their humours in balance. This included exercise, rest and sleep.

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SOURCE 5

Have the filth lying in the streets removed and cleanse the city from all odours so that no great mortality may arise from such smells. The filth from the houses is infecting the air, endangering people through the contagious sickness which is increasing daily. Other towns followed the methods used in London. Rakers were employed to remove animal dung from the streets, fines were issued for litter and butchers were punished for leaving the remains of slaughtered animals in the streets.

Part of a letter written by King Edward III to the Mayor of London in April 1349

Bad air (miasma)

Another theory was that the plague was caused by bad air. People carried sweet-smelling herbs or lit fires that were believed to be stronger than the bad air. It was believed that these would prevent people from breathing in the bad air. Another method was to keep the air moving by ringing bells or allowing birds to fly around the house. They also very sensibly made efforts to remove anything which caused bad smells, as you can see from Source 5.

The government took action by stopping people entering villages because they thought they might be carrying the plague. New quarantine laws were also decided by the government. People new to an area had to stay away from others for 40 days. However, local government did not have much power in medieval England and so they could not enforce these laws.

SOURCE 6

A medieval image showing mass burials during the Black Death

Parish councils also took care with the burial of the dead. We have some useful source material for this in the accounts of churchwardens. They were officials (not priests) who worked for the Church carrying out administrative tasks such as collecting tithes, recording births and burials and making notes at meetings. Notes from meetings show that they organised teams of people to search houses where there might be plague. The notes also show that they hired people known as bearers to carry the dead out to be buried and arranged accommodation for these searchers and bearer searchers in the churchyard where they would not mix with other people. They arranged the burning of clothing of the infected. The churchwardens directed the gravedigger where to make graves, employed extra grave diggers, and purchased land for mass graves when the churchyard began to fill up.

SOURCE 7

Monks with the plague

SOURCE ANALYSIS

1 How do we know that these monks have the plague?
2 What treatment does the source suggest they are being given?

Approaches to treatment

Historians know very little about the treatments used because, when someone suffered with the plague, they often died very quickly. It is likely that there was no time to record the treatments used. However, we do know that the following treatments were used:

- People put charms around the necks of victims.
- Prayers were said for the sick.
- Buboes were cut open to let out the pus.
- It is likely that bleeding would have been used to balance the Four Humours.
- Herbal remedies were used to cleanse the body, including strong smelling herbs such as aloe and myrrh.

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RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

1 Describe at least two measures taken to tackle the problem of bad air.
2 How did people deal with the problem of the dead?
3 Describe at least three ways that people in medieval England were treated for the Black Death.

FOCUS TASK

What can we learn from the Black Death (1348–49) about medicine in medieval England?

Make a copy of the table below. Decide if each statement is true or false. Go back over this section to find evidence to support your decision.

Statement:	True or false?	Evidence to prove:
Most people believed that disease was sent by God as a punishment for sin		
The ideas of Hippocrates and Galen were no longer important		
Parish councils did little to protect their people from plague		
Physicians understood how the Black Death was spread across continents		

REVISION

You do not need to do these tasks now; use them when you are revising for a test, or a mock exam, or the real thing.

Task 1

Go back over this section. Cover up the text so that you can only see the Retrieval Practice tasks.

See if you can answer them without looking at the text.

Task 2

Ask your teacher to provide you with copies of the visual sources in this section.

Turn these slides into a presentation and see if you can tell the story of the history of medicine in this period using only these sources.

Task 3

Make a copy of the table below. Decide if each statement is true or false. Go back over this section to find evidence to support your decision.

Statement:	True or false?	Evidence to prove:
Medieval medicine was dominated by the Church		
Women played an important role in medieval medicine		
Everyone in medieval England would have been treated in a hospital at some point in their lives		
There were no individuals who influenced medicine in medieval England		

Task 4

Make a list of any additional examples of change or continuity in the history of medicine in this period. Can you explain why each change, or continuity, took place?

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KEY TOPIC 2

The Medical Renaissance in England, c1500–c1700

The second part of this course looks at the Medical Renaissance in England.

In 2.1, you will look at the ideas about the cause of disease and illness. You will consider how ideas about the cause of disease and illness changed, including scientific approaches and the influence of the printing press. You will set out your own ideas about why ideas changed and how far they changed.

In 2.2, you will examine the change and continuity in approaches to prevention, treatment and care in the community and hospitals. You will reach your own judgement on how far treatments have changed.

In 2.3, you will tackle case studies about the contribution of William Harvey and the approach to the Great Plague in London in 1665. You will compare medicine in the Renaissance period with medicine in the medieval period.

SUMMARY OF SPECIFICATION CONTENT

Ideas about the cause of disease and illness

- ✔ Continuity and change in explanations of the cause of disease
- ✔ Scientific approaches
- ✔ The influence of the printing press and the work of the Royal Society on the transmission of ideas

Approaches to prevention and treatment

- ✔ Continuity in approaches to prevention and treatment of disease in the community and in hospitals.
- ✔ Improvements in medical training
- ✔ The influence in England of the work of Vesalius

Case studies

- ✔ Key individual: William Harvey and the discovery of the circulation of the blood
- ✔ Dealing with the Great Plague in London, 1665

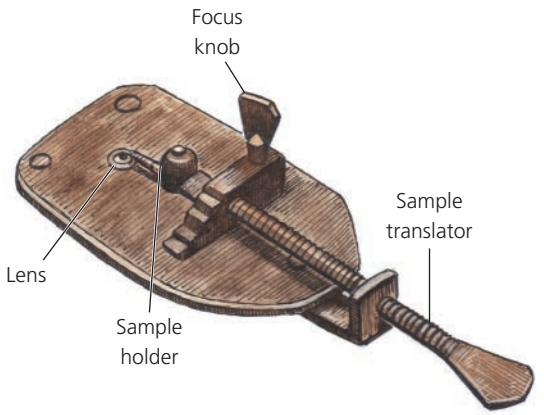
FOCUS

The word 'Renaissance' is French and means re-birth. The Medical Renaissance was a period when old ideas were being questioned and new ideas were beginning to influence medicine. The classical ideas of people such as Galen began to be challenged. It was the beginning of scientific ideas.

2.1 Ideas about the cause of disease and illness

The changes England experienced during the Renaissance had an impact on the understanding of the cause of illness, as well as prevention and treatments. New inventions, such as the microscope, helped make new discoveries. Inventions, such as the printing press, helped to share these new ideas quickly and further.

SOURCE 1



The early Leeuwenhoek microscope

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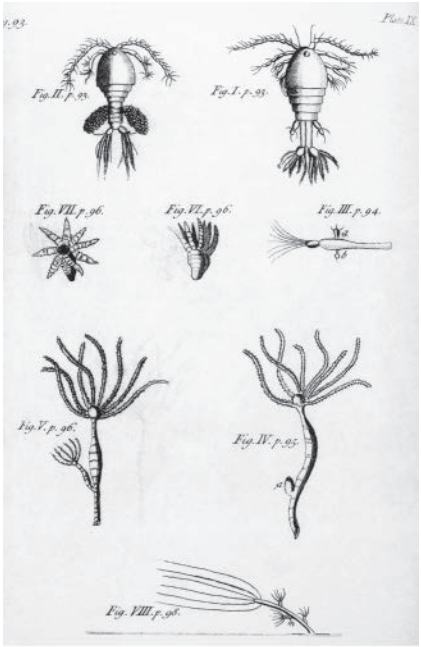
Explanations of the cause of disease and illness: continuity and change

SOURCE 2



Antoni van Leeuwenhoek's drawing of what he called 'little animals' under the microscope, published in 1677. This was the first sighting of microorganisms

Continuity

Ideas about the cause of disease and illness continued during the Medical Renaissance in England. These ideas included that disease and illness occurred because of an imbalance of the Four Humours and were spread by miasma (bad smells). The idea that disease was spread by miasma was believed more widely during an epidemic such as the Great Plague.

Change

Some people came up with new scientific discoveries. From 1683, more powerful microscopes, developed by Antoni van Leeuwenhoek, were being used. These enabled the first recorded observation of bacteria. Tiny 'animalcules' were seen in plaque scraped from between the teeth, but the images were not very clear. More importantly, nobody made the connection between microbes and disease so the discovery was an important step, but it had limited impact on the understanding of the cause of disease or its treatment.

During this period, most people began to change their views and began to believe that disease and illness was not sent as a punishment from God. However, the old beliefs could be reawakened by a major disaster. For example, during the Great Plague of 1665, there were many pamphlets and preachers claiming that the plague was sent by God.

RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

1. What ideas about the cause of disease and illness continued during the Medical Renaissance in England?
2. Who pioneered the use of microscopes?
3. What was an 'animalcule'?

The work of Thomas Sydenham

Thomas Sydenham was a doctor who made progress in the diagnosis of disease and illness. He believed in careful observation of the patient and of the illness. As a result, he gained the name the 'English Hippocrates'. The work of Thomas Sydenham was important in moving medicine away from the ideas of Galen and Hippocrates, and into the new scientific era.

Sydenham was educated at Oxford and Cambridge universities before becoming a physician in London. As a physician, he told young doctors, 'You must go to the bedside. It is there alone that you can learn about disease'. He believed that a doctor should take a full history of the patient's health and symptoms. In addition, that the patient should be examined carefully before diagnosing their illness, such as listening to their pulse. Thomas Sydenham believed that each disease was different and should be identified carefully so that the correct treatment

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SOURCE 3

A portrait of Thomas Sydenham (1624–89). Only very wealthy and important people usually had portraits made

RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

1 Describe the ideas of Thomas Sydenham.
2 In what ways were Sydenham's ideas new?

SOURCE 4

A woodcut showing the printing press in 1568

SOURCE ANALYSIS

1 What can you see happening in Source 4?
2 How would this have helped medicine to progress during the Renaissance?

could be prescribed. He was therefore rejecting the idea that all disease could be understood with a single theory like the Four Humours.

Sydenham made detailed descriptions of many illnesses. His first description was of scarlet fever. This led Sydenham to contribute to the long-term progress of medicine in this period. Sydenham was able to discover that measles and scarlet fever were different diseases, but he was unable to identify the different **microorganisms** that caused the disease. He published his findings in many books. Probably the most famous was *Observationes Mediciae* (Observations of Medicine), in 1676.

The influence of the printing press

One piece of technology had a massive impact on medicine, even though it was nothing to do with doctors or disease. In the 1450s a German, Johannes Gutenberg, built the first printing press. A printing press was a machine that would print text and pictures. This meant that books no longer had to be written by hand. Many copies of the same text could be printed. By 1500, there were printing presses across Europe.

The availability of new information and ideas had a huge impact on the understanding and treatment of disease. The printing press enabled new medical ideas to be spread accurately and quickly. Scientists were able to publish and share their discoveries.

At the same time, the Church had much less control over what information was shared and could not prevent ideas they disapproved of from being published. Physicians were now able to publish ideas that challenged the work of Galen.

The work of the Royal Society

From 1645, meetings took place in London between a group of people who wanted to discuss new ideas in science. Discussions took place about physics, **astronomy** and medicine. From 1662, this group became known as the Royal Society because King Charles II attended their talks. They had their own laboratory and so were able to carry out experiments. They also published books to spread their ideas. The support of the king gave the group additional credibility. It was believed that if the king agreed with their ideas then they must be correct. People donated to the Royal Society so that their work could continue. Probably the biggest impact of the Royal Society was through its publications. Each year they published their *Philosophical Transactions*. This was basically a book recording all the scientific developments which its members had been involved in or had heard about.

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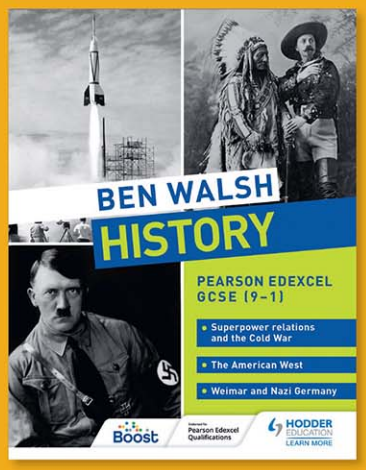

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