

Eyam and the Great Plague of 1665

Read the text and do the following activities.

1

Eyam, a village in Derbyshire, was also badly affected by the Great Plague of 1665 even though the disease is most associated with its impact on London. The sacrifices made by the villagers of Eyam may well have saved cities in northern England from the worst of the plague.

At the time of the plague, the village had a population of about 350. The most important person in the village was the church leader – William Mompesson.

2

In the summer of 1665, the village tailor received a parcel of material from his supplier in London. This parcel contained the fleas that caused the plague. The tailor was dead from the plague within one week of receiving his parcel. By the end of September, five more villagers had died. Twenty three died in October.

3

Some of the villagers suggested that they should flee the village for the nearby city of Sheffield. Mompesson persuaded them not to do this as he feared that they would spread the plague into the north of England that had more or less escaped the worst of it. In fact, the village decided to cut itself off from the outside world. They effectively agreed to quarantine themselves even though it would mean death for many of them.

4

The village was supplied with food by those who lived outside of the village. People brought supplies and left them at the parish stones that marked the start of Eyam. The villagers left money in a water trough filled with vinegar to sterilise the coins left in them. In this way, Eyam was not left to starve to death. Those who supplied the food did not come into contact with the villagers.

Eyam continued to be hit by the plague in 1666. The rector, Mompesson, had to bury his own family in the churchyard of Eyam. His wife died in August 1666. He decided to hold his services outside to reduce the chances of people catching the disease.

5

By November 1666, the plague was considered at an end. 260 out of 350 had died in the village but their sacrifice may well have saved many thousands of lives in the north of England. Mompesson did survive.

1. Drag each of the following headings to the correct paragraph

When did the Plague end?

How did people in Eyam survive during the Plague?

How did the Great Plague of 1665 start in Eyam?

What happened in Eyam?

How did the village help stop the Plague?

Article's source: <https://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/stuart-england/eyam-and-the-great-plague-of-1665/>

2. Read the text carefully, and say if the following statements are True or False.

- | | | |
|--|----------|----------|
| 1. The villagers were very selfish | T | F |
| 2. The rector was a real authority in the village | T | F |
| 3. The population of Eyam was very generous | T | F |
| 4. People who lived outside the village hated Eyam residents | T | F |
| 5. The plague was God's punishment for Eyam | T | F |

3. Answer the following questions with one word or number

1. In what English region is Eyam located?
2. How many people lived in Eyam in 1665?
3. What creatures were responsible for carrying the Plague?
4. Where did some of Eyam people want to escape?
5. How many people died in October 1665?
6. What was used to sterilise the money left by the villagers?
7. How many years did the Great Plague last in Eyam?

3. Match the words on the left to their definitions on the right.

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 1. flea | a. to affect a larger area |
| 2. disease | b. a person whose job is to make clothes |
| 3. tailor | c. a small jumping insect which sometimes transmits diseases |
| 4. To spread | d. an object wrapped in paper that is sent by post |
| 5. to starve | e. a cemetery |
| 6. graveyard | f. to suffer extreme hunger |
| 7. parcel | g. a disorder of the human body, resulting in a series of symptoms and requiring medical treatment |

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