

Prof. Marino HI-102-IN
Primary Source Paper 1

The Covid pandemic was the first world crisis my generation has lived through and been a part of. Almost every aspect of daily life had changed during the height of the pandemic, and some of these changes will most likely remain forever. The biggest difference for someone in their last years of highschool was how class was altered. In the beginning of the pandemic, all class was immediately moved online, and was for lack of a better word, a joke. It was not a real class at my high school. We were sent homework, and would have until the end of each day to make the submission. I would sleep in much later than I would be able to in a normal school day, and would often do my work while on a call with my friends, or even while watching a movie or tv show. The following fall however, things became more challenging. My school decided it was going to do a hybrid system, where you would spend 2 days in school, and 3 days at home. This system was extremely challenging as when you were in school, you had to wear a mask which oftentimes could make it hard to fully concentrate, but you also had to experience the teacher trying to teach both her in class students, and those on her zoom call. This became very frustrating, as sometimes the teacher would spend the majority of the class dealing with technical issues. From home it was even worse. It is extremely hard to follow a professor's lecture, when they are teaching mainly to a half filled classroom of students, while you feel like a bystander sitting in the comfort of your bedroom, which at times didn't feel so comfortable anymore. It began to feel as if you were bringing your school life into your home, rather than separating the two, and for a long time I began to not even like the idea of sitting in my own room as it brought connotations I had once associated with going to school. In many cases, this caused

more depression, anxiety and higher stress levels among students. All in all, the education experience was a difficult, stressful and unique time for students at all levels, but specifically those in their later years of their high school education.

Many headlines in today's society read that Covid-19 is a unique and unprecedented time in our society. While in some ways this may be a true statement, in others it can certainly be argued. I would argue that some aspects of this pandemic have actually been very similar to those of the Black Death in 1349. One way in which this statement can be proven true, is by comparing how many people used their religious beliefs as a sense of hope and belonging in 1349, and the same can be said about 2020. In the time of the Black Death, "The Flagellants were religious zealots of the Middle Ages in Europe who demonstrated their religious fervor and sought atonement for their sins by vigorously whipping themselves in public displays of penance".¹ Something extremely similar can be seen when analyzing the use of religion by today's citizens in response to the pandemic. These people gathered to practice their religions, sometimes secretly, but other times at outdoor mass and other church held events, to pray for better times, and to pray for god to protect their health. These people, like those during 1349, were putting themselves in grave danger, being all together in a small area, often times they were putting their physical health in danger by being exposed to others and potentially the disease, to the betterment of their mental health, knowing they have a community gather with and a god to pray to for safety. A second way in which the Black Death was very similar to the Covid 19 pandemic is in

¹ The Flagellants Attempt to Repel the Black Death, 1349," EyeWitness to History, www.eyewitnesstohistory.com (2010)

that of the way the people living through it responded. In both cases, people sought the shelter of their homes. They put themselves into isolation, not wanting to risk coming across someone who might pass them one of these incredibly contagious and dangerous diseases. As *Boccaccio, The Onset of the Black Death* states “Wherefore they banded together, and dissociating themselves from all others, formed communities in houses where there were no sick, and lived a separate and secluded life, which they regulated with the utmost care, avoiding every kind of luxury”.² As you can see, and clearly understand due to the similarity to the world we lived in 2 years ago, these people were separating and secluding themselves from everybody else around them. You can imagine that this would have affected the mental health of these people just as much as many members of our community had theirs affected, with extreme stress and anxiety. This not only comes from stress and anxiety of catching the disease, but also after some time of being alone, isolated from everyone but a few close relatives, you can start to go crazy. Due to this, these 2 historic events can be closely compared and there are many similarities to be found when analyzing the situations of each time and the citizens' responses to them. All in all, it is not completely correct to state that Covid 19 is an unprecedented time in the history of the world, as clearly there are some major aspects in which the Black Death can be found to be extremely similar.

² “Medieval Sourcebook: Boccaccio: The Decameron - Introduction.” Internet History Sourcebooks Project. Accessed September 23, 2022. <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/boccaccio2.asp>.