The Black Death: Crisis Committee

Annie Yuan
Co-chair

Soumya Khadye
Co-chair
Dear Delegates,

We are pleased to welcome you to Moody Middle School’s Model U.N. IX! Your co-chairs for this committee are Soumya Khadye and Annie Yuan. This committee, Black Death, is set in the Late Middle Ages (mid-1300's) during the disastrous epidemic. The prospering Kingdom of Penrith faces numerous threats, ranging from the plague to the enemy Kingdom of Elyot. The Black Death is currently ravaging the bordering Silician Kingdom, and the plague is on the doorstep of Penrith. Now, the King’s Court and closest palace advisors must decide the best course of action to prevent the spread of the plague. Additionally, the dangling threat of the Elyot Kingdom draws ever closer after the 50-year war. Please mind that the main locations and characters in this committee are fictional, but firmly rooted in the historic Medieval period of the Black Death. Refer to the position description to know your stances on the conflict.

Soumya Khadye, an eighth grader at Moody Middle School, is delighted to co-chair the Black Death committee at MMSMUN IX! Soumya has begun participating in Model UN this year as a delegate in Specialized Agencies for both GSMUN and HIMUNC. She participates in numerous extracurricular activities, such as tennis, piano, and art. During her free time, Soumya is an avid reader and enjoys participating in online chess tournaments.

Annie Yuan is also an eighth grader at Moody Middle School. As an active participant in many Model UN conferences such as GSMUN, debate competitions such as MSTOC, and an officer in the Moody Debate Club, she is very excited to run the Black Death committee along with Soumya. In spare time, Annie enjoys playing the piano, violin, and card games, badly.

Please keep in mind that delegates must prepare in advance to the conference day, and that this is a crisis committee. A Position Paper reviewing the stances and perspectives of the topic is strongly recommended. Use the background guide, position descriptions, and online resources to help write the paper. These must be formatted in a 12-point Times New Roman font, with double spacing and one-inch margins. Cite the sources used in the paper in the Chicago Manual Style (CMS). To help better understand what a position paper covers, use this resource. Before the first committee session begins, please email your paper to one of the co-chairs. If you have any questions or concerns, contact Soumya Khadye (hcps-khadyesp@henricostudent.org) or Annie Yuan (hcps-yuanal@henricostudents.org). We are excited to meet everyone and see lively and interesting debate!

Your Chairs,
Soumya Khadye and Annie Yuan
Background Guide

History

After the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 A.D., the Early Middle Ages began in the 5th century, lasting approximately until the 10th century. Due to the chaos caused by the fall of the Western Roman Empire, several tribes, such as the Ostrogoths and the Franks, founded a series of small, unstable kingdoms. Unfortunately, the kingdoms were constantly besieged by war and rulers were constantly at war with one another. As the Early Middle Ages was declining, the Itogoths (Similar to the Ostrogoths) conquered a vast expanse of land within central Italy. In the 8th century, they formed a quaint kingdom settled in Naples. Dubbed Bienevelle by King Hugh I, the small kingdom prospered under his reign.

A generation later, however, the benevolent King Fabian was assassinated by the Penrate tribe, who renamed the kingdom Penrith. Hunting and eliminating the heirs, the new Kingdom of Penrith emerged in Italy, surprising bordering kingdoms with innovation and creativity. For example, the Peneriths invented the spinning wheel, Italian fire, and Forti steel. At the pinnacle of success, the kingdom was able to develop and refine its military, as well as establish its own Feudal system under the rule of King Gervase. Several noblemen emerged within the region, maintaining an immense influence over the citizens. Additionally, the Great Schism in 1053 caused the rise of Bishops and support for the Catholic Church. The advancements in art and culture encouraged another kingdom to form.

The Elyots

The secretive tribe of the Elit invaded a region of Sicily in the late 11th century, seeking the benefits of the resources and power of the area. King Elwin exerted complete control over the Elyot kingdom; therefore, the only gossip in the area derived from the Penrith-held palace itself. Elyot’s primary objective was to strengthen its military and economy, so 20% of the population employed as knights and soldiers. Instead of being invested in cultural growth, the financial strength from their import-export trade system was devoted to advancing weaponry and tools. The Elyots follow the Catholic Church as well. Towards the mid-twelfth century, the nation declared war on the Penrith kingdom, accusing it of unspeakable actions. The gruesome war that followed lasted nearly 50 years before the claim was proven false and that the Elyots simply wished to conquer their rich land. King Maurice, father of future King Charles, led the Peneriths to victory before stepping down and handing the throne to his son.

Current Status

A strange new illness has befallen Europe and Asia. Rumors have spread like wildfire, stating that the “Great Pestilence” has invaded China, India, Egypt, Syria, and Persia. It is 1340, and the Late Middle Ages have begun. The King’s Court has started to assess the situation and possible threats. The cause of this plague is still unknown, and the successful Kingdom of Penrith is in jeopardy of a
crumbling economy, mass death, and weak defenses against the Kingdom of Elyot.

**Topic 1: A Medical Mystery**

As of now, the cause of the foreign plague is still unknown, although bordering kingdoms have currently suspended trade with other countries. It is believed that the spirits may be angry with man, and are using the plague as revenge. The Italian poet Boccaccio stated that the disease is characterized by grotesque, black boils, swelling to the sizes of apples and eggs. This will be followed by a large amount of blood and pus. People often die within 24 hours of infection. The plague has consumed nation after nation, arriving in proximity to the Penrith kingdom. Physicians in the kingdom have suggested the methods of blood-letting and boil-lancing to help treat the plague. A common but unproven theory is that the plague is spread through germ-filled odors.

The Black Death has arrived at the ports of the Sicilian kingdom (located only fifty miles away from Penrith), and the majority of their trade ships have displayed dead or infected sailors. Possible solutions include quarantine, although this may cause the economical growth of the kingdom to come to a shuddering halt. Therefore, it is imperative that the necessary actions are taken in a timely manner in order to prevent the spread of the bubonic plague in the Kingdom of Penrith.

In addition, there are rumors that the Kingdom of Elyot hungers for the resources and riches of Penrith. After the previous war, the Kingdom of Elyot demands vengeance for the mass casualties of their people.

**Questions to Consider**

1. Should the Kingdom of Penrith go into quarantine? If so, when should they begin and for how long must the process last?
2. How will the kingdom continue to protect its economical growth in the midst of the epidemic?
3. There are varied rumors as to the cause and possible treatments for the plague. Should these claims be investigated or does the kingdom have more pressing matters?
4. How can the royal family ensure the safety of all the levels of the hierarchy? Should the opportunity to receive treatment be based on social status?

**Further Research**

All delegates must review their positions and stances on their topic. Additional sources other than the list provided below should be used to complete position papers. There are several fictional concepts in this committee, but it is based upon the Late Middle Ages and the Black Death in the mid-1300’s. The sources below will provide a basis for research.

- [history.com/topics/middle-ages/black-death](https://history.com/topics/middle-ages/black-death)
Topic II: Relationship with the Elyots

In the half century since the war between Elyot and Penrith, the two kingdoms have emerged into a tense, wary agreement. Penrith relies on its trade routes going through Elyot and into Northern Europe to further its economy, and thus depends on the Elyotian fighting force for protection against the route’s numerous bandits. In return, Elyot receives a quarter of Penrith’s harvest every year.

However, there are rumors spreading throughout the kingdom regarding a plot by Elyot to take over those same trade routes and exploit them for themselves. It is generally agreed upon by Penrith’s people that the correct course of action is to break all ties with Elyot and send in the knights of Penrith to defend the routes without Elyotian interference, but King Charles is hesitant to give such extreme orders over mere gossip.

In addition, spies of Penrith within the bandits’ numbers send word of potential rebellion plans against the King of Elyot, Wilhelm II. The bandits have allegedly been building an army and training deep within the Elyotian mountains. If these rumors are discovered to be true, it may be more beneficial for Penrith to do away with their rivalry with the bandits and use their combined forces to defeat Elyot for once and for all.

Questions to Consider

1. How should Penrith respond to the bandits attacking the trade routes?
2. Do you think the rumors about the rebellion and Elyot’s plan to take over the trade routes have credibility?
3. There may be spies for the Kingdom of Elyot within the walls of Penrith. How will you safely discern these spies and thwart their plans to intercept Penrith’s trade routes?

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- https://sites.google.com/a/guilford.edu/life-and-money-in-medieval-europe/trade
- https://www.britannica.com/topic/tactics/Medieval-tactics-in-the-West