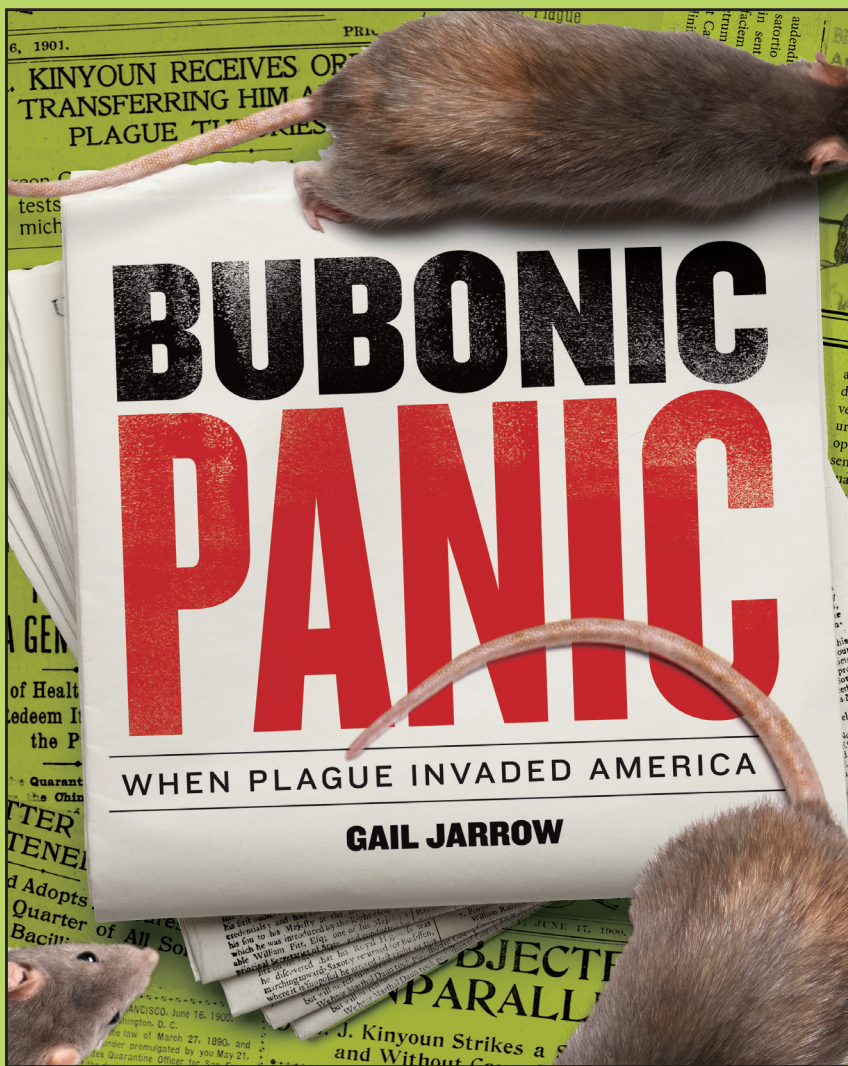


# Educator's Guide



 CALKINS CREEK

 BOYD'S MILLS PRESS



**A mysterious death in Chinatown.**

**A city government intent on keeping the real cause of death quiet.**

**And the determined doctors and scientists who tirelessly pursued the elusive killer.**

*Bubonic Panic: When Plague Invaded America* traces one of the worst diseases in human history from its first mention in a message written in 542 in the Roman Empire to its crash landing on American shores during the turn of the 20th century. The story of plague's beginnings in America offers ample opportunities for historical and scientific discussion.

As she did in the two previous books in her *Deadly Diseases* trilogy—*Red Madness: How a Medical Mystery Changed What We Eat* and *Fatal Fever: Tracking Down Typhoid Mary*—Gail Jarrow blends meticulous research and collected photographs and headlines to tell this true story.

This guide is designed to help teachers lead students in a close reading of *Bubonic Panic: When Plague Invaded America* by Gail Jarrow. Connections to Common Core State Standards are noted with each activity.

**Common Core abbreviations used in this guide:**

RI—Reading Informational Text

W—Writing

SL—Speaking and Listening

RH—Literacy in History and Social Studies

For the complete Common Core State Standards, visit [corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy](http://corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy).

## **Before Reading**

Ask students to share what they know about the plague. Ask students to explain where their background information comes from: television shows, nonfiction books, perhaps an Edgar Allan Poe story? Once students share their ideas, ask them to consider if everything they've heard from other students is true. What makes them believe some of the information they've heard, but not other information? How might they verify if what

they heard is true? What might be some negative consequences of never finding out whether something is true—but instead simply believing or disbelieving it without any further research?

**[SL.6.1, SL.6.2]**

Look through the book, scanning the headlines, photos, captions, chapter titles, and headings. What will the book be about? How is ordered? Which parts are students looking forward to reading?

**[SL.6.1, SL.6.2]**

Ask students: Can true stories ever be as exciting and suspenseful as fictional stories? Make sure each student explains his or her answer.

**[SL.6.1, SL.6.2]**

Ask for volunteers to read Chapter One of the book aloud. Ask readers to describe the writer's tone and writing style. Point out that the author personifies the plague as "the killer" and refers to the victim as "you." What effect does that have on readers?

**[RI.6.1, RI.6.3, RI.6.6; SL.6.1, SL.6.2]**

## **While Reading**

### ***Quick Questions to Check Reading Comprehension***

- Why did the Chinese people mistrust Western medical professionals during the third pandemic in Hong Kong?  
**[RI.6.1; RH.6–8.1; SL.6.1]**
- What changed between the second pandemic and outbreak in the 1800s that was a crucial factor in fighting bubonic plague?  
**[RI.6.1; RH.6–8.1; SL.6.1]**
- Why did the Western doctors want to perform autopsies on bodies in Hong Kong, and why did the Chinese people resist?  
**[RI.6.1; RH.6–8.1; SL.6.1]**
- Why did some ships in San Francisco fly a yellow flag as they entered the harbor?  
**[RI.6.1; RH.6–8.1; SL.6.1]**
- Why did scientists inject infected animal samples into healthy animals?  
**[RI.6.1; RH.6–8.1; SL.6.1]**

- Why did the California governor resist announcing that plague had been found in California after Kinyoun had found it? What was the governor’s motivation?  
**[RI.6.1; RH.6–8.1; SL.6.1]**
- What are the different ways that people get infected with bubonic plague?  
**[RI.6.1; RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.3; SL.6.1]**

### ***In-depth Questions for Thinking about the Text***

How did the author piece together how plague affected people in the distant past? What resources did she use to find the information?

**[RI.6.1, RI.6.3; RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.9; SL.6.1]**

How do the pictures of the symptoms of bubonic plague throughout the text make you feel? How do they add to the narrative and your understanding (or take away from it)?

**[RI.6.1; RH.6–8.1; SL.6.1]**

Over the years, what are some of the common reactions of human beings to the threat of an outbreak of bubonic plague? Cite examples from the book.

**[RI.6.1; RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.5; SL.6.1]**

How did certain cultural lifestyles affect the spread of bubonic plague? Cite examples from the text of certain living conditions and habits (such as walking barefoot) that caused people to inadvertently catch or pass on the disease.

**[RI.6.1; RH.6–8.1; SL.6.1]**

What does the confusion about the first American victim’s name show about the Chinatown community and the newspapers reporting on the death?

**[RI.6.1; RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.2, RH.6–8.7; SL.6.1]**

When plague broke out in the Chinatown section of San Francisco, many people suspected the plague was somehow connected to people of Asian heritage. What factors led people to think the disease had something to do with the victims’ heritage? What was the actual reason Chinatown was likely the place where bubonic plague came to America?

**[RI.6.1; RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.3; SL.6.1]**

Explain why the treatment of people in Chinatown was considered unconstitutional. In what ways had the California health officials violated the rights of the people in Chinatown?

**[RI.6.1; RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.2, RH.6–8.3; SL.6.1]**

Observation plays a huge role in the scientific process. Explain how scientists and doctors throughout the decades learned about plague from observing people, places, animals, and bacteria. In a more general sense, explain how human beings use observation to learn about the world.

**[RI.6.1; SL.6.1]**

Compare Joseph Kinyoun’s approach to cleaning up Chinatown to Rupert Blue’s approach. How did their approaches differ? Why were their treatments so different?

**[RI.6.1; RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.3; SL.6.1]**

## **After Reading**

### ***Questions for Discussion***

Nonfiction often has the reputation of being less suspenseful in comparison to fiction, but the writer defies that expectation. What are some storytelling techniques that the writer uses to drum up suspense?

**[RI.6.1, RI.6.3, RI.6.5, RI.6.9; RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.5, RH.6–8.6; SL.6.1]**

The author feels that rats are so representative of bubonic panic that they not only appear throughout the book, but also on the cover. As a class, brainstorm all the ways that rats are connected to bubonic plague. How did they contract the disease, spread the disease, warn people of the coming of the disease, and ultimately help scientists to better understand and combat the disease?

**[RI.6.1, RI.6.2, RI.6.3, RI.6.5, RI.6.9; W.6.7; RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.2, RH.6–8.5, RH.6–8.6; SL.6.1]**

One factor that exacerbated the problem of the plague is misinformation. Find examples in the text of people intentionally or unintentionally spreading misinformation. How can you avoid being misguided by misinformation? What does the bubonic plague teach us about the possible consequences of spreading or believing misinformation?

**[RI.6.1, RI.6.2; RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.2, RH.6–8.7; SL.6.1]**

## ***Ideas for Going Beyond the Text***

Think about the area of the world where you live. In what ways is bubonic plague most likely to occur in your area? What animals are common in your area that carry bubonic plague and pass it to humans? What are some precautions we can take, as a society and as individuals, to avoid the spread of bubonic plague? After students share their ideas, allow time for further research into this question. Have students present their findings in an essay, video, or discussion, making sure to cite the sources for their information.

**[W.6.4, W.6.6, W.6.7, W.6.8, W.6.9; SL.6.1, SL.6.2, SL.6.5]**

Have students write a true story—either something that happened to them personally, or an event from yesterday. Students should use storytelling techniques to tell the story as if it were a narrative instead of simply restating the facts. Have students bring their stories to a class discussion. Volunteers can read excerpts from their work. Ask students what difficulties they encountered while presenting their nonfiction accounts as narrative stories. Then ask what difficulties they think Jarrow might have encountered when writing this text.

**[W.6.3, W.6.4, W.6.5, W.6.9]**

Using a printout of a world map, have students use the book and other resources, such as websites or an encyclopedia, to show where plague showed up from the year 542 until today.

**[W.6.2.A; RH.6–8.7]**

Break students into groups and ask each group to create a different type of graphic organizer to capture details from the book. For instance, one group could create a timeline of the different scientific discoveries that changed the way we fight plague. After students create their various graphic organizers, examine each one as a class. Discuss the benefits of each type of graphic organizer in understanding a situation.

**[RI.6.1, RI.6.7; W.6.4, W.6.5, W.6.7, W.6.9; RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.7; SL.6.1, SL.6.2, SL.6.4]**

Have students create a pamphlet that explains how bubonic plague is contracted. Include steps people can take to limit their likelihood of getting sick. Extend this activity by splitting the class into groups. Each group could create a flyer that informs people how to avoid bubonic plague in a specific time

period. Use this project as a jumping off point for analyzing how people's understanding of the disease changed over time.

**[RI.6.1, RI.6.7; W.6.4, W.6.5, W.6.6, W.6.9; SL.6.1, SL.6.5]**

Have students do a close read of Chapter Seven. Ask students what they remember about the chapter, then have them reread it, stopping periodically to have students summarize small sections of text and take notes. Once the close reading is finished, discuss the different forms of discrimination aimed at Chinese people in America. What are some other examples of America assigning blame to one cultural group and treating them unfairly as a result? What are the factors that lead to discriminatory treatment of a cultural group, and how does the U.S. Constitution and federal law aim to limit cultural discrimination?

**[RI.6.1, RI.6.2, RI.6.3, RI.6.5; W.6.9; RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.2; SL.6.1, SL.6.2]**

## **Research Further**

Explore these websites that provide more information about bubonic plague:

### ***World Health Organization***

<http://www.who.int/topics/plague/en/>

### ***History.com***

<http://www.history.com/topics/black-death>

### ***BBC***

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/middle\\_ages/black\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/middle_ages/black_01.shtml)



# BUBONIC PANIC

## When Plague Invaded America

by Gail Jarrow

978-1-62091-738-1

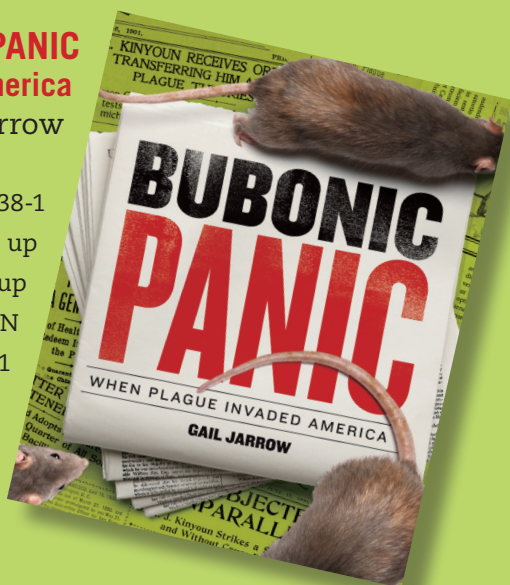
Ages 10 and up

Grades 5 and up

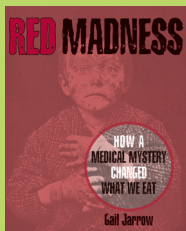
\$18.95 U.S. / \$24.50 CAN

e-book 978-1-62979-562-1

\$9.99



### Also available:

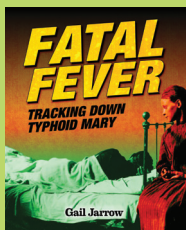


### RED MADNESS

How a Medical Mystery Changed What We Eat

978-1-59078-732-8 • \$16.95 U.S. / \$21.99 CAN

e-book 978-1-62979-215-6 • \$9.99



### FATAL FEVER Tracking Down Typhoid Mary

978-1-62091-597-4 • \$16.95 U.S. / \$21.99 CAN

e-book 978-1-62979-060-2 • \$9.99

Available to the trade from Perseus Distribution.  
Contact your Perseus sales representative, customer service at (800) 343-4499, or [orderentry@perseusbooks.com](mailto:orderentry@perseusbooks.com).

For marketing inquiries, contact [marketing@calkinscreekbooks.com](mailto:marketing@calkinscreekbooks.com).

This guide was created by Marie Jaskulka.



CALKINS CREEK



BOYD'S MILLS PRESS

Highlights

[calkinscreekbooks.com](http://calkinscreekbooks.com) • [boydsmillspress.com](http://boydsmillspress.com) • [gailjarrow.com](http://gailjarrow.com)