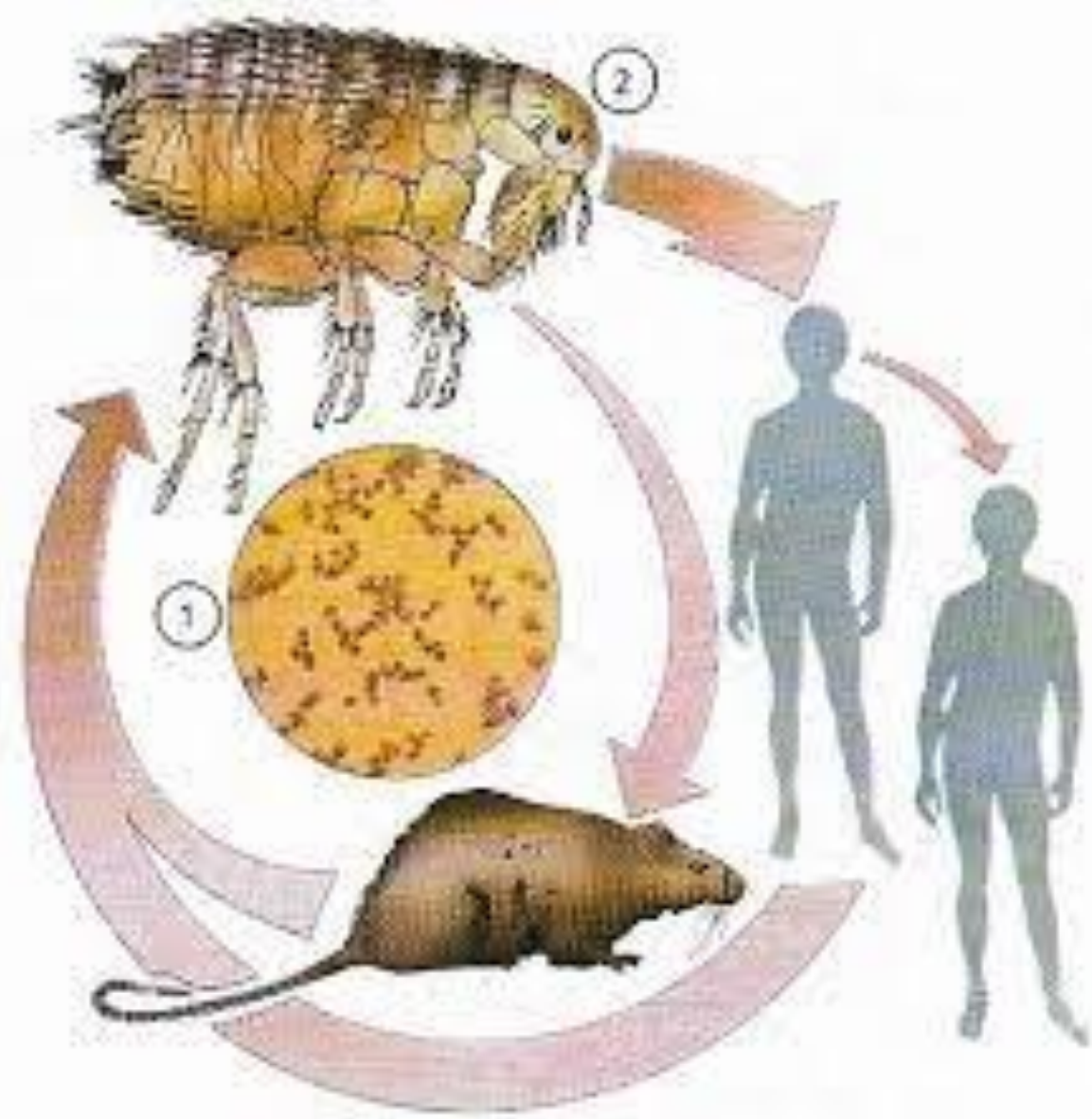


What caused the Black Death?













**What can the skeletons of
Black Death victims tell us
about their lives?**





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- Key radio carbon-14 dating has revealed at least two distinct periods of burials.
- The earliest is within the period of the Black Death in 1348-50, followed by a later period dating from the early to mid 1400s.
- Archaeologists observed the different layers of burials during excavation.
- Together with the presence of the plague-causing *Yersinia pestis* bacterium in skeletons across both layers of burials, it shows the cemetery was used for two separate plague events between 1348 and the 1430s.
- Historical records suggest tens of thousands of people were buried in this emergency cemetery.

Scientists have analysed the **bones** and the Isotope levels in the skeletons' bones and **teeth** to gain an insight into the **birth**, **life** and **diet** of Londoners during the 14th and 15th centuries.

The results showed that:

1. Many of the skeletons appear to suffer signs of malnutrition and 16% had rickets.
2. 40% of the those tested grew up outside of London possibly as far north as Scotland – showing that 14th century London attracted people from across Britain just as it does today.

3. The later skeletons from the 1400s had a high rate of upper body injury showing they were involved in violent altercations.
4. One individual had become a vegetarian later in life which is something a Carthusian monk would have done at that time.
5. 13 of the skeletons were male, three female, two children, the gender was undetermined in the other seven skeletons.
6. High rate of back damage and strain indicating heavy manual labour.