How Problems in the 14th Century Brought Changes to European Society

By Elisa Oh

Problems in the 14th century included famine, disease, warfare, and financial collapse. These problems were all connected to each other, because warfare sapped the money and resources needed to provide care for victims of the Black Plague. The Europeans learned from their mistakes during the Renaissance and made some permanent decisions, changing society forever.

During the Black Plague, there was also war involving different countries. War causes collapses in finance, because the leaders take the money normally used for necessities, such as food and health, and use it for weapons and hiring troops. This collapses the economy and opens black markets, as people want to get everyday items, such as food, books, and other items a different way. Since the demand for these items go up, people take advantage and start selling their own supplies, or supplies that they gained illegally.

 Many wealthy families that lived in this time period consisted of merchants. Since rich families made up the group of people made up the “government” during the Italian Renaissance, the lack of profit cut out from everyday usage of money, such as buying food from the lower class/farmers to sell. Instead of using the money for buying things to craft, they spent money on weapons and items necessary for war. This causes a huge financial collapse as the “government” runs out of money to provide for other things. When the Black Plague struck, the government was spending money on warfare resources instead of science, research, and medicines. This caused millions of Europeans to die because there was not enough money being put into research to find a cure for the Black Plague, or at least a temporary cure.

After the Black Plague, people in Europe started to take precautions to ensure that another financial collapse didn’t happen. They started developing capitalism to manage money, and to develop a better governing system. This system spread throughout Europe, and while values and laws varied from place to place, capitalism still helped keep money and governing in check. When people eventually started travelling and inhabiting new places around the earth many years later, capitalism was a big ideal and without it, maybe some parts of the American governing system wouldn't have existed today. Without the major problems that occurred during the 14th century, the whole world might not be the same as today.

In conclusion, the problems in the 14th century helped shape European society because from the issues, a new society was formed and without it, the world would be without capitalism and much different from today.