

Charles F. Briggs: *The Body Broken: Medieval Europe 1300–1520*. Routledge, 2011, p. 7.

At the start of the fifteenth century the population of Latin Christian Europe was just over half what it had been a century before. Wracked by famine, deadly epidemics, war and insurrection, it is no wonder that the fourteenth century has gained the dubious distinction of being the most deadly in recorded history, and of only being equalled, in terms of savagery and misery, by the calamity wrought by the totalitarian social engineering and total war of the first half of the twentieth century. If the fifteenth century offered some improvement, it was not enough to allow the population to rebound in any significant way. Not until the last quarter of the fifteenth century would Europe's population begin to recover, and it would not again achieve its c. 1300 level until the mid-sixteenth century in Germany, and not until the seventeenth in Western Europe, or even perhaps the eighteenth in England. The chief cause of this dramatic demographic decline and persistent trough was the murderous pandemic of pestilence, the Black Death, which swept through much of the eastern hemisphere in the 1340s, and ravaged Europe from the end of 1347 until 1351. Yet this one episode, which was responsible for having wiped out between one-third and one-half of Europe's population, does not, on its own, explain late medieval Europe's long term demographic malaise...

1. Co bylo hlavní příčinou dramatického demografického poklesu?
2. V jakém smyslu a ohledu lze přirovnat čtrnácté století k první polovině dvacátého?
3. Stačí nalezení jedné příčiny k vysvětlení toho, proč na tom byla pozdně středověká Evropa demograficky dlouhodobě špatně?