

Things to think about: Defoe, Journal of the Plague Year  
(pages refer to Norton Critical Edition)

How does a comparison of his description of the epidemic compare with the selections from his sources? The Bills of mortality? The early 17<sup>th</sup> century orders? (Then the orders promulgated in anticipation of a new visitation)

How would you compare *Journal of the Plague Year* with the excerpts of Defoe's newspaper reporting on the plague in continental Europe in 1721?

Why do you think he chose to present this experience in a first person narrative rather than a third person narrative?

What is the narrator--the "I"--like? How do you know?

To what extent does the evidentiary value of Defoe's narrative depend on him having been an eye witness? To what extent does its persuasiveness depend on H.F.'s claim to have been an eyewitness?

What was it like to experience the London plague of 1665?

What did you think of HF's deliberations about whether to go or to stay? (P. 11 ff.)

Is it appropriate to make moral judgments about people's responses to a spreading epidemic?

What does HF think about the policy of confining all residents of households in which there had been a single case of plague?

People sneaking away and abandoning dead or dying servants? (45-47)

Discussion of core moral issue of duty to community vs. duty to self? (48-9)

"Innocent corruption" of watchmen? (51)

What would it have been like to be one of the watchmen hired to make sure that infected families were confined to their houses?

If you had been a policy maker during the epidemic that Defoe described, what would you have done? Why would you have enforced a policy that apparently didn't work, and might even have led to the spread of the plague?

Why does he think that shutting up houses was bound to fail? (61-62)

What do you think of his three practical recommendations in case of future epidemics? (63-64)

How did London society respond to this catastrophe? How did the social fabric hold together? Were there any signs of social crisis?

What are the implications of comparing the plague to a fire? (see 34--also Hodge 213)

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