

visiting Mecca. From Genoa and Venice it crept down the Italian boot toward Florence and Rome. Going west, it struck Marseilles, Tunis, and Barcelona. By June, the epidemic was storming Paris, causing the French royal family to flee to Rouen,<sup>10</sup> where it soon followed. That summer, it overran Germany, Poland, and Hungary and crossed the channel to southern England.

90 Winter did not slow its progress. The weather was unusually mild and wet, perhaps warm enough for fleas living on house rats to remain active. Huddled indoors, people were also exposed to air contaminated both by those suffering from pneumonic plague and by the dust from rodent droppings.

As the disease moved northward through England, citizens of Lincoln wrote wills at 30 times the normal annual rate. At first, the Scots avoided the plague, but when they assembled troops to invade England, pestilence<sup>11</sup> struck, perhaps imported by soldiers from France.

The Black Death landed in Scandinavia on a ship carrying wool from  
100 London to Norway. The ship had run aground near Bergen because all the crew had died. From there, plague spread across Norway, into Sweden, and across the Baltic Sea to Russia.

### The Journey Ends

In 1350, plague peaked in Scotland and Scandinavia, while in southern Spain, it killed King Alfonso XI of Castile. The following year, it stretched to Greenland, where it helped wipe out the Norwegian colony, and to Yemen, at the tip of the Arabian peninsula. In 1353, it closed in on Moscow, killing both the patriarch of the Russian church and the grand duke of Muscovy.

110 Finally, the Black Death petered out somewhere in Kiev, having come almost full circle back to Kaffa. During its long **rampage**, between one-third and one-half of the population of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East died. No natural disaster before or since has caused such devastation of human life over such a large area. It was one of the greatest catastrophes in human history. **E**



A priest blesses plague-infected monks. Illumination from *Omne Bonum* (about 1370), Jacobus Anglicus. Ms. Royal 6, E VI, fol. 301. © British Library/akg-images.

**rampage** (rām'pāj') *n.* a wild or violent outbreak

#### **E** PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION

Reread lines 103–119. Which words signal the pattern of organization? How does the final subheading reinforce this organization?

10. **Rouen** (rōō-ān'): a city in France, about 84 miles northwest of Paris.

11. **pestilence** (pēs'tē-lens): any disease that spreads rapidly and causes many deaths.