

Shatin Pui Ying Post

MATRIX

March 2018



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English Literature Society

One of the major highlights of the English Literature Society is the annual pilgrimage to a drama performance. This year, the show we have chosen is an adaptation of the famous play **Waiting for Godot** by Irish writer Samuel Beckett.


Unlike usual plot-based drama we have selected from the past few years, the English Literature Society decides to explore the **Theatre of the Absurd** with our senior form students, and introduces them to philosophical concepts by **Friedrich Nietzsche** (尼采). Let's see what they have to say about this experience.

I was a little bit confused at first: why the two men have to wait for Godot for so long even when he doesn't seem to be coming. However, after I have re-evaluated the plot, I can guess what the playwright wants to express — **hope**. Even when we do not know what the future might be, we still have to stay positive and hopeful.

[Tiffany Lau 4C]

The repeating moves and dialogues seem boring and meaningless on the surface; however, it prompts us to **reconsider the nature and meaning of life**. We usually see life as a linear line; we believe we are moving forward every day to a better and brighter future. Yet is it in reality a cycle like the play, where there is a little boy informing that you are always one step away from Godot? It is the experience of this repeated question that we eventually ask ourselves **where we are going to**. Perhaps, in the end, we are leading a repetitive life just like Estragon and Vladimir.

[Kitty Cheng 4C]



Although this version of *Waiting for Godot* is a little bit different from that of the original version, the way the playwright expresses the theme still inspires me a lot. By inserting Chinese Opera into Theatre of the Absurd, it makes the whole performance more attractive since not all the audience could bear the "boredom" or the silence of the latter. I think this is a **good introductory level** to understanding Theatre of the Absurd!

[Rachel Chan 4C]



The higher my hope rises,
the greater my fear is

Theatre of the Absurd is famous for its lack of meaning on the surface of the text, where actors prompts the audience to question the meaning of their existence when speech becomes meaningless.

This adaptation focuses on a Chinese context and a more entertaining approach, involving Peking Opera and Kung Fu elements in the play.



Make haste, before he stops

Samuel Beckett is an Irish playwright who mixes black comedy in his minimalistic plays.



His most famous works include *Endgame*, *Krapp's Last Tape*, and *Happy Days*.



The higher my hope rises,
the greater my fear is



If you are interested in learning more about English Literature, you are more than welcome to join our society and our general meetings :)

English Week



Hi! I'm Governor Chris Patten's favourite snack!

S.2 Mascot Showcase—these Hong Kong-style mascots demonstrate the workmanship and creativity of students.



Skyscrapers are surely an icon of Hong Kong!



Korean star? Very beautiful? Who are you talking about...?



S.1 English Fun Day— students have to accurately describe what appears on the screen so that their groupmates can guess what that is.





Can I have s'more please? :)



Food Tasting — students who are able to answer one simple question will get some tasty snacks for dessert.

Tongue Twister — "Tongue-Twisting Ladies" are introducing some tongue-twisters to students. Students have to say it without stumbling in order to get the prize.





Am I allowed to bring Doraemon inside to help me destroy all the Grievors?



Don't be silly! Doraemon comes from the 22nd century! Maze Runner presumably takes place in the 23rd!



S5 Youth Forum — Students assume the role of a Maze Runner, and are allowed to choose 2 items to bring with them inside the Maze. What do you think they will choose?

All About Allergies

4C - Valerie Young

While acute illnesses can be cured by medicine, less “deadly” but more chronic problems such as allergies are a nuisance to many. When it comes to allergies, there are numerous tough and mysterious ones around the globe, and some of them even remain undiagnosed till now. In the following, I will introduce several types of allergies to all you. Let’s see if you have heard of any one of them before! :)

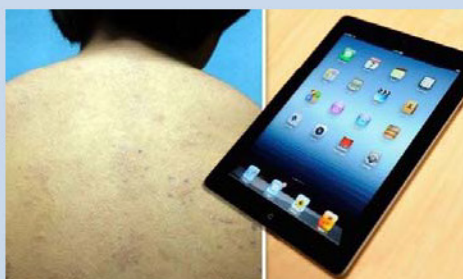
One of the rarest allergies in the world is [water allergy](#). It is a rare condition where only 40 people worldwide are known to have this problem. The symptoms include painful and itchy rash and even blisters when the skin is in contact with water. It is hard to imagine that the sufferers could only take a shower for at most 10 seconds per week. In addition, they need to drink diet coke instead of water. It is so inconceivable since 70% of human body is composed of water whereas some people can be allergic to it. Scholars suggested the allergy tends to be caused by an allergen in water rather than water. Nevertheless, the underlying cause of water allergy is still uncertain; there is currently no specific remedy for this rare condition. Hopefully, cures can be discovered in the future to cure sufferers from this affliction.



Other than this rare allergy, there is a more common allergy in comparison with water allergy — [nickel allergy](#). Nickel is a kind of metal often combined with other metals like iron and copper to produce many

daily necessities. The cause of nickel allergy is once again unknown. It occurs when sufferers' immune system detects and views nickel as harmful. Itchy rash and allergic contact dermatitis appear if the skin is in contact with items containing nickel. As such, sufferers have to avoid contact with coins, zippers, body-piercing jewelry made out of nickel, and so on.

Undoubtedly, the most concerned issue of the teenagers would be whether gadgets can be used. The truth is, most tablets contain nickel and other elements that would cause an allergic reaction. But



does this mean they have to bid their smartphones and tablets goodbye? The good news is, there are methods to prevent direct contact with electronic gadgets. For instance, applying screen protector film and phone case. Alternatively, gadgets made from other materials can be used. Similar to water allergy, there seems to be no remedy for nickel allergy so far due to the lack of a complete diagnosis, but there are several treatments for treating nickel allergy. Sufferers are advised to moisturize their hands frequently. Once rash appears, **lotion** should be applied to alleviate the allergic reaction.

All in all, there are still many types of allergies except the two mentioned above. The consequences of allergies should not be neglected as they can be fatal. Therefore, extra attention should be paid to health care. Sufferers can start by applying small treatments, for example, the usage of nasal spray for nasal allergy and eye drops for eye allergies, in order to ease the allergy symptoms and defeat allergies gradually.

Special Syndromes

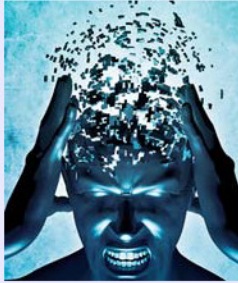
To begin with, I would like to ask you a question: what do you think about diseases? In the past I often linked diseases with pain, suffering or death. However, there are several diseases which, to the sufferers are rather torturing, but may seem fascinating to outsiders.

One of the relatively more interesting disease is called "[Alice in Wonderland Syndrome](#)" (AIWS). In Lewis Carroll's novel, Alice drinks a potion and turns very small to go through the door. This syndrome was first discovered by a British psychiatrist, Dr. John Todd, in 1955. AIWS mostly targets young children, affecting their visual perception and involving an array of symptoms that include temporary altered image of the shapes of objects. To the children with AIWS, they would appear to be smaller or larger than normal. The symptoms often happen less than an hour, and occur up to several times a day. Essentially, patients suffering from AIWS experience distorted



time, space, and body image. They feel as if their bodies have been transformed in size and they have visual hallucinations. Even till now, there are no proven treatment methods for AIWS; however, rest and dietary changes are indicated as helpful, and most cases, like fairytales, disappear when the child reaches adulthood.

I guess many of you somehow have had nightmares before, but have you experienced a painless loud bang , a clash of cymbals or a bomb exploding before you fall asleep? If yes, you probably have the [Exploding Head Syndrome](#) (EHS). This syndrome was first found as long ago as 1876, but it was not given its colourful title until 1988.



EHS is a parasomnia, which involves undesired events that come along with sleep. This can cause a high level of distress and fear. Victims of EHS may sometimes think they are having a stroke too. These moments can happen very rarely, but they can also occur many times in one night. Some have noticed that it may occur more often when you are very tired or under stress. The good news is, many people have noted that it occurred much less frequently over a period of years.

If you find the above examples troublesome, wait till you hear about [prosopagnosia](#), which disrupts your everyday and even social life. Nowadays, many celebrities have undergone plastic surgeries and look similar to each other, or in other cases, there are identical twins who look almost the same too. But for patients suffering from prosopagnosia, these aren't the only cases that would get them confused. They cannot remember even their family and friends' faces. Some of them may not even recognize themselves when they look in the mirror. Suffering from face blindness, these patients may use alternative strategies to recognize people, such as remembering the way they walk, their hairstyle, voice or fashion style. As people with prosopagnosia tend to find social life difficult, they may avoid social interaction altogether and develop social anxiety disorder. They may also have difficulty forming relationships or experience problems with their career, thus having depression isn't uncommon at all. Luckily, they can be improved through training programs that are currently developed by scientists.



To conclude, the above syndromes do not seem to be like the common illnesses we identify as dangerous and deadly, such as cancer, lupus, or cirrhosis. Nonetheless, they cause inconvenience to patients and their family members. We should be thankful that we are healthy and accept people who are enduring the difficulties.

Not My Priority!

4C - Henry Chu

It was 2003. News headlines bombarded every television in Hong Kong.

‘ANOTHER DOCTOR LOST LIFE TO DISEASE’

‘SCHOOL SUSPENDED FOR ANOTHER TWO WEEKS’

‘TERRIBLE RESPIRATORY DISEASE PROVED TO BE AIRBORNE’

No one in the house dared to go out even for a small trip to buy necessities.

Everyone in Hong Kong learnt a valuable lesson that year— except for one year-old Jeff, who had no idea what was happening all over Hong Kong.

10 Years passed.

Jeff became a 10-year old child, studying normally in an elementary school.

Like most students, he had grown into a holiday-loving, school-hating little boy.



‘School is just boring!’

‘Of course! Only nerds like Jane like school!’ They would chuckle to one another.

‘I really wish I could go out to play these days, instead of doing nothing here!’

‘I don’t care what we would do; I just don’t wanna go to school!’

‘But what’s the best excuse to get away from this?’

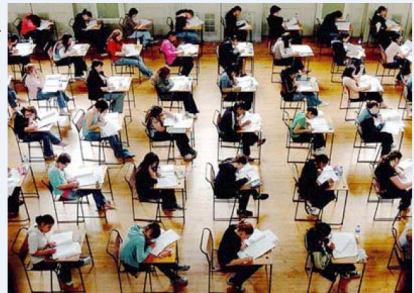
‘Well, we can always try to get make ourselves ill by getting a fever, then we can at least get away from school for several days...’ Jeff said.

‘Really? But...you can’t play, you can’t eat your favourite food, and... you will have to take horrible medicine!’

‘True... but it’s better than going to school!’

Everyone giggled in agreement. ‘This kid named Jeff seemed to have a point,’ they would think. After all, everything is second priority to skipping school.

Almost another 10 years passed, and Jeff started to mature into a teenager. His belief evolved during his secondary school years, and became drastically different particularly in the year of his public exam. To him, now, school and results are of the highest priority.



‘Anything for an admission slip to HKU,’ he would chant.

On the morning of his first public exam, he woke up to find himself feeling a bit queasy.

‘Please...don’t let it be...’ He slowly inserted the body thermometer into his ear, trembling with uneasiness and fear.

With his heart in his mouth, he pressed the button.

‘Phew!’ He gave a sigh of relief to find that the recording was 37.9 degrees, right below the required 38 degrees cut-off line. ‘I can’t miss this!



Nothing can take away my hard work!’ Jeff said to himself.

Indeed. Being ill was one of the last things that a DSE student would want to happen. But health is beside the point now. It would just mess up this golden hour — ‘and possibly my entire life too!’ Jeff said to himself.

After 10 more years of hard work, Jeff became a successful man. He was enjoying his success in work and the feeling of leading a hundred people in his company.

'Good morning, Mandy.'

'Mr Chan,' Mandy sensed something. 'You look a bit pale; you ok?'

In the attempt to say he was fine, Jeff only blurted a phlegmy cough.

'Your cough is getting worse! And it has lasted for a week already!'

'Trust me, I'm fine! I can still work...' Jeff squeezed out breathlessly.

Mandy sneaked half a step back, saying, 'You hadn't slept in days!'

Jeff didn't exactly hear what she said, but it didn't take a genius to guess what she was insinuating. 'Stop mumbling and start working. Meeting's in 5 minutes!'

Mandy immediately stumbled back to her seat and started printing agendas.

10 more years passed, and Jeff was in his forties. He had brought his family wealth and fame, and he felt so proud of what he had achieved.

But this year, everything became different, because yet another terrible epidemic had struck Hong Kong.

'UNFORESEEN VIRUS TERRORIZES EAST ASIA'

'DEATH TOLL SURGED THROUGH THREE DIGITS IN 3 WEEKS'

'EPIDEMIC PROVED TO BE HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS'

Jeff didn't know he had been through one before, so he really had no idea how powerful it could be.



‘But what harm could it do?’ Jeff asked himself. ‘Health had never been my priority, it hasn’t stopped me before, and it most definitely won’t stop me now — not when I’m about to establish my own business empire.’

What he didn’t know was, his lack of rest had made him vulnerable to the disease for having low immunity. Another thing he didn’t know was, this epidemic was even worse than the one forty years ago.

10 days later, he was diagnosed to have contracted the disease.

‘No! I don’t want to be in the hospital! I’ll be fine.’

‘Sir, this is official protocol. It’s not up to you.’

‘This isn’t like cancer! I’ll recover soon...’ Jeff bargained.

‘You’re right, Mr Chan, it’s not cancer — it’s worse.’

Sobbing, struggling, even kicking... Jeff did all he could to avoid the fate of being quarantined, but to no avail. What was needed to be done was done.



10 hours later, Jeff was laid in a single room. Everything was peaceful and white, and it seemed almost serene, except for the eerie panting of the breathing machine every other second.

Jeff stared at the ceiling, and a tear dropped down his face. He wondered how his health could have deteriorated so swiftly in the past hours, and how on earth he would have thought he could beat sickness. He wondered why it never occurred to him that health was one’s most prized possession. But it seemed too late now. No one was allowed to visit him. No one was even allowed to just wave at him from the window. He was, all alone.

He saw nothing but pure white above him. He could almost hear nothing — except for his breath, longer and thinner every second, and gradually getting fainter and fainter...

Chocolate and Us

Let's have a wild guess, which is the most popular food type of snack around the world at present? I'm sure many of you can guess the answer: it is of course our beloved chocolate! Not only do Hong Kong people enjoy eating chocolate, but different people around the world also enjoy chocolate on different occasions. But do you know what the origin of the "first chocolate bar" is? Have you ever wondered why chocolate can be so sweet and tasty? What makes chocolate so special? Why do people offer chocolates to one another at some special festivals?

To begin our chocolate adventure, let's first talk about how it is made. Chocolate is usually made from **Cacao**, seeds that come from a Cacao tree. After collecting the seeds, they will be heated and soon liquefied, thereby transforming into a liquid called chocolate liquor. It will then be cooled and frozen into its two components: cocoa solids and cocoa butter. Cocoa solids and cocoa butter are the most basic elements when one bakes the real chocolate; without adding sugar, it is called bitter chocolate, otherwise called dark chocolate.

Some of you may ask: much of the chocolate we eat nowadays seem to be quite sweet; what happened in the middle then? In fact, today's chocolate is a combination of cocoa solids, cocoa butter, vegetable oils and tons of sugar. By adding in sugar, dark chocolate is then transformed into milk chocolate, which is generally the most popular type.



It was invented by Daniel Peter and Henri Nestle from Switzerland, who added milk powder and condensed milk into the baking chocolate, making it much sweeter in the process. Speaking of which, does the surname "Nestle" look familiar?

Fast forward to 1847, and we see Joseph Fry, founder of Fry's of Bristol, discovering a way to mix the ingredients of cocoa powder, sugar and cocoa to manufacture a paste that could be molded into a chocolate bar proper for consumption.



Later, Fry and John Cadbury, founder of Cadbury, introduced their first chocolate bar to the public and were welcomed by the people for many decades. They were also the ones who produced the first chocolate Easter egg in the UK in 1873.

Nowadays, many people offer different kinds of chocolate to one another at different festivals. Easter eggs are most likely the first festival that chocolate is used to celebrate and given to people (Thanks to Cadbury). Chocolate are molded into eggs and rabbits and traditionally given in Christian groups. Chocolate hearts will be given to lovers on Valentine's Day to express your care to your other half. Nowadays, chocolate, like a heart shape, is almost viewed as an equivalent to love.

Yet inside its perfect shell, chocolate does bring harm to people. An ounce of chocolate contains nearly 145 calories and 8-10 grams of fat. Although it sounds not that big a deal; if you include it in every diet, I'm pretty sure weight is the only thing you will gain in the end. Remember, a moment on the lips, forever on the hips!

In short, chocolate truly brings much joy to us regardless of time, space, and people. It certainly lives up to its mission — to make people feel happy anytime, anywhere! :)

Black Death

4C - Samantha Ho

During the 14th century, a disastrous plague broke out in Europe, leading to the decline of Catholic Church at the time. From a health issue to a religious issue, the occurrence, cause, and existence of Black Death is still a mystery to many of us, including experts of plagues. Even till now, Black Death has its disputes among the experts.

One of the biggest controversies is the pathogen (cause of disease) of **Black Death**. Some experts think it was a variant kind of rat plague, and the major theory to explain the pathogen of Black Death was that it originated from rats and fleas. Fleas which lived on rats sting their hosts to inhale their blood, carrying their bacteria onto the next target. When the flea bites a human being, the germs which were originally stored in the flea's stomach entered the human's body through blood flow, causing the human to contract the disease.



After years of research and examination, **Barney Sloane**, a historian, stated one main point to prove the rat plague theory is illogical. He believed that if the fleas sucked in bacteria enough to infect a human, the rats should fundamentally also be infected and would cause a broad-scale death of rats. Yet no such phenomenon was ever observed during the time of Black Death. Sloane claimed that the rat plague theory should not be appreciated, while his own inference is that the cause of disease is an unknown pathogen.

No conclusion is ultimately drawn as per the cause of Black Death, even when the society is as evolved and well-developed as it is today; but among all the uncertainties, it is for sure that the unhygienic environment in those days was a determinate reason for the plague. To some extent, the Europeans who were killed in those

days were more so done by their **superstition and ignorance towards hygiene** than even causes like natural disaster.

Besides causing a **sharp decline in the European population**, Black Death was also so powerful that it intensified conflicts among social classes. The rich who witnessed the repercussion of Black Death and could afford to evacuate from the affected area would move out to avert infection. After the situation eventually mitigated, they then hired poor people to live in their house, and observe whether their “guest” got infected before they moved into their house again. At that time, it was as though wealthy people could buy the lives of the poor and treat them as experimental objects.

However, the influence of Black Death doesn't stop here. As aforementioned, it even shook the seemingly rock-solid leading position of the Catholic Church at that time. The priests ascribed the cause of disease as “God condemns”, so they asked the people to repent and even perform self-whip for redemption purposes and beg for God's forgiveness. Of course, no matter how the people prayed and hurt themselves, God could not save them from the plague. Ironically, it even worsened the epidemic, since the virus invaded human bodies and their wounds made them more susceptible to contraction. Irresponsibly, the clergymen not only refused to live upon their own “teachings”, but even escaped from the church and country to avoid the disease. As a result, people's faith on the **Catholic church crumbled** entirely.

Black Death was notably one of the greatest European tragedies in recorded history, bring ground-breaking consequences to individuals, society, and even religion. Although the event seemed traumatic, it was fortunate enough that it revealed the inadequacies of then-Europe, which thereby fostered the continent to move onto the Renaissance period — a new era that fundamentally transformed humanity and earmarked one of the most remarkable developments in European history.



The 1894 Plague

“When memories are always in bits and pieces, the depiction of history can only be an attempt to combine traces of the past into a full picture; history is never comprehensive.”

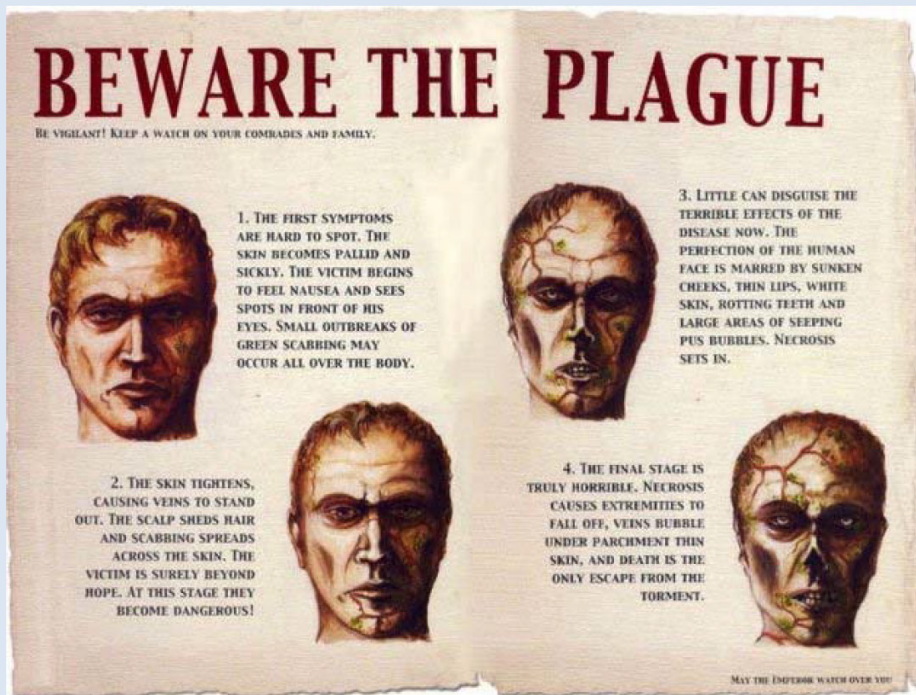
For most of the general public, official narratives are often one of the major sources of knowing the past of Hong Kong, especially the colonial history. However, history can never be objective; for instance, Hong Kong’s historical narration of significant issues such as plague, are under elaborated in only a short paragraph on one single piece of exhibition board, without mentioning any concrete policy reformations made so as to downplay the British government contributions. The short paragraph exhibited is as follow,

“As predicted by the Chadwick Report in 1882, a dreadful plague in 1894 in the Chinese-populated Tai Ping Shan district occurred because of the poor sanitary conditions in Hong Kong. In response, the Government introduced a series of preventative measures to halt the spread of plague, closing and subsequently clearing much of the Tai Ping Shan district in what is now known as Sheung Wan. The plague took 2500 lives and recurred in various degrees of gravity in the subsequent years until 1920. The plague forced the Government to reform its educational, public health and medical policies.”

—“The Plague and Sanitary Problem”

(Extracted Text from The Hong Kong Story Exhibition)

In fact, [the plague in 1894](#) is a significant part of the local history which puts forward those remarkable reformations in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, as the document shows, a lot of important details of the incident, such as the origin of plague, people who contribute at the frontline, and exactly what contribution did the government make concerning the plague, are being neglected. Not to mention how our history book only briefly went through the topic of public health in 1894. Now, let's reflect more upon the history, and focus on the details which are often overlooked. In the following paragraphs, it would be a highlight on the cultural clashes between Westerners and Chinese at that time, and how it resulted in the outbreak of plague and hindering of the implementation of new policies. I would also like to hereby express my greatest gratitude to those frontline fighters during the outbreak of the dreadful bubonic plague.



For the [origin](#) of the plague, it has always been a mystery to many as it is often not clearly stated on official websites. This is probably due to two reasons, the importation of the bubonic plague from Canton, and the

initial nonintervention policy of the British government. In most history books today, Hong Kong plague in 1894 originated from the Yunnan Province in 1855, and continued in the years after. The plague then reached the city of Canton in 1894 and hit Hong Kong in May 1894, leading it to be declared as an infected port. From a more scientific view, we believe that the transportation network that led to all part of the city is more likely to cause the spread of plague from Canton to Hong Kong. At that time, Hong Kong



had more than 11000 people arriving from Canton and neighboring cities weekly. However, no systems or policies of inspecting sickness of visitors were set up. Hence, it is possible for sick people to arrive at Hong Kong and spread the plague. Adding to this point, Hong Kong was not informed nor alerted to the serious plague condition in Canton till 26th April. Therefore, it was already too late for the government to realize the need to restrict visitors as the plague had already immersed into the city.

Apart from the importation of the bubonic plague from Canton, the initial nonintervention policy of the British government is also highly related. In 1883, a permanent Sanitary Board was established to improve public health. However, the public health policies still remained “laissez-



faire” as the power of the board was highly restricted because of the strong opposition of landlords. The landlords feared that the reform would result in a huge financial lost due to the fee for cleaning up and the loss of minimizing their tenants. As a result, management and control of the Chinese were still in the hand of the Tung Wah Group Directorate.

Not only the establishment of Sanitary Board, but the construction of new drains in the Chinese quarters also fail to improve public health because of the tensions between local Chinese and Westerners' governments. The noninterference policy still continued to maintain the "peaceful coexistence" of the two groups of ethnicities in Hong Kong. These all led to the first outbreak of plague in the Chinese accommodated area — Tai Ping Shan district.

During the outbreak of the plague, both Chinese and Westerners experienced cultural clashes because of the definition to plague. In 1894, the Bubonic plague was an unknown, ghost-like existence to both Westerners and Chinese. In 19th century Hong Kong, the government believed that the disease was bred

by the filth on the wooden floors. It was because the Chinese in the Tai Ping Shan District did not clean their houses regularly. In addition to the drains, rain could not get into the house and washed away those "accumulated filth" on the



"poisoned eastern floor", as the British say. On the other hand, Chinese would see British as strange and inconsiderate, which caused huge difficulties to workers doing whitewashing. Eventually, changes on the sanitary situations were made, and laws were passed with the Sanitary Board being authorized a higher degree of power to exercise their power.

However, the acceptance didn't come smoothly. As the British point of view was portrayed in the *Hong Kong Weekly Press* article, "The Plague and Chinese Opposition to Sanitary Measures", it was expressed that the Chinese took the sterilization concept and standard in a difficult manner. When the cleansing team was carrying out house-to-house disease

inspection, rebellions occurred among the locals. When the patients had to be brought to the hospitals to receive treatment, horrors, hatred were aroused from their friends and families. It was also reported that the **Chinese held a poor opinion** towards foreign medicine and refused to take them. Upon fear, anger, and hatred, the healing process was sluggish. For example, women and children would run away as they thought foreign medicine workers would chop them into pieces. There were even myths that claim these officials would “make medicine out of bones and eyes.”

Facing the intensified situation of cultural clashes, the British government restated the needs for the measures. With the reformation of policies, the plague finally came under control in the early 1900s, despite recording a total number of **2552 deaths**.

This 1894 plague has brought significant changes to Hong Kong, especially on the public health policy. It was also a full reflection of the Chinese and Western cultural clashes in the colonial city. Through this article, I hope to recommend all of you to **read beyond History books**. Try to explore history with your eyes, digest and look into it. Books are never comprehensive, so please attempt to put forward another piece of jigsaw puzzle to convey a more thorough understanding about the incident(s) that you are curious about.

Editor-in-Chief:	Kitty Cheng	4C
Editor:	Henry Chu	4C
Contributors:	Julio Tang	4A
	Samantha Ho, Tiffany Lau, Valerie Young	4C

