**Primary Source: Document B: The Decameron (excerpted)**

*The Italian writer Giovanni Boccaccio lived through the plague as it ravaged the city of Florence in 1348. In the introduction to his book, Boccaccio gives a graphic description of the effects of the epidemic on his city.*

…(S)uch terror was struck into the hearts of men and women by this calamity, that brother abandoned brother, and the uncle his nephew, and the sister her brother, and very often the wife her husband. What is even worse and nearly incredible is that fathers and mothers refused to see and tend their children…

The plight of the lower and most of the middle classes was even more pitiful to behold. Most of them remained in their houses, either through poverty or in hopes of safety, and fell sick by thousands. Since they received no care and attention, almost all of them died. Many ended their lives in the streets…and many others who died in their houses were only known to be dead because the neighbors smelled their decaying bodies….(T)hey carried the bodies out of the houses and laid them at the door; where every morning quantities of the dead might be seen.

Such was the multitude of corpses (bodies) brought to the churches every day and almost every hour that there was not enough…ground to give them burial, especially since they wanted to bury each person in the family grave, according to the old custom. Although the cemeteries were full they were forced to dig huge trenches, where they buried the bodies by hundreds.

***Source***: "The Black Death, 1348," EyeWitness to History, www.eyewitnesstohistory.com (2001).