

An American Plague:

• Library Lessons •

by | Lynne Farrell Stover

Grades
3–6

The True and Terrifying Story of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793

Enrichment Activities

Biography: Inform the students that an obituary is a notice of someone's death. It usually appears in the newspaper and often includes a short biography of that person. Instruct the students to select one of the people mentioned in the book *An American Plague* listed below and write an interesting and factual obituary about that person. Obituaries include the deceased person's:

- Full name
- Date of Death
- Place of Death
- Cause of Death
- Date of Birth
- Place of Birth
- Names of Parents
- Marriage and name of spouse
- Education
- Jobs
- Awards & Achievements
- Family (survived by)

John Adams, Napoleon Bonaparte,
Rachel Carson, Alexander Hamilton,
Thomas Jefferson, Dolley Madison,
James Madison, James Monroe,
Louis Pasteur, Walter Reed, Benjamin Rush,
George Washington, Martha Washington.
(Another choice with teacher approval)

Current Events: Epidemics and pandemics have become a byproduct of the "globalization" of the modern world. Invite the students to investigate news sources to discover if there is currently an

epidemic in some part of the world. Ask them to share what this epidemic is, how it spreading, and what measures are being put in place to control it.

Scientific Research: Humans have been "plagued" by terrible epidemics throughout history. Encourage students to research one of these diseases, list ten facts about it, and share their findings with the class. Your suggested list might include: botulism, bubonic plague (Black Death), cholera, diphtheria, influenza, leprosy, Lyme disease, malaria, measles, polio, smallpox, tuberculosis, typhoid fever, yellow fever, etc.

Economics: When it was evident there was a yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia, merchants closed their shops, supplies stopped coming in, and many people left the city for a healthier place. This situation caused many goods and services to become scarce. There was a great demand, the amount of a particular good or service consumers wanted to purchase, and very little supply, the total amount of goods and services available to purchase. The goods and services remaining in the city were being sold at very high prices.

Divide the board or a piece of chart paper in half. On one side write SUPPLY, on the write DEMAND. Ask students what goods and services may have been available in 1793. List those under supply. Then ask what would be needed most during an epidemic. List those under demand. Discuss with the students what they think will happen when the demand is far greater than the supply. (Possible answers include: shortages, high prices, hoarding, theft, starvation.) Instruct the students to write a paragraph based on the class discussion. Possible topics:

- Why Supplies Were Scarce in Philadelphia in 1793

- The Greater the Demand, the Higher the Price
- Survival: Good and Services Required in a Time of Need

Listening: (Recorded Books) Students who would like to listen to part of *An American Plague: The True and Terrifying Story of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793* can find Chapters 1 & 2 at this address: www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3751212

Reading: Students who find gross diseases interesting and who are nonfiction fans may also like to read:

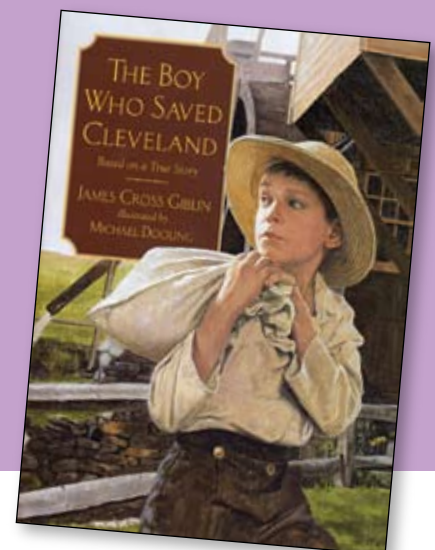
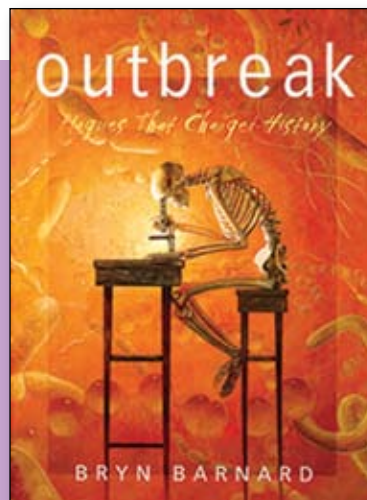
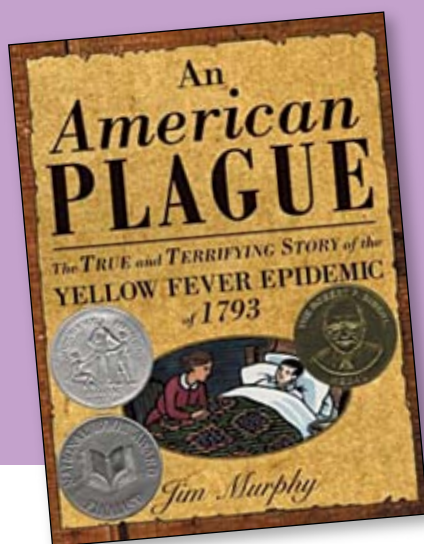
- *Outbreak: Plagues that Changed History* by Bryn Barnard. Crown Publishers, 2005.
- *Purple Death: The Mysterious Flu of 1918* by David Getz. Henry Holt, 2000.
- *You Wouldn't Want to Be at the Boston Tea Party!: Wharf Water Tea You'd Rather Not Drink* by Peter Cook. Franklin Watts, 2006.
- *You Wouldn't Want to Be Sick in the 16th Century!: Diseases You'd Rather Not Catch* by Kathryn Senior. Franklin Watts, 2002.

Students who rather read fictional accounts of historic events might find these titles interesting:

- *The Boy Who Saved Cleveland: Based on a True Story* by James Cross Giblin. Holt, 2006.
- *Fever, 1793* by Laurie Halse Anderson. Simon and Schuster, 2002.
- *Graveyard Girl* by Anna Myers. Eakin Press, 1995.

❖ ❖ ❖

Lynne Farrell Stover has over thirty years of experience as an educator and is currently a Teacher Consultant at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. She has taught many teacher workshops and won Teacher of the Year in 1999 from the Virginia Council of Economic Education and from the Virginia Association for the Gifted. She is the author of *Magical Library Lessons*, *More Magical Library Lessons*, *Magical Library Lessons: Holiday Happenings*, and *From Snicket to Shakespeare from UpstartBooks*.



Diamante Plague Poem

A diamante poem has seven lines that form the shape of a diamond. It does not need to rhyme. It uses nouns, adjectives, and verbs to describe a topic. Diamantes use contrasts to show both sides of the topic.

Here is an example of a diamante poem about the plague in Philadelphia in 1793:



- ← Noun (topic)
- ← 2 Adjectives
- ← 3 Verbs (“ing” words)
- ← 4 nouns (change focus in the middle)
- ← 3 Verbs (“ing” words)
- ← 2 Adjectives
- ← Noun (topic antonym or opposite)



Parts of Speech Review:

Noun: a person, place, thing, or idea

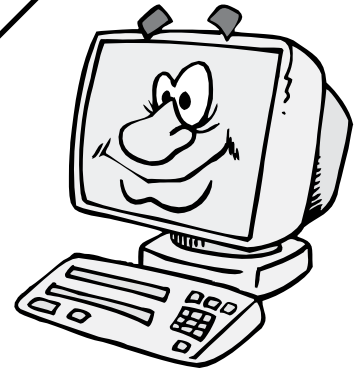
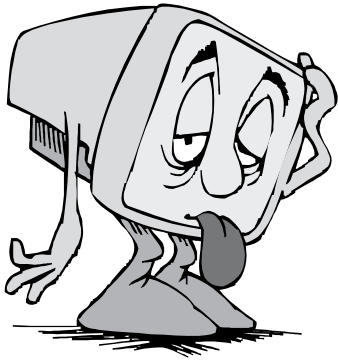
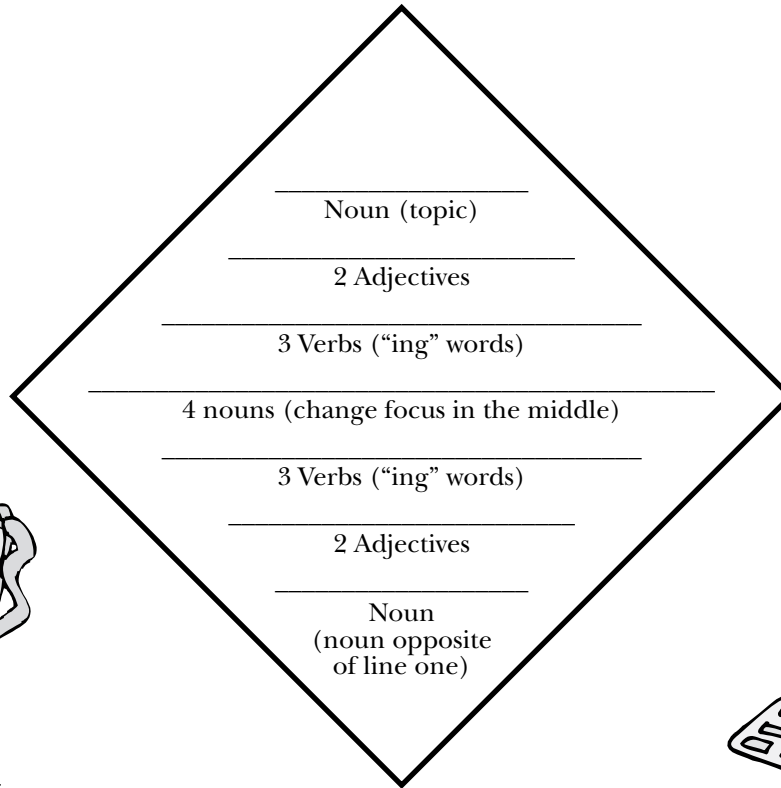
Adjective: a word that describes a noun

Verb: an action word

Antonym: a word having the opposite meaning of another word

Diamante Plague Poem Activity

Directions: Create a poem using the pattern. Your poem's topic should be about being sick and getting better. The words listed below will help you with the first and last lines of your poem.



Sickness Words	Healthy Words
1. Ailment	1. Able-bodied
2. Blight	2. Cleanliness
3. Complaint	3. Convalesce
4. Contagion	4. Cure
5. Contamination	5. Energy
6. Desolation	6. Fitness
7. Deterioration	7. Happiness
8. Disease	8. Healing
9. Distress	9. Health
10. Epidemic	10. Improvement
11. Illness	11. Life
12. Infection	12. Progress
13. Lethargy	13. Recovery
14. Malady	14. Recuperation
15. Outbreak	15. Restoration
16. Pandemic	16. Strength
17. Pestilence	17. Treatment
18. Scourge	18. Vigor
19. Virus	19. Vitality
20. Weakness	20. Wellness

Primary and Secondary Sources

Primary and Secondary Sources

Primary sources come first. They include eyewitness accounts about people, places, or events. Examples of primary sources include journals, official records, and photographs.

Secondary sources come second. Writers of secondary source materials explain, summarize, or interpret events using primary sources.

Example: Jim Murphy used newspaper articles, personal letters, and death records from 1793 to find the information he needed to write *An American Plague: The True and Terrifying Story of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793*.

PRIMARY SOURCE EXAMPLES



- Autobiography
- Birth Certificate
- Diary
- Eyewitness Account
- Government Document
- Gravestone
- Interview
- Last Will and Testament
- Legal Contract
- Letter
- Map

SECONDARY SOURCE EXAMPLES



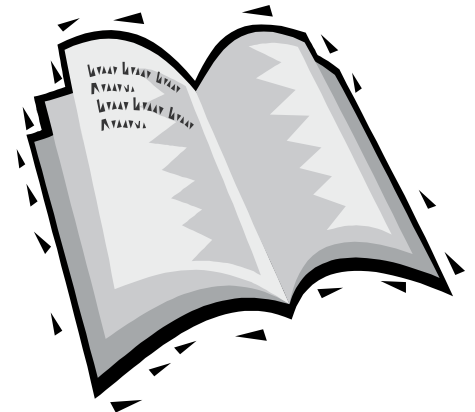
- Biography
- Encyclopedias—Print and Electronic
- Historical Novel
- Magazine Article
- Television Documentary
- Textbooks
- Travel Brochure
- U. S. History Book

Primary and Secondary Sources Activity

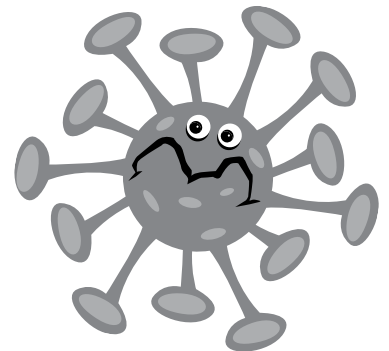
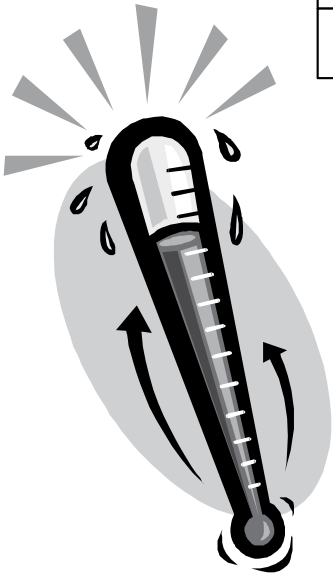
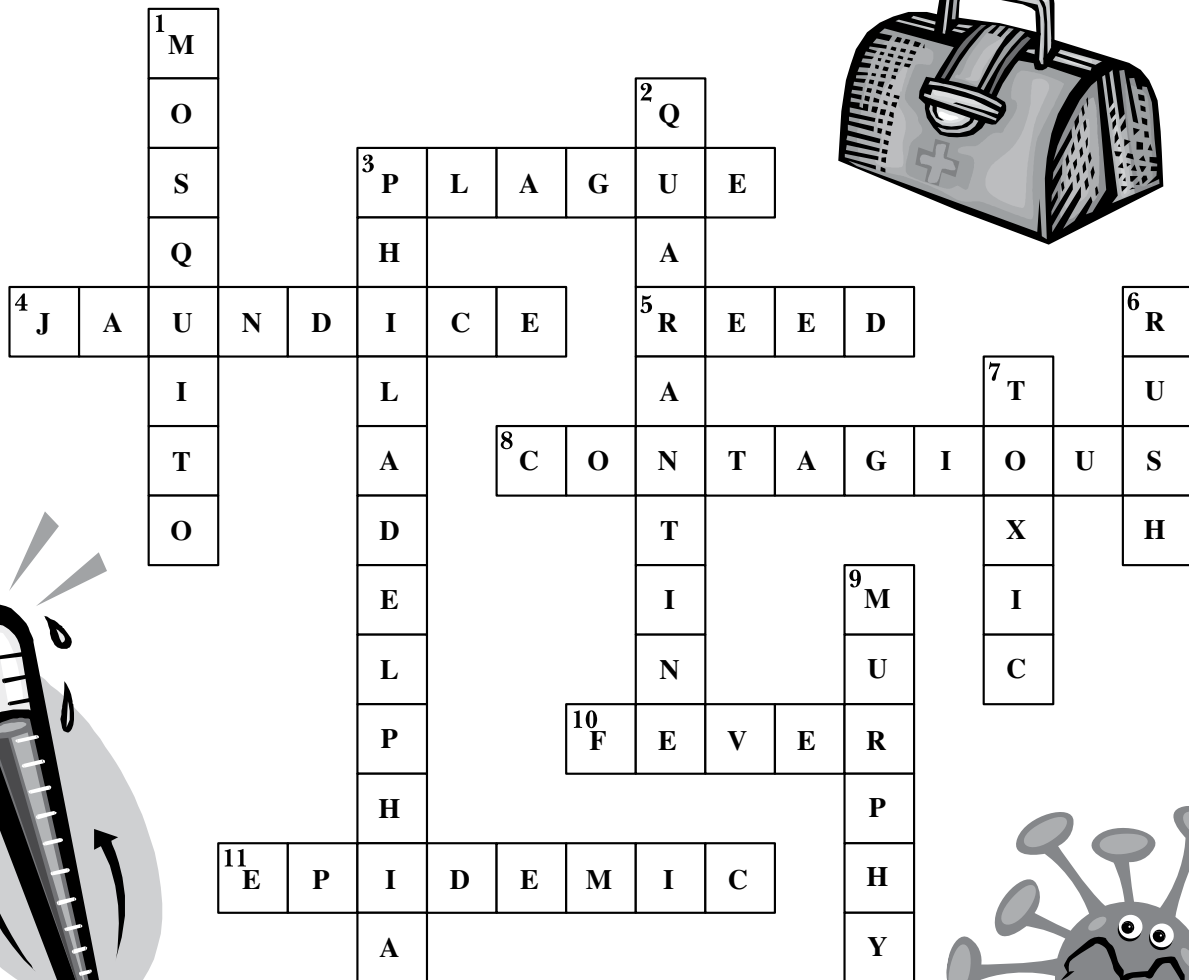
The examples listed below can be found in *An American Plague: The True and Terrifying Story of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793* by Jim Murphy.

Directions: Write **P** if you think the source listed would be considered a **PRIMARY SOURCE**. Write **S** if the source would be considered a **SECONDARY SOURCE**. Be prepared to defend your answers.

- _____ 1. *Observations on the Cause, Nature, and Treatment of the Epidemic Disorder, Prevalent in Philadelphia* (Written by David Nassy in 1773)
- _____ 2. Philadelphia Directory and Register, 1793 (listing names, occupations and addresses of the city's citizens)
- _____ 3. Governor Thomas Mifflin's proclamation found in the November 14, 1793 edition of the newspaper, the *Federal Gazette*
- _____ 4. *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720–1840*, a nonfiction book by Gary B. Nash published in 1988
- _____ 5. *Fever, 1793*, an award-winning fiction book by Laurie Halse Anderson
- _____ 6. Letters written by John Adams to Thomas Jefferson
- _____ 7. Map of Philadelphia (drawn by John Hill, 1796)
- _____ 8. *Walter Reed: A Biography* by William B. Bean
- _____ 9. "A Mosquito Bites Back" an article in *The New York Times Magazine*, August, 24, 1997
- _____ 10. Elizabeth Drinker's journal (1759-1807)



Yellow Fever Crossword Puzzle Answer Key



ACROSS

3. A widespread contagious disease with a high fatality rate
4. Yellow coloring of skin and eyes
5. Army doctor who identified the mosquito as the source of yellow fever; Walter ____
8. Able to be spread from one person to another
10. Above-normal body temperature
11. Outbreak of an infectious disease

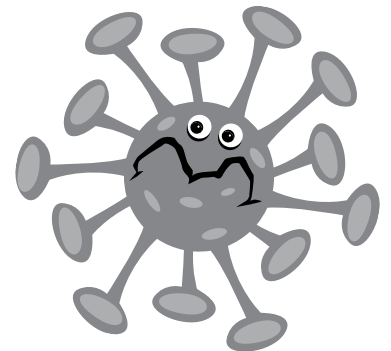
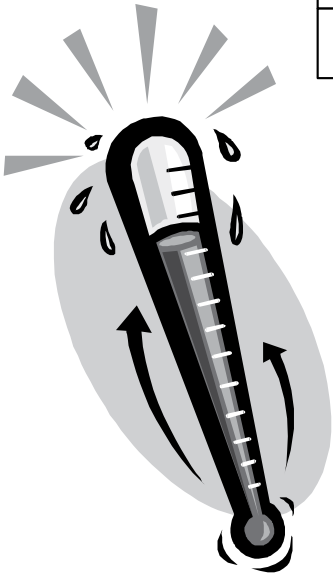
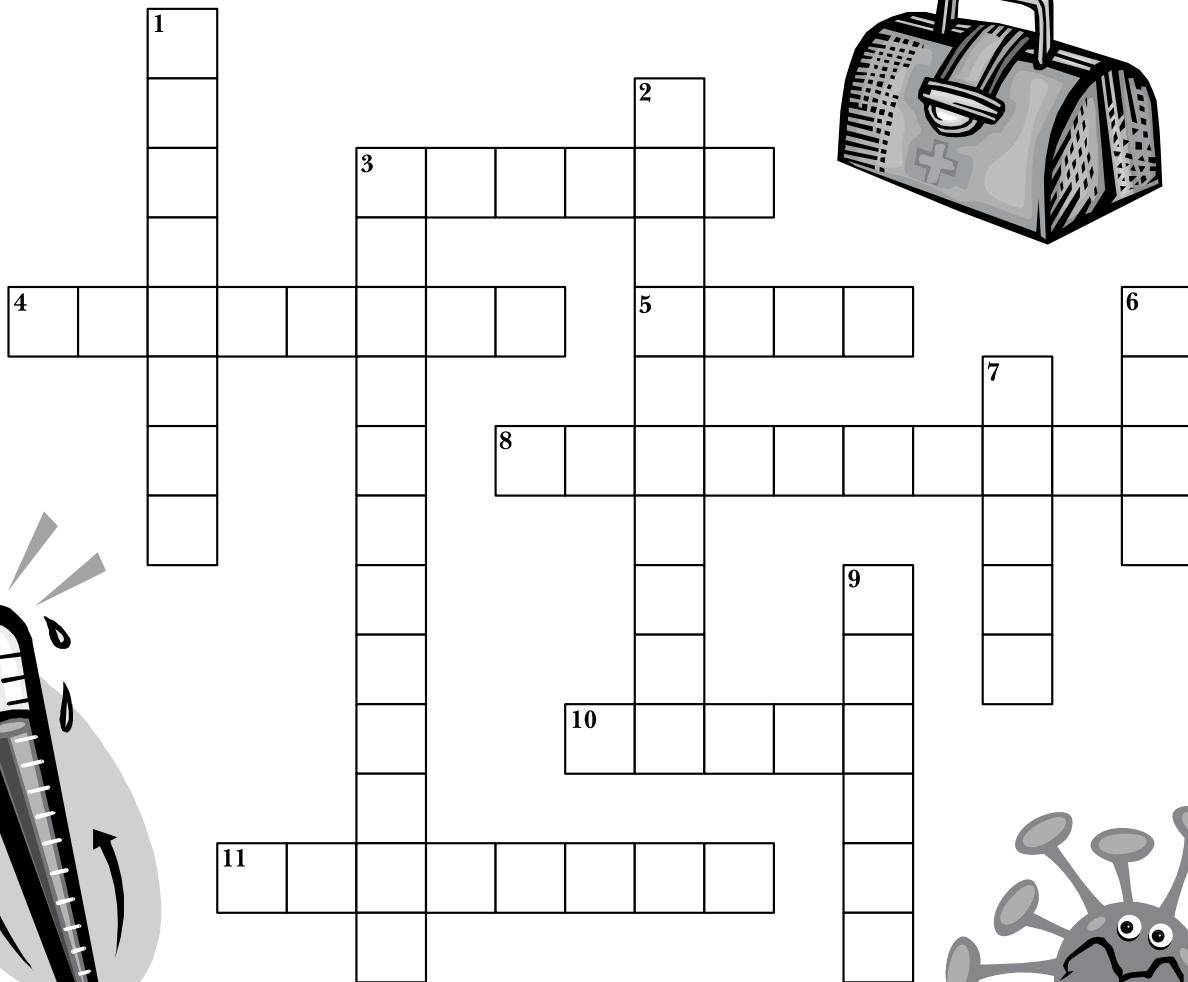
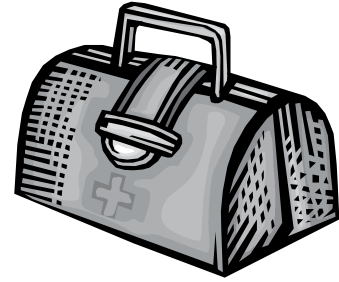
DOWN

1. Blood-sucking insect
2. Separation from others to stop the spread of disease
3. The capital city of the US from 1790–1800
6. Famous doctor in 1793; Benjamin ____
7. Capable of causing injury or death
9. The author of *An American Plague*; Jim ____

WORD BANK

contagious, epidemic, fever, jaundice, mosquito, Murphy, Philadelphia, plague, quarantine, Reed, Rush, toxic

Yellow Fever Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

3. A widespread contagious disease with a high fatality rate
4. Yellow coloring of skin and eyes
5. Army doctor who identified the mosquito as the source of yellow fever; Walter ____
8. Able to be spread from one person to another
10. Above-normal body temperature
11. Outbreak of an infectious disease

DOWN

1. Blood-sucking insect
2. Separation from others to stop the spread of disease
3. The capital city of the US from 1790–1800
6. Famous doctor in 1973; Benjamin ____
7. Capable of causing injury or death
9. The author of An American Plague; Jim ____

WORD BANK

contagious, epidemic, fever, jaundice, mosquito, Murphy, Philadelphia, plague, quarantine, Reed, Rush, toxic