

John Snow - an investigation into the causes of cholera



My name is John Snow and I would like to thank you for your support in investigating the mysterious case of the great cholera outbreak in Broad Street, London. You may need to use your best detective skills to solve the problems and stop cholera from spreading.

First of all let's look at the map that I drew showing the cases of cholera around the Broad Street pump;

- ? Find Broad Street - make a note of how many people died in the square around Silver Street and Cambridge Street.
- ? Find the workhouse - make a note of how many people lived in the workhouse and how many died.
- ? Find the brewery - make a note of how many people worked in the brewery and how many died.
- ? Find the factory - make a note of how many people worked in the factory and how many died.

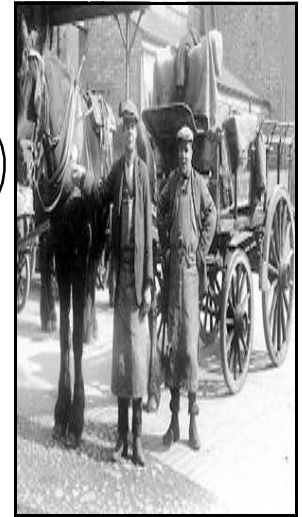
Think about where the people who died got their water from and where the people who survived got their water from and then write a few lines explaining the conclusions that you have drawn from the first part of your investigation.

Next we need to interview some of the people that live and work near Broad Street;



I live near to Broad Street and all of my friends that died from cholera lived within a short distance of the Broad Street water pump. I have heard that there were only ten deaths from houses closer to other pumps. In five of these cases the people that had died had got their water from Broad Street. In three other cases the dead were children who went to the school near to Broad Street.

We work in a brewery near Broad Street run by Mr Huggins. There are 70 of us and not one has died from cholera. We are allowed to drink beer from the brewery. We do not drink the water from the pump in Broad street as there is also a well in the brewery.



I live in Hampstead, but I like the water from Broad Street so much that I have a bottle sent to me everyday. However, recently I have been feeling rather ill. My skin colour has changed, my tongue is feeling flabby and I have been vomiting. What is happening to me?

These interviews give us more clues. Make a list of the reasons why some people have died and some people have survived.

The last piece of evidence we need to investigate is the water pump itself. I have two choices;

- 1) Take the handle off the pump
- 2) Ignore the pump and start thinking about the bad smells in the area

Make your choice and give a reason for your answer.



NOW ANSWER THESE GCSE QUESTIONS ON JOHN SNOW FROM THE 2002 EXAM.

1. Study John Snow's map and use your own knowledge. Explain how the Broad Street cholera cases helped John Snow to understand the way cholera spread.
2. Study John Snow's map and the following source. Compare the usefulness of these two sources to a historian studying the work of John Snow.

From *Alive and Well*, a book about the history of Medicine by Norman Longmate, 1970.

We know now that John Snow was completely right in all his deductions and guesses, but in 1855 his book had little effect. He was even accused of holding back sanitary progress because, if the air was not to blame, people would no longer bother about cleaning up the streets. Some doctors suggested that, even if infected water did spread the disease, it would only affect people already weakened by 'poisoned air'. Slowly, very slowly, everyone realised John Snow had been right and that cholera was mainly spread by the waste from cholera patients getting into the water supply. But getting rid of false theory, once it is firmly believed, takes a long time.