What We Are Doing

- **OBJECTIVE:** To read, study and become an expert on ONE CHAPTER of “An American Plague: The True and Terrifying Story of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793” by Jim Murphy.

- **PURPOSE:** Understanding the historical context will help with our first book, “Fever, 1793” by Laurie Halse Anderson.
Procedure

1. Read the selection.
2. Determine the MOST IMPORTANT facts and details from your chapter.
3. Select 3-5 of the MOST IMPORTANT vocab words.
4. Design 3-5 questions (Levels 2 and up) that specifically address #2
Product

- **TEACH** - the class about your chapter.
- **HAND IN** – Vocab words and definitions and your questions/answers.
- **TIME LIMIT** – 7 minutes
- You may use the board/the computer/posters etc.
Terms to Know

- Plague
- Epidemic
- Pestilence
- Symptom
- Susceptible
- Jaundice
- Succumb
- Quack
- Immune
Terms to Know

- **Plague** - is a severe and potentially deadly bacterial infection.
- **Epidemic** - a temporary prevalence of a disease.
- **Pestilence** - a deadly or virulent epidemic disease.
- **Symptom** - a sign or indication of something.
- **Susceptible** - capable of being infected.
- **Jaundice** - yellow discoloration of the skin, whites of the eyes.
- **Succumb** - to yield to disease.
- **Quack** - a fraud – someone who pretends to have a certain skill.
- **Immune** - protected from a disease.
Historical Context Review

- Philadelphia, PA is the largest city in the United States and the temporary capital of the country.
  - President Washington and his wife live in the city.
- Prior to the ‘outbreak’ many different illnesses are seen that had previously been uncommon in PA.
- Summer is hot and the city begins to smell of rot and decay.
- Church bells are used to indicate when someone has died.
Dr. Benjamin Rush recognizes the symptoms of Yellow Fever in a patient. He had seen it before in 1762.

- Symptoms: fever, jaundice, constipation, vomiting, etc. as red blood cells dissolve. After a period of improvement a patient dies.

- Mayor of the city orders cleaning and the removal of dead animals. Gunfire and fire are used to “cleanse” the air.

- ¼ of the citizens, mostly the wealthy, leave the city for the countryside.
Historical Context

- **Myths:**
  - African Americans were immune.
  - The disease was brought on the ships from the West Indies.

- As more people get sick and die, the bodies begin piling up in the street.

- Rickett’s Circus and Bush Hill are used for the sick and the dying/dead.

- President Washington and his wife leave the city.
Historical Context

- Free African Society – a group of people (thought they were immune) get together to help others.
- Dr. Rush offers “cures” that he claims helped cure him. Many people sought his help but oftentimes the cure made people sicker.
- The people are dying so quickly that there is not enough time to bury them.
- The town spends $15,000 on medicine, coffins and gravediggers (approx. half a million today).
Historical Context

- The mansion, Bush Hill, became known as “The Great Human Slaughterhouse.” No one was allowed to leave.
- A red flag on the outside of a house symbolizes that the plague is there.
- Crime rate rises and riots begin. Newspapers have less to report and stop publishing obituaries.
- The plague moves to the suburbs.
- Quack doctors begin selling fake cures.
Historical Context

- President Washington is having difficulty getting reports on what is happening.
- Attorney General says the government cannot be moved from the city.
- Postmaster General reports that the plague is dying down.
- Looting graves has become more common as economy collapses.
- Black nurses are preferred because they are less susceptible to the disease.
Historical Context

- Benjamin Rush donates the money he earned tending plague victims
- Fever returns in 1794, 1796, 1797 and 1798 but is less prominent
- Chapter 11
  - New York has a Yellow Fever outbreak in 1858 – the Irish are blamed and quarantined.
  - A crowd riots and burns down the hospital
Historical Context

- Other examples of Yellow Fever
  - New Orleans in 1853-9,000
  - Memphis in 1873 and 1878-7,000
  - French Soldiers while attacking Haiti in 1801 – 26,000

- Speculation on the cause
  - 1848 Dr. Josiah Nott – mosquitoes
  - 1890s Doctors in Germany discover “viruses”
  - 1900 Dr. Jesse Lazear of the US Army – mosquitoes are carriers of the disease. Dies after infection.
  - 1900 Walter Reed – female mosquitoes transmit
Historical Context

- **Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793**
  - Mosquito eggs were unknowingly transported to US in water casks aboard ships. They hatched and began infecting people
- **Mosquito-control measures put into place**
- **1947 Pan American Sanitary Bureau** – eradicated that one type of mosquito, eliminating the disease in the western hemisphere.
- **1962 Pesticide DDT proves successful** – Once mosquitoes start becoming immune, new pesticides were developed
Uh oh…

- Continued use of the pesticide causes "supermosquitos" to form that are resistant. New pesticides are developed.
- Continued use of pesticides causes other other mosquito-borne diseases to “change,” such as malaria, and become immune.
- There is still no cure for Yellow Fever 😞