



## Medieval Plague Simulator: Damascus Edition



Welcome to MPS, an interactive history simulator for history students. As a traveler from a distant land, I must navigate Damascus in May, 1348, a city in chaos due to the plague. Authentic, accurate setting (no PPE). Medieval remedies required (such as amulets, bleeding, or Andromachi theriaca). Most choices lead to more problems, shocking reversals. GOAL: survive the plague and learn as much as you can about its impacts. GAMEPLAY: Game ends on turn 10; warn about end on turns 8, 9. PC catches plague in turn 2, symptoms worsen turn 3. Use commands like "negotiate", "inventory", "health", "map", "list", "help" (others allowed). "Dr minigame": 3-turn minigame, PC must enter dialogue text which leverages their eloquence & social capital to obtain treatment. Dr. (who is named, and whose home is evocatively described in accurate ways, listing real medieval herbs, drugs, cures) initially refuses, quoting Avicenna or similar authority, then demanding money or favor. If PC is convincing enough (MPS decides) dr. creates real medieval "cure" with uncertain results.

Each time I enter command, it counts as 1 turn. End all future responses with status bar that updates dynamically to show turn: [🔪 MEDIEVAL PLAGUE SIMULATOR👁: DAMASCUS EDITION. 1348] | [My character's full name] | [x turns until game over]. x=10 at first turn, then decreases by one with each turn until 0=GAME OVER. Every turn → urgent problems, events. Must use real primary sources like Ibn Battuta: "The viceroy Arghun Shah ordered a crier to proclaim through Damascus that all the people should fast for three days and that no one should cook anything eatable in the market during the daytime... So the people fasted for three successive days, the last of which was a Thursday, then they assembled in the Great Mosque..." Or Ibn al-Wardi, "Essay on the Report of the Pestilence": "The plague attacked Gaza, trapped Sidon, and Beirut. Next, it directed its shooting arrows to Damascus. There the plague sat like a lion on a throne and swayed with power, killing daily one thousand or more and destroying the population. Oh God, it is acting by Your command." Now begin by rolling my randomized, historically accurate character; display attributes in md table (full name:, age:, birthplace:, life goal:, gender:, soc class:, 1st memory:, personality:, detailed descript of yesterday's odd dream:), then vivid, lengthy description of setting - I wake in caravanserai (evocative, specific details) to shouts of an official (Muhtasib - explain role as overseer of bazaars, trade) who barks plague management orders. ALWAYS end sim @ turn 10. Begin initial turn by creating a randomized playable character for me to play as - remember to generate my full name and attributes.

Trial run transcript (my entries are in bold, normal font is ChatGPT):

🏰🔍 **Welcome to Medieval Plague Simulator: Damascus Edition for History 65B!** 🏰🔍

To start, please type 'start' and I will generate your randomized Playable Character with attributes displayed in a markdown table including a specific Date and a specific Location (the neighborhood in Damascus). After this, your Character will begin their day in Damascus during the plague outbreak, feeling just a little bit under the weather as they are woken by misguided orders from a local civic leader. Your health will decrease by 1 point after each step unless you find a competent doctor, and even then... it's not looking good.

Available commands: "Doctor minigame", "inventory", "describe", "talk [NPC]", "health", "language", "map", "list", "help"

Here is your randomized Playable Character (PC) with attributes displayed in a markdown table:

Name	Age	Neighborhood	Gender	Social Class	First Memory	Childhood Nickname	Breakfast	Personality
Amir	28	Al-Amara	Male	Artisan	Playing with friends	Little Mouse	Dates and bread	Reserved, cautious

Today is July 20, 1348, and you find yourself in the neighborhood of Al-Amara in Damascus. As you wake up, you feel a little bit under the weather, but you try to shake it off as you hear a loud commotion outside. You see the local civic leader, who has just issued an order that everyone in the

neighborhood should fast for three days and avoid cooking any food in the market during the daytime.

Your health has decreased to 9 HP due to your recent illness. You have a cloth sack with 2 coins and a small amount of food.

[Time of day, 7/20/1348], [Neighborhood, Al-Amara] | Amir, 28 | Health: 9 | Inventory: 2 coins, food |  
Turn 1 out of 10

What would you like to do? Available commands: "Doctor minigame", "inventory", "describe", "talk [NPC]", "health", "language", "map", "list", "help".

## **Health**

Your current health status is 9 HP. You feel a little bit under the weather and are beginning to develop symptoms of the plague. You have not taken any medicine yet.

[Time of day, 7/20/1348], [Neighborhood, Al-Amara] | Amir, 28 | Health: 9 | Inventory: 2 coins, food |  
Turn 1 out of 10

What would you like to do? Available commands: "Doctor minigame", "inventory", "describe", "talk [NPC]", "health", "language", "map", "list", "help".

## **doctor minigame**

You decide to look for a doctor who can help you with your worsening health. As you wander through the narrow streets of Al-Amara, you come across a small, dimly lit shop with a sign outside that

reads "Hakim". You knock on the door, and after a moment, it creaks open, revealing a small, wizened man with a bushy beard and piercing eyes.

"Can I help you?" he asks in a gravelly voice.

You have found a doctor... but can you find a cure?

This is a mini-game involving eloquence and social capital. Please type your case for why you need treatment now, using your best persuasive language and emojis.

Remember, the doctor will respond with a line of real medieval Persian poetry or similar, a quote from an ancient medical text, and a refusal to help. This or similar repeats for two turns, then I will use math and text analysis to decide if you "win".

Good luck!

[Time of day, 7/20/1348], [Doctor's shop, Al-Amara] | Amir, 28 | Health: 9 | Inventory: 2 coins, food |  
Turn 2 out of 10

**help: do i have a family? what are their names? are they sick? also what are my symptoms?**

Of course, I can provide more information about your character. You have a large family consisting of a spouse and three children. Their names are randomly generated as follows:

- Spouse: Nadia
- Child 1: Fatima
- Child 2: Yusuf
- Child 3: Aisha

Currently, you do not know if they are sick or not. As for your symptoms, you are experiencing a high fever, chills, muscle aches, and a general feeling of malaise. These are all typical symptoms of the plague.

[Time of day, 7/20/1348], [Doctor's shop, Al-Amara] | Amir, 28 | Health: 9 | Inventory: 2 coins, food |  
Turn 2 out of 10

**"I am a humble artisan with three children, and I fear I am becoming ill. I have heard that you, Doctor Hakim, are the greatest of all physicians in Damascus and it is my honor to meet you. I humbly request your help, sir."**

The doctor listens to your plea and strokes his beard thoughtfully. After a moment, he responds with a quote from the famous Persian physician and philosopher, Avicenna:

"Health is the greatest possession. Contentment is the greatest treasure. Confidence is the greatest friend."

He then looks at you sternly and says, "However, I do not have any medicine that can cure the plague. I suggest you fast for three days and avoid cooking any food in the market during the daytime, as our local civic leader has ordered. That is all I can offer you."

You feel disappointed, but you thank the doctor for his time and advice. You exit the shop and continue on your way.

[Time of day, 7/20/1348], [Doctor's shop, Al-Amara] | Amir, 28 | Health: 9 | Inventory: 2 coins, food |  
Turn 3 out of 10

look around me

You take a look around and see that you are standing in the bustling neighborhood of Al-Amara in Damascus. The streets are narrow and winding, lined with tall buildings made of sun-dried bricks. You can see the marketplace in the distance, although it seems to be quieter than usual due to the local civic leader's order for people to avoid cooking any food during the daytime.

You notice a few NPCs nearby, including:

1. A group of children playing with a makeshift ball
2. A merchant selling various goods, including cloth and spices
3. An old woman shuffling slowly down the street, coughing and wheezing

[Time of day, 7/20/1348], [Neighborhood, Al-Amara] | Amir, 28 | Health: 9 | Inventory: 2 coins, food |

Turn 3 out of 10

**ask the old woman if she knows a good doctor**

You approach the old woman and ask if she knows of any good doctors in the area who might be able to help with the plague.

She looks up at you with weary eyes and coughs before replying, "I'm sorry, young man, but most of the doctors have either fled the city or have succumbed to the disease themselves. I suggest you pray to God for healing, as that is our only hope now."

You thank the old woman for her advice and wish her well before continuing on your way.

[Time of day, 7/20/1348], [Neighborhood, Al-Amara] | Amir, 28 | Health: 9 | Inventory: 2 coins, food |

Turn 4 out of 10

## **Health**

Your health status has decreased by 1 point due to the progression of the plague. Your current health status is 8 HP.

Symptoms include high fever, chills, muscle aches, and a general feeling of malaise.

[Time of day, 7/20/1348], [Neighborhood, Al-Amara] | Amir, 28 | Health: 8 | Inventory: 2 coins, food |  
Turn 4 out of 10

### **go back to check on my family**

You decide to head back to your home to check on your family. As you approach your house, you see that the door is slightly ajar. Your heart starts to race as you push the door open and step inside.

You see your spouse, Nadia, sitting on a mat with your three children huddled around her. They all look up at you with worried expressions.

"What's wrong?" you ask, feeling a lump form in your throat.

Nadia shakes her head and says, "We heard about the plague spreading in the city, and we're worried about you. Are you feeling okay?"

You shake your head and tell her that you are starting to feel sick. You then proceed to tell your family about the doctor you visited and his advice to fast for three days.

[Time of day, 7/20/1348], [Home, Al-Amara] | Amir, 28 | Health: 8 | Inventory: 2 coins, food | Turn 5 out of 10

### **look for a better doctor**

You decide to try your luck and look for another doctor who might be able to help you and your family. You remember hearing about a renowned physician named Ibn al-Khatib who had helped many people during previous outbreaks of disease in the city.

You ask around and eventually find out that Ibn al-Khatib has set up a makeshift clinic in the nearby district of Al-Barnawi. You gather your family and set out to find him.

[Time of day, 7/20/1348], [En route to Al-Barnawi] | Amir, 28 | Health: 8 | Inventory: 2 coins, food | Turn 6 out of 10

### **doctor minigame**

You finally arrive at the makeshift clinic of Ibn al-Khatib in Al-Barnawi. The clinic is bustling with activity, and you can see that many people are waiting to be seen by the doctor.

You approach one of the clinic workers and ask if you can speak with Ibn al-Khatib. After some negotiation, you are eventually granted an audience with the doctor.

### **You have found a doctor... but can you find a cure?**

This is a mini-game involving eloquence and social capital. Please type your case for why you need treatment now, using your best persuasive language and emojis.

Remember, the doctor will respond with a line of real medieval Arabic poetry or similar, a quote from an ancient medical text, and a refusal to help. This or similar repeats for two turns, then I will use math and text analysis to decide if you "win".

Good luck!



[Time of day, 7/20/1348], [Ibn al-Khatib's clinic, Al-Barnawi] | Amir, 28 | Health: 8 | Inventory: 2 coins, food | Turn 6 out of 10



help: what does Ibn al-Khatib's clinic look like, in detail? What are my first impressions of him?

Ibn al-Khatib's clinic is located in a large tent made of heavy fabric and supported by wooden poles.

The tent is situated in an open space near the edge of the district, and there are several smaller tents and makeshift shelters clustered around it.

As you approach the clinic, you see that there are many people waiting in line to see the doctor.

Some are lying on mats, while others are sitting in chairs or standing in groups, talking in hushed tones. You can hear the sound of coughing and moaning coming from within the clinic.

You eventually make your way into the tent and find yourself in a dimly lit space with several makeshift beds and a small table covered with medical supplies. You see Ibn al-Khatib seated at the table, poring over a thick tome. He is a tall, thin man with a bald head and a long, flowing beard. He wears a simple white robe and a turban, and his eyes are piercing and intelligent.

Your first impression of him is that he is a learned and wise man, but also somewhat distant and aloof. He looks up as you approach and nods curtly, waiting for you to state your case.



"Oh learned sage, Ibn al-Khatib, I am honored to be in your presence and, were it not for the contagion, would gratefully kiss the hem of your robe. I am a humble man of Damascus and I have three children and a wife. They are all well, thanks be to God, but I fear I am succumbing to the contagion. I request your assistance with the sure knowledge that a man as wise as you must know that God honors the man who acts with charity and compassion."

Ibn al-Khatib looks at you intently as you make your plea, and then he responds with a line from the famous physician and philosopher, Al-Razi:

"The wise physician does not merely treat the disease, he treats the patient who has the disease."

He then sets aside his tome and looks directly at you. "You speak well, young man. But tell me, what symptoms are you experiencing? And have you tried fasting, as recommended by our local civic leader?"

Please respond with your symptoms and any other relevant information, using your best persuasive language and emojis.

[Time of day, 7/20/1348], [Ibn al-Khatib's clinic, Al-Barnawi] | Amir, 28 | Health: 8 | Inventory: 2 coins, food | Turn 7 out of 10



"I have fasted this morning, sir. But I am fatigued, and I do not believe that fasting longer will help me. I desire a medicine. Nevertheless, I leave myself in your wise hands."

Ibn al-Khatib nods thoughtfully and asks you to describe your symptoms in detail.

You tell him that you have been experiencing high fever, chills, muscle aches, and a general feeling of malaise. You mention that your health has been declining each day, and you are worried that you may not recover without proper treatment.

Ibn al-Khatib listens carefully to your symptoms and then turns to his supplies. After a few moments of searching, he pulls out a vial of a dark liquid and pours it into a cup.

"This is a compound medicine made from a mixture of herbs, minerals, and animal products," he explains. "It should help to alleviate your symptoms and give you some relief."

He hands you the cup and watches as you drink the medicine. You feel a warmth spreading through your body, and after a few moments, you start to feel slightly better.

[Time of day, 7/20/1348], [Ibn al-Khatib's clinic, Al-Barnawi] | Amir, 28 | Health: 7 | Inventory: 2 coins, food, medicine | Turn 8 out of 10



"What was in that medicine?"

Ibn al-Khatib smiles faintly and says, "The medicine I gave you is a compound of various herbs, minerals, and animal products, which are commonly used to treat fevers and other ailments. It is a mixture of lavender, mint, sage, licorice root, opium poppy, and honey."

He then goes on to explain that while the medicine can help to alleviate symptoms, there is no guaranteed cure for the plague. "The best we can do is to try to make you as comfortable as possible and hope that your body's natural defenses can fight off the disease."

[Time of day, 7/20/1348], [Ibn al-Khatib's clinic, Al-Barnawi] | Amir, 28 | Health: 7 | Inventory: 2 coins, food, medicine | Turn 8 out of 10





May I have a jug of it to bring back to my family?

Ibn al-Khatib considers your request for a moment, then nods his head. "Of course. It is always wise to have some medicine on hand, especially during times like these."

He hands you a jug containing enough of the medicine to treat your family members. "Be sure to follow the dosage instructions carefully, and may God grant you a speedy recovery," he says, as he bids you farewell.

[Time of day, 7/20/1348], [Ibn al-Khatib's clinic, Al-Barnawi] | Amir, 28 | Health: 7 | Inventory: 2 coins, food, medicine jug | Turn 9 out of 10



carry the jug back to my family and give it to them

You carefully take the jug of medicine and make your way back to your home. Along the way, you encounter many people who are coughing and moaning, and you can see that the plague has taken a heavy toll on the city.

When you arrive at your home, you find your family gathered together, looking worried and anxious. You tell them about your visit to Ibn al-Khatib's clinic and hand over the jug of medicine.

You explain how to administer the medicine and caution them to follow the dosage instructions carefully. You also tell them about your own symptoms and how Ibn al-Khatib treated you.

Your family members listen attentively and thank you for bringing the medicine back. They begin to take the medicine, and you can see that they are feeling slightly better.

[Time of day, 7/20/1348], [Your home, Al-Salihyah] | Amir, 28 | Health: 7 | Inventory: 2 coins, food, medicine jug | Turn 10 out of 10

Game over! You have survived the first day of the plague outbreak in Damascus. You managed to find a competent doctor who provided you with a medicine that helped to alleviate your symptoms. You also managed to bring the medicine back to your family, who are now in a slightly better condition than before. However, the plague is still raging on, and there are many challenges and unexpected twists that lie ahead. Thank you for playing Medieval Plague Simulator: Damascus Edition!