

# How did ideas spread the 1918 flu?

**C3.D2.His.1.9-12: Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.**

**Text Set:** Secondary sources regarding flu response in six different regions of the world. This document set is introduced on the third class of this project, supported by a podcast excerpt describing the discovery of Typhoid Mary in New York in 1906, a visual disease simulator, and a public service announcement from the New York Times in 1918.

**Identity:** Students will be able to make connections between misconceptions about what it says about a person's character to become ill, and how that can apply to our everyday assumptions about people who are sick.

**Skills:** Students will be able to compose an argumentative claim about how ideas spread the flu; they will select evidence from the document set to support their claim; they will explain how the evidence proves their claim.

**Intellect:** students learn about ideas held all over the world at the outset of the pandemic and their role in spreading disease. Some ideas that contributed to the spread included in the documents are racism, classism, and generally underestimating the severity of the illness.

**Criticality:** Students will learn to interrogate the "necessity" of censorship in wartime, and the consequences associated with bureaucratic lack of transparency.

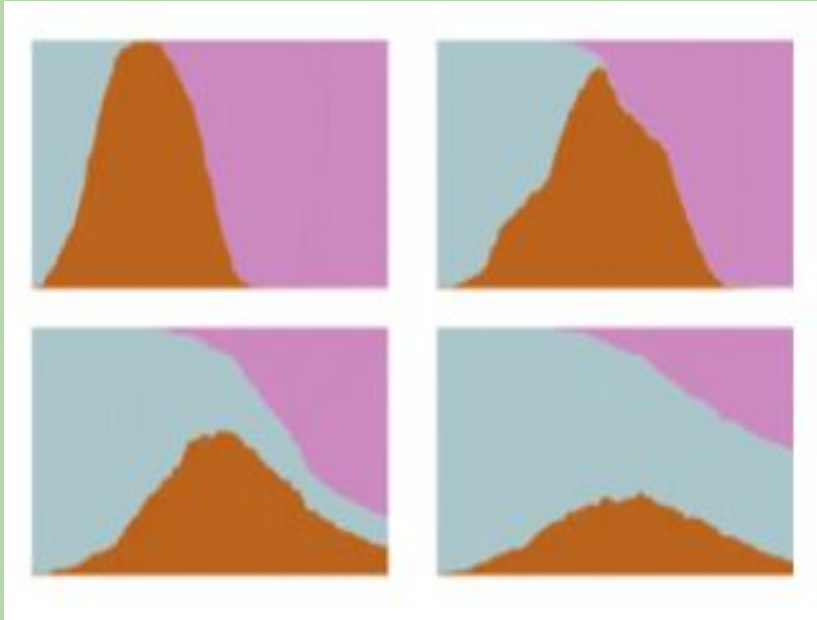
## NPR [podcast](#) about Typhoid Mary

While they listen, students are asked to identify the ideas people have about the spread of illnesses, and how those ideas enabled Mary Mallon to spread Typhoid to so many people.

Some misconceptions mentioned are that unemployment, immorality, ill-virtue, and “vagrancy” are identifiers for sick people alongside symptoms. Mary Mallon is revealed to be the first documented asymptomatic carrier of an illness in North America.



# Infectious Disease [Simulator](#), Washington Post



We watch each simulation, with the lens of ideas; simulation one goes unchecked and not everyone recovers, simulation two applies a quarantine that is slowly lifted, simulation three applies “soft” social distancing, and the last simulation shows diligent social distancing that “flattens the curve.”

We debrief each of these scenarios and imagine what information or ideas could lead to each scenario. Students make connections between their lived collective experience and make predictions for how these may have happened during the flu pandemic in 1918.

# Public Service Announcement featured in NYT, 1918

The poster is displayed with no further context, and students are asked to observe and analyze what message the poster is meaning to send about sick people.

Some include: servicemembers, civilians, and a clearly sick person.

The sick person looks grotesque, and encapsulates how the illness “menaces” war production. What ideas do people in 1918 have about sick people? How do these ideas perpetuate illness? How do they stigmatize sick people?

