

from A JOURNAL OF THE PLAGUE YEAR

COPY MASTER

Literary Analysis

VERISIMILITUDE

Daniel Defoe’s *A Journal of the Plague Year* is a work of fiction. The novel portrays London during the summer of 1665, the darkest days of the city’s bubonic plague epidemic. An innovative writer, Defoe incorporated details from mortality records, city maps, and other historical documents to help him achieve **verisimilitude**, or the appearance of reality. Presented as an eyewitness account, the novel purposefully blurs the line between fact and fiction. In this way, Defoe’s writing anticipates the realism and psychological depth of modern novels.

Directions: Reread the narrator’s encounter with the desperate man, lines 83–125. Record at least one example from the passage for each aspect of verisimilitude listed in the first column of the chart. One has been done for you.

Aspects of Verisimilitude	Example From Selection
a first-person narrator	“ . . . as I have observed above . . . ” (line 94)
numbers and statistics	
dates and references to time	
geographical names	
precise details	