

Camp Sherman Suffers Many Losses to the Flu Pandemic of 1918

The influenza pandemic of 1918 - 1919 claimed over 20 million lives worldwide. This was far more than the casualties from World War I, which was coming to an end as the flu was coming on. The influenza death toll for Americans was estimated at 675,000. This was probably felt strongest among the U.S. military. The influenza and pneumonia killed more American soldiers than those lost in battle.

Camp Sherman, like other military camps, with their crowded accommodations, would have been a hotbed for the flu. In the month of October, 1918, 5,686 cases of the flu were reported there. By month's end, 1,177 had died.* The chart below gives a partial count of soldiers deaths at the camp.

It was quite a sad state of affairs for Chillicothe. The local undertakers, who had been counted on for their services by Camp Sherman in the past, were overwhelmed. The military soon went into the undertaking business, setting up a makeshift morgue on the stage of the local Majestic Theatre. Richard Peck describes this scene in his history of Camp Sherman* "The Majestic Theatre was used as a temporary morgue, where the bodies were stacked like cord wood. The army would haul bodies to the railroad depot by the wagon load,

Camp Sherman Mortality Schedule		
Flu Epidemic of 1918		
(October 1-October 13)		
	Date	Deaths
October	1	16
	2	22
	3	47
	4	52
	5	104
	6	119
	7	104
	8	131
	9	97
	10	86
	11	53
	12	49
	13	83

Statistics are from "The Historical Report of Camp Sherman."

playing funeral hymns as they marched. While returning from the depot, the band would strike up with "Dixie" and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" to help brighten the sadness in the faces of the townspeople. The city itself had suffered an epidemic, but only a small number of deaths occurred. During the epidemic, the camp and the city were quarantined, and all public meeting places, theatres, and bars were ordered closed. The spirit of the people seemed broken, until November 11, 1918, when the Armistice was signed, and the cheers of the people were heard once more.

*Statistics and information from The Rise and Fall of Camp Sherman by G. Richard Peck.

In the story, the Flu is described as a "pandemic" then later called an "epidemic". They both describe the spread of disease. Based on the information given what do you think the difference is ?

A "Mortality Schedule" is a list of _____

Why do you think "During the epidemic, the camp and the city were quarantined, and all public meeting places, theatres, and bars were ordered closed. "? _____

Using the data given in the "**Camp Sherman Mortality Schedule**" create a BAR or LINE graph on page 3.

