Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722) is a fictionalized account of the bubonic plague epidemic that struck London in 1665, which Defoe witnessed as a five-year old -- the year before the Great Fire of London. This work is among the first English novels. Like *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders* and several other of his novels, Defoe published this work as though it were based on primary sources and was not -- so he pretended -- a novel at all. This was Defoe’s way of developing an audience among the reading public for fiction writing. The work is remarkable in its abundant use of “telling detail” to create an impression of verisimilitude, and for nearly two hundred years it was widely considered a pioneering work of journalism rather than a novel. Indeed, it is still assigned as required reading in journalism courses.