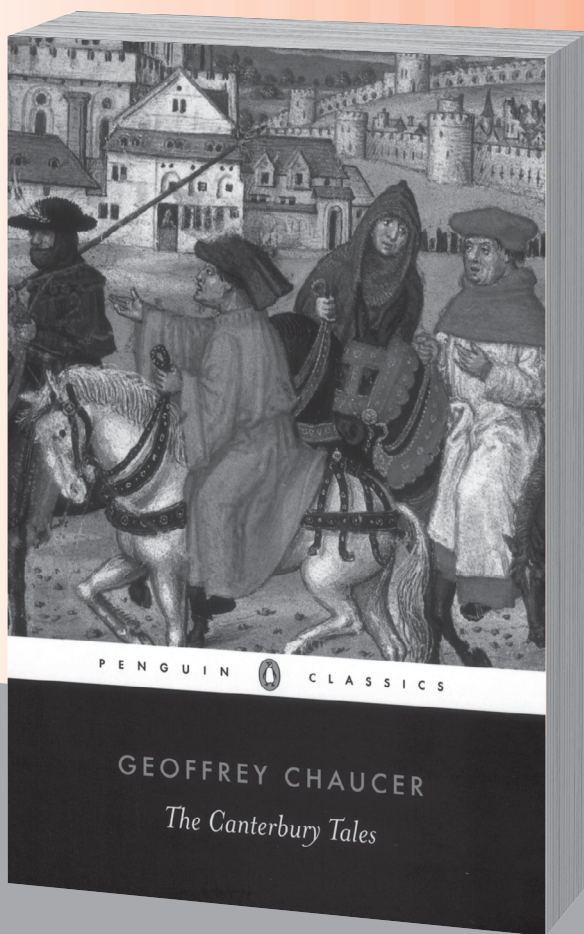


TEACHER'S GUIDE

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE PENGUIN CLASSICS EDITION OF

THE CANTERBURY TALES

BY GEOFFREY CHAUCER



BY LAURA REIS MAYER

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE	3
MIDDLE AGES STATION ROTATION	3
PILGRIMAGE JIGSAW	4
FRAME STORY THINK/PAIR/SHARE	5
ANALYZING THE PROLOGUE	6
THE FIRST 18 LINES	6
CULTURAL COLLAGE	6
PROFILING THE PILGRIMS	6
READING AND ANALYZING THE TALES	7
ROMANCE VERSUS REALISM: THE KNIGHT'S AND THE MILLER'S TALES	7
MEDIEVAL MARRIAGES: THE WIFE OF BATH'S AND THE FRANKLIN'S TALES	10
MORAL LESSONS: THE NUN'S PRIEST'S AND THE PARDONER'S TALES	12
SYNTHESIZING THE TEXT AS A WHOLE	15
ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE	17
ABOUT THE EDITORS OF THIS GUIDE	17
FREE TEACHER'S GUIDES	19

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INTRODUCTION

Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* is a literary treasure. With its twenty-four stories of love, lust, sin and redemption, this classic collection of fables, fabliaux, romance, and satire is every bit as compelling today as it was to its original medieval audience.

The twenty-nine pilgrims that frame Chaucer's tales, along with the host and the book's narrator, entertain and provide "moral" lessons for one another as they travel to Thomas Becket's tomb at Canterbury. But for the reader, the pilgrims provide even more: a panoramic view of a country in transition and of the diverse population of nobility, middle class, and clergy that formed England's culture during the Middle Ages.

Perhaps the most entertaining aspects of *The Canterbury Tales* are the political and social satire. Geoffrey Chaucer has long been recognized as the father of British Literature, and his writing is, without question, masterful. He uses that talent to skewer kings, priests, and carpenters alike. Chaucer's amusing tales may make the criticism go down easy, but they criticize nonetheless. The dying feudal system, the corrupt Catholic Church, and the superficial middle class are each laid bare for the narrator's and audience's analysis.

This guide examines six of the book's most popular tales for their message as well as their method. Two compelling questions provide an overall line of inquiry: *How does The Canterbury Tales serve as a commentary on the culture, politics, and values of both medieval England and contemporary America? How do Chaucer's stylistic choices contribute to the text's overall structure and aesthetic impact?* A range of activities and text-based questions are included in order to generate possible answers to this line of inquiry and to provide the critical reading, writing, and thinking required of today's students. Teachers may choose to assign all six tales or just a few. In either case, students should leave their time with the tales a bit more convinced that the Middle Ages are not as dark as they may have believed.

BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

MIDDLE AGES STATION ROTATION

Introduce students to the Middle Ages by creating a "stations" learning experience. By the end of the period, students will be able to answer the following question: how did specific institutions, people, and events shape the culture of medieval England?

Split students into small groups at various points around the room, designated by labeled chart paper on the walls or tables. Each station represents a topic significant to *The Canterbury Tales*. Stations are set up with an image, audio clip, video, or short text that groups quickly research and discuss before writing a summary on the chart paper. When groups have had sufficient time at a station, they can move clockwise to the next one, where they will examine the resources and add to what has been noted on the poster. Though not every station must be visited by each group, students will eventually return to their original station, read their classmates' notes, and synthesize them into a clearly written summary statement that demonstrates how persons, institutions, or events influenced the culture of the Middle Ages. Group summaries can be read aloud or posted on a digital message board such as padlet.com. Stations (with possible resources) might include:

The Catholic Church

- <http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/people/catholic-church.html>
- http://westernreservepublicmedia.org/middleages/feud_clergy.htm

The Feudal System

- <http://bit.ly/2uVDNYV>
- <https://ed.ted.com/on/Mvcu2Vyb>

The Emergence of the Middle Class

- <http://www.learner.org/interactives/renaissance/middleages.html>
- <http://www.cpcml.ca/images2011/WorkersEconomy/MedievalMarket.jpg>

The Black Death

- <https://tinyurl.com/y9yn3ryf>
- <https://tinyurl.com/yc4arkpd>

Archbishop Thomas Becket

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JczRpnjNKwc>
- <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/the-making-of-an-english-martyr>

Religious Pilgrimages

- http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/pilg/hd_pilg.htm
- <http://www.apieceofbritain.com/images/blog/canterbury/canterburypilgrims.jpg>

PILGRIMAGE JIGSAW

Raise students' awareness of religious pilgrimages occurring today. As a class, read popular travel expert Rick Steve's article, "A Medieval Pilgrimage in Modern Times" (<http://bit.ly/2wNGMDo>). Discuss the general purpose and characteristics of pilgrimages and how religions still incorporate them today. Divide the class into several "expert groups," and assign each group a different religious pilgrimage. Expert groups research and discuss their topic, agreeing upon key points and recording them in the appropriate column on the chart below. Next, reassign students into home groups comprised of one student from each expert group. Each expert shares key points as classmates listen and complete their charts. After the jigsaw chart is complete, conduct a class discussion around the following questions:

- Are there similar motivations behind religious pilgrimages of different faiths?
- Are pilgrimages solely for spiritual purposes? What evidence can you provide from research?
- Why might pilgrims choose to travel together? What is the significance of group unity?

Jigsaw Resources:

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/11/travel/southern-spain-jaen-andalusia-pilgrimage.html>
- <http://www.euronews.com/2016/11/21/millions-gather-for-arbaeen>
- <http://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-37319588/what-is-the-hajj-pilgrimage-to-mecca>
- <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2014/02/kumbh-mela/spinney-text>
(Registration and fee required)
- <http://time.com/4725682/easter-jerusalem-holy-land-photos/>
- <http://bit.ly/2wNGMDo>

Pilgrimage	Religion	Purpose	Description (customs, rituals, traditions, events)	Challenges & Benefits
Andalusia				
Arbaeen				
Camino de Santiago				
Hajj				
Holy Land				
Kumbh Mela				

FRAME STORY THINK/PAIR/SHARE

Invite students to explore the tradition of frame narratives: stories nested within other stories. The outer tale “frames” one or more inner stories, or, as in the case of *The Canterbury Tales*, links the inner stories together. Students might be familiar with frame stories such as *Arabian Nights*, *The Odyssey*, *Frankenstein*, *Inception*, and *Life of Pi*. Show students the opening scene of *The Princess Bride*, a movie many have seen: <http://bit.ly/2tY47QS><http://bit.ly/2tXQQbb>. After viewing, ask students to respond in writing to one or more of the prompts below. Afterwards, students can talk with a partner to share their thinking.

- How does the framing technique contribute to the story's overall structure, meaning, or aesthetic impact?
- What is the effect of a narrative frame on the reader or viewer?

Explain that Chaucer chose a religious pilgrimage to Thomas Becket's tomb as a frame for *The Canterbury Tales*, and in doing so, provided a purpose and background for the collection of stories. Students should keep this structural technique in mind as they read Chaucer's work and consider how the pilgrims' descriptions and interactions connect with the tales they tell.

ANALYZING THE PROLOGUE

THE FIRST 18 LINES

For generations, students have been asked to memorize the first 18 lines of Chaucer's Prologue in Middle English. While memorization is certainly not a requirement, the opening monologue explains the purpose for the pilgrimage and, in its original form, introduces students to the sounds of Middle English. Explain that the text's narrator is a character in the poem and is speaking these lines to his fellow pilgrims. Play an audio recording so students can hear the spoken word as the medieval narrator would have performed it (<http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/gp-aloud.htm>). Provide students with a copy written in Middle English and ask them to translate words they recognize. As an extension, students can listen to a model reader and then recite the lines themselves (<http://digital.lib.sfu.ca/chaucer-13/opening-18-lines>).

CULTURAL COLLAGE

In his introductory notes to *The Canterbury Tales*, Nevill Coghill calls the Prologue “the concise portrait of an entire nation, high and low, old and young, male and female, lay and clerical, learned and ignorant, rogue and righteous, land and sea, town and country...” (p. xvii). Indeed, it was Chaucer's intent to provide a panoramic view of British society during the Middle Ages. In order to consider Chaucer's purpose in writing the Prologue, challenge students to create their own “concise portrait” of contemporary American society. Using a digital collage tool such as PicMonkey, Canva, or Instagram Layout, students should select a group of individual images that together provide a unified portrait of contemporary America. As an extension, students might write an annotated list justifying their choices. Points to consider include:

- What people, places, and institutions convey a clear picture of America and Americans?
- What makes our country unique? What symbols or images immediately come to mind?

Afterwards, ask students: Using your knowledge of medieval England, what are probable people, places, and institutions you would expect Chaucer to include in *The Canterbury Tales*?

PROFILING THE PILGRIMS

In the Prologue, Chaucer reveals the abuse, dishonesty, and hypocrisy prevalent in all levels of society, including the Catholic Church. However, by including one model character in each social class, he shows that moral perfection is possible as well. Using a three-column chart, ask students to keep track of social class as they meet each pilgrim in the Prologue. When they identify the “good pilgrim” in each class, they should signify him or her with an asterisk or other symbol. When all pilgrims have been “profiled,” discuss the questions below.

Pilgrim (place a mark beside the name of one pilgrim in each class who serves as Chaucer's moral model)	Class (Church, nobility, peasant, middle)	Description

- Count the number of pilgrims in each class. Which class has the most pilgrims represented? Which has the fewest? What might be Chaucer's purpose here? (Students should see that the peasant class has the fewest because it is a dying system, and the newly flourishing middle class has the most).
- What abuses, dishonest acts, or personality traits does Chaucer uncover? What issues emerged more than once? Considering the first 18 lines of the prologue, what is ironic about Chaucer's portrayal of the pilgrims?
- Using evidence from the text, which pilgrims does Chaucer portray as positive models? What values or character traits do they exemplify?

READING AND ANALYZING THE TALES

ROMANCE VERSUS REALISM: THE KNIGHT'S AND THE MILLER'S TALES

Summary of the Knight's Tale

Theseus, the Duke of Athens, is on his way home after defeating the Amazons, accompanied by his Amazon Queen wife, Hippolyta, and her sister, Emily. The party encounters a group of Theban women who mourn their dead husbands, whose corpses King Creon has ordered left out in the wilderness. Theseus defeats Creon, orders a proper burial for the men, and enslaves several Theban soldiers. Palamon and Arcita, two of Creon's knights, are imprisoned in a tower when they see Emily. Both immediately profess their love for her, as well as their anguish over being kept apart. Both knights are freed after several years and ordered by Theseus to round up an army and fight for Emily's favor at a festival to be held in one year.

The Roman gods take sides as Venus, the goddess of love, agrees to help Palamon win Emily's hand. Arcita prays to Mars, the god of war, who promises to bring Arcita victory. And Emily, who has met neither of the men nor been asked about her wishes, prays to Diana. The goddess of chastity promises Emily that should she marry, it will be the knight who truly loves and deserves her. All three promises are kept. Arcita wins the joust, is promised to Emily, yet dies of his wounds and is revered as the perfect chivalric hero. After years of mourning, Theseus hosts the wedding of Palamon and Emily, who live happily ever after.

Summary of the Miller's Tale

An older carpenter named John and his much younger wife Alison rent a room to Nicholas, a young astronomy student. So that Nicholas and Alison can spend the night together, they trick John into believing the stars have forecast a flood. John follows Nicholas's orders and ties three tubs to the roof, supposedly to save their lives once the flood waters rise. As John snores in his tub, Nicholas and Alison retreat to the bedroom. Meanwhile, Absalom, the church clerk who desires Alison as well, approaches the bedroom window and asks for a kiss. He is rewarded with Alison's rear-end instead. Vowing revenge, Absalom borrows a hot branding iron and returns to the carpenter's house. This time, it is Nicholas's rear that hangs out the window, and it is his bottom that Absalom brands. When Nicholas yells "water," the husband awakes, cuts the rope holding his tub, and falls to the floor where he is injured and mocked by all.

TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS:

The Knight's Tale

1. According to the beginning of the tale, how is Theseus's and Hippolyta's marriage ironic? What does this tell the reader about Theseus and the time in which he lives?
2. Summarize Arcita's argument for his love of Emily (p. 34). How does he turn Palamon's words (p. 33) against himself? Cite specific words and phrases.
3. The Knight asks his audience a question at the end of Part I (p. 39). Rephrase his question, provide your own answer, and support your reasoning.
4. Using the Knight's description of Arcita when he is leaving Athens (pp. 39-40), how might you characterize the idea of courtly love?
5. What does Theseus mean when he says of the two knights, "Thus has their lord, the God of Love, repaid/ Their services; these are his fees and wages!" (p. 51). How does he characterize the nature of love in this speech?
6. Theseus points out that Emily, "the cause of all these jolly pranks,/ Has no more reason to return them thanks/ Than I, and knows no more of this affair,/ By God, than does a cuckoo or a hare!" (p. 51). What point does his comment make about the role of the female in courtly love?
7. Part III begins with a lengthy description of the theater Theseus builds to host the joust (pp. 53-59). Why does Chaucer choose to have the Knight take so long detailing this impressive arena? What is the author saying about medieval feudal society?
8. How does Palamon's prayer to Venus (p. 63) differ from Arcita's prayer to Mars (pp. 66-68)? What does Arcita never discuss? Why?
9. Determine the overall tone of the battle scene (p. 73). What specific words from the text serve to characterize this scene? How might the Knight who tells this tale interpret the scene? Would Chaucer's characterization be different? Explain.
10. Summarize the results of the joust. How do they connect to Arcita's, Palamon's, and Emily's prayers to Mars, Venus, and Diana? In what way does the ending support the code of chivalry and the idea of courtly love?

The Miller's Tale

1. How does the Miller depict the relationship between the carpenter, his wife, and their boarder (pp. 88-90)? Cite specific words or phrases to support your characterization.
2. Why might the Miller choose a church clerk to be another admirer of the carpenter's wife? What is being said about the church and gender in this tale?
3. Summarize Nicholas's plan (pp. 97-99). What is ironic about the text he uses to support his argument (p. 97)?
4. Translate the lines, "And thus lay Nicholas and Alison/ Busy in solace and the quest of fun,/ Until the bell for lauds had started ringing/ And in the chancel friars began their singing" (p. 101). What juxtaposition appears in these lines? Why?
5. What is the Miller's purpose in telling this tale? What is Chaucer's purpose?

Both Tales

1. What is the relationship between the Knight's Tale, which is a romance, and the Miller's Tale, which is a fabliau? What is Chaucer's purpose in following one with the other?
2. Compare and contrast the love triangle of Palamon, Arcita and Emily in the Knight's Tale with that of Nicholas, John and Alison in the Miller's Tale. What is the role of women in each tale? How much control do they have over their lives?

ACTIVITIES:

Handfasting vs. Cuckolding

At the end of the Knight's Tale, Theseus performs a handfasting ceremony between Palamon and Emily. Familiarize students with this medieval tradition through media they will recognize. Show a video clip from the television series *Game of Thrones* (<http://bit.ly/2vCFwVu>) and an image from the royal wedding of William and Kate (<http://bit.ly/2fjMgBJ>). Discuss with students: what, both literally and figuratively, is "bound" in these marriages? Next, project on the whiteboard François Bunel's painting, "Actors of the 'Commedia dell'Arte'" (<http://bit.ly/2wwS91p>). Help students see that the wife in the painting flirts with a younger man as her older husband is shown with horns. Explain that this is the traditional depiction of a "cuckold." Ask students to "stop and jot" their thoughts about these two depictions of medieval marriage. What is emphasized or absent in a handfasting versus a cuckolding?

Analysis of Chivalry

In order to understand the medieval code depicted in the Knight's Tale, ask students to re-read Arcita's death pledge (pp. 77-78). Explain that this monologue is a demonstration of the code of chivalry, an honor code practiced by knights as far back as the Crusades and King Arthur's Roundtable. Ask students to jot down words and phrases which strike them as important or as characteristic of the overall tone of the chivalric code. Students might select "love," "service," "faith," "knightly deed," "humility," "noble," "honour," or "truth." Next, project the text on the whiteboard. Invite students to walk to the board and circle one of the words or phrases they chose during reading. Then direct students to come up and write notes in the margins beside a classmate's word. Annotations might answer one of these questions:

- Why is the circled word or phrase significant?
- What was the Knight's purpose in choosing this word or phrase? Chaucer's purpose?
- What tone do the words suggest?

Allow time and silence for students to read, write, and reflect on their classmates' thinking. Afterwards, ask the class to identify patterns they see in their circled words and their annotations and then define the code of chivalry. Ask students: How does re-reading Arcita's speech contribute to your understanding of the Knight's character and the feudal tradition he represents?

CER (Claim, Evidence, Reasons)

Chaucer juxtaposes the Knight's and Miller's tales, in part, to illustrate medieval England's dying feudal society versus its burgeoning middle class. Challenge students to consider if a similar situation is occurring in America today between the 99 percenters and the wealthy. Distribute copies of the Politico article, "The Pitchforks are Coming ...For Us Plutocrats" (<http://politi.co/2uuovJ1>). In the article, American billionaire Nick Hanauer warns his fellow "one percenters" that "our country is rapidly becoming less a capitalist society and more a feudal society," and that "if we don't do something to fix the glaring inequities in this economy,

the pitchforks are going to come for us.” Ask students to apply the CER method of text analysis by identifying the author’s *claims* in one color highlighter, *evidence* in a second color, and *reasons* in a third. Afterwards, students should turn to a partner and evaluate Hanauer’s position based on their findings. As a class, discuss:

- Are we a country of haves and have-nots?
- How does such a division of wealth play out in our society? What are some visible signs of this division?
- What parallels can we draw between Chaucer’s England and contemporary America?
- Is the Knight a romantic trying to hang on to a dying economic system? Are we?

MEDIEVAL MARRIAGES: THE WIFE OF BATH’S AND THE FRANKLIN’S TALES

Summary of the Wife of Bath’s Tale

In the days of King Arthur, a knight is guilty of raping a young woman. The knight is sentenced to death by the King, but the Queen asks to handle his punishment herself. She asks the knight what it is that women want most, warning the knight that his life depends on the correct answer. When the knight is unable to answer, the Queen sends him on a quest for a year and a day in search of what women want. Throughout that year, the knight knocks on many doors, only to find a different answer each place he goes. On his trip back to the Queen, an old woman offers to give him the correct answer if he vows to do anything she asks. The knight agrees, and he returns to court with the answer that women wish for dominance in marriage. When the Queen and her court agree with his answer, the old woman steps forward and demands that the knight marry her. After the wedding, the knight refuses to consummate the marriage, citing the old woman’s age, poverty, and lack of nobility. One by one his wife debates his arguments, finally asking the knight if he would rather have an old yet faithful wife, or a wife who is young but a temptation. When the knight admits only she has the answer, the old woman transforms into a beautiful young girl, and the two live happily ever after.

Summary of the Franklin’s Tale

A knight named Arveragus and a lady named Dorigen fall in love, marry, and return to his native Brittany where they live in love and service to one another. After one year, Arveragus must travel for a long period of time, leaving Dorigen to mourn his absence. Her friends attempt to cheer her, including a squire named Aurelius, who has loved her secretly for years. Dorigen admonishes Aurelius for professing his love to a happily married woman, and jokingly offers him her love only if he clears the rocks from the coast of Brittany, a seemingly impossible feat. Aurelius strikes a deal with a magician who uses his knowledge of the tides to make it appear the rocks have disappeared. Dorigen is stricken with remorse and considers giving up her life rather than her chastity. Meanwhile Arveragus returns home. When Dorigen tearfully explains her predicament, he proclaims that truth is a man’s most valuable asset and allows her to go to Aurelius provided she never tell a soul about the affair. Dorigen goes to Aurelius, and when he sees her torment and hears of her husband’s selflessness, he releases Dorigen from her promise. When the magician hears of Aurelius’s actions, he too, is moved, erasing the squire’s debt and proclaiming all is “well paid.”

TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS:

The Wife of Bath's Tale

1. Is the punishment created by the Queen fitting for the knight's crime? Why or why not?
2. What is the purpose of the Wife of Bath's diversion into the King Midas tale?
3. Evaluate the old woman's argument against the knight's rejection (pp. 288-91). What are her claims? What does she use for evidence?
4. The old woman claims, "But truly poor are they who whine and fret/ And covet what they cannot hope to get./ And he that, having nothing, covets not;/ Is rich, though you may think he is a sot" (p. 290). Rewrite the paradox in your own words. In what way is the knight "poor?"
5. In what sense has the wife won "mastery" over her husband? (p. 291) Why might Chaucer choose this word, considering the knight's past behavior?

The Franklin's Tale

1. Explain the paradox "She took a servant when she took a lord" (p. 410). What kind of marriage do Dorigen and Arveragus have? What is Chaucer's purpose in having the Franklin use words like "servant," "service," and "servitude" (pp. 410-411)?
2. Why is Aurelius described as "servant in the game/ Of Venus..." (p. 414)? How might the squire be described in contemporary society?
3. What is the "natural magic" that could create an "illusion" that the rocks have disappeared (pp. 419-20)?
4. What is the purpose of the long speech Dorigen makes about famous wives (pp. 426-28)?
5. Aurelius, a squire, says of Arveragus, a knight, "I well perceive his nobleness" (p. 430). In what ways is Arveragus "noble" for his actions towards Dorigen and Aurelius? Is Aurelius noble, as well? What about the magician? What might the Franklin be saying about both classes?

Both Tales

1. Compare the knight's and lady's marriage in the Wife of Bath's Tale to that of Arveragus and Dorigen in the Franklin's Tale. How does Chaucer treat the ideas of mastery and dominance differently in the two tales?
2. Explore the role of forgiveness in both the Wife of Bath's Tale and the Franklin's Tale. Who forgives whom? Whose forgiveness demonstrates the greatest character?

ACTIVITIES:

Say Something: Wife of Bath's Prologue

Hold a "Say Something" paired-reading of an excerpt from the Wife of Bath's prologue, which sheds light on medieval marriage and the role of women in the Middle Ages. Sample excerpts include her claim that women want what they cannot have (p. 272), her defense of female sexuality (pp. 260-61), and her conclusion to marriage number five (pp. 279-80). Students take turns reading an excerpt of the text out loud, stopping to "say something" to their partner about the text. The comment might be a summary, question, or inference. The process is repeated until the reading is complete. Afterwards, ask partners to discuss the following: what are the Wife of Bath's claims in this excerpt? What evidence does she give? What insight into medieval marriages do her insights provide? As a companion piece, read and discuss the article "The Modern Marriage Trap—and What to Do About It" (<http://ti.me/2jFdiEi>). Ask the

class: Six hundred years later, what has changed and what has remained similar about gender roles in marriage? How does reading this contemporary article resonate with our reading of the Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale?

Presentation on Genre

Both the Wife of Bath's Tale and the Franklin's Tale can be considered "Breton lais" due to their focus on love, chivalry, and the supernatural. In addition, both tales contain a quest, which is characteristic of medieval romances. Provide students with resources about both genres; ask them to pick one of the two tales, and look for text evidence that defines the tale as either a Breton lai, a romance, or both. Using powtoon.com, students can work in partners to develop a short video animation that presents their findings. See samples and details at <https://www.powtoon.com/edu-home/>. Possible genre resources:

- <https://www.britannica.com/art/romance-literature-and-performance>
- <https://www.britannica.com/art/Breton-lay>

MORAL LESSONS:

THE NUN'S PRIEST'S AND THE PARDONER'S TALES

Summary of the Nun's Priest's Tale

A proud rooster named Chanticleer rules the roost at the home of a humble widow. Among the rooster's seven hens, his favorite is named Pertelote. One morning, Chanticleer recounts his dream that a fierce beast came to kidnap and kill him. Shaming the rooster for his cowardice, Pertelote tells him to give no significance to dreams. Chanticleer rebuts the hen's viewpoint by retelling several historical and literary examples where dreams proved true. But heeding Pertelote's advice, the rooster basks in the barnyard and sings. Meanwhile Sir Russel Fox has been lying in wait. He flatters Chanticleer and asks him to sing. Chanticleer complies, and the fox snatches him, prompting an epic chase by the widow's daughters and the entire menagerie of barnyard animals plus the family dog. The rooster tricks Russel into taunting his enemies, whereupon the fox drops his prisoner. Chanticleer has learned his lesson, and the Priest concludes with a warning about flattery.

Summary of the Pardoner's Tale

Three young troublemakers from Flanders are known for gluttony, cursing, and gambling. One night at a tavern, they ask about the identity of a corpse passing by in a coffin. The tavern boy tells them it actually is a friend of theirs, slain while drunk last night by a thief named Death. The three vow to find Death and kill him. They have not traveled far when they encounter an old man whom they treat harshly. He reminds them they should respect their elders, and when they threaten him unless he tells them how to locate the thief named Death, the old man tells them to look underneath a nearby tree. There, they find a pot of gold and make plans to take it home. The wickedest of the three suggests that one of them go back for food and drink while the other two guard the gold. When the youngest is sent back to town, the remaining two make plans to kill him upon his return. Meanwhile, the youngest decides to buy poison in order to eliminate the other two. After the older two attack the youngest, they sit down for a rest, drink the poison, and die, leaving the gold beneath the tree. Ending his tale with a warning against avarice, the Pardoner then proceeds to offer his audience fake religious relics, provoking a sharp rejoinder from the Host to the point that the Knight intervenes and calls for peace.

TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS:

The Nun's Priest's Tale

1. Review the description of Chanticleer (p. 215). Why did Chaucer choose to have the Nun's Priest describe the rooster in this fashion?
2. Contrast Chanticleer's and Pertelote's claims about dreams. Whose argument, if either, is stronger? Use text evidence to defend your answer.
3. Define the tone of the Nun's Priest when he discusses women (p. 226). What specific words or phrases from the text suggest his tone?
4. What is the fox's purpose in telling Chanticleer that both the rooster's parents "have honoured my poor house" (p. 227)? How does this purpose support the tale's overall message?
5. The Priest describes the chase (p. 229). What connections can you make to scenes in other literature? Why might Chaucer choose to depict the battle in this way?
6. The Nun's Priest concludes with the moral of the tale (p. 231). Restate this lesson in your own words. Why might Chaucer have chosen an animal fable to illustrate this message?

The Pardoner's Tale

1. What is the effect of the Pardoner beginning his tale with an admittedly hypocritical sermon?
2. What are some of the motivations for giving sermons, according to the Pardoner (p. 243)? Explain the irony given the type of pilgrimage the Pardoner and his fellow pilgrims are making.
3. Explain what the Pardoner means by "That I will live in poverty, from choice?/ That's not the counsel of my inner voice!" (p. 244). Sum up his personal philosophy (pp. 243-44).
4. How does the personification of death (p. 250) impact the tale's overall structure and message? Cite specific words or phrases in your answer.
5. Identify and explain the paradox about death (p. 251).
6. Summarize the plan suggested by the "wickedest" of the gang (pp. 253-54).
7. What might serve as the moral to the Pardoner's Tale? How and why does Chaucer juxtapose this moral with the tale's narrator?

Both Tales

1. What is the relationship between the Nun's Priest's Tale, which is a bestiary, and the Pardoner's Tale, which is an allegory? What is Chaucer's message about morality in the Middle Ages? How might both these genres help support his purpose and appeal to his audience, both then and now?
2. What sin is the focus for each of these tales? How are these sins connected? What is their relationship to other characters Chaucer introduces in his prologue?

ACTIVITIES:

Morality Check

Both the Nun's Priest Tale and the Pardoner's Tale address moral lessons. Generate student reflection on the concept of morality with the SQPL strategy (Student Questions for Purposeful Learning). Select a compelling quotation from the *Atlantic* article "Understanding America's Moral Divides" (<http://theatlantic.com/cgP5z46>). One such quote from the article: "Moral reasoning

... is a skill we humans evolved to further our social agendas—to justify our own actions and to defend the teams we belong to.... The goal is not to find truth, it's to knock down everything the other side throws at you, and to try to throw things at the other side.”

Assign partners and ask students to generate questions based on this quote. Post student questions on the board, deleting duplication, and adding any important questions students may have omitted. The idea is for students to now read the complete article with purpose, looking for answers to their self-generated questions. Next, ask students to read the Pardoner's Prologue, where the church leader expresses his take on morality. Discuss connections between Chaucer's medieval text and the contemporary article. Questions to consider include:

- How does the Pardoner, a church leader, manipulate the idea of what is moral (his own and his followers) to support his point of view?
- Do our current leaders manipulate their constituents' moral compasses?
- What evidence from the *Atlantic* article and your own experience supports your claim?

Comparative Analysis

In both the Nun's Priest's Tale and the Pardoner's Tale, Chaucer employs irony and the fear of death to emphasize a moral message. In the Nun's Priest's Tale, a fox kidnaps a rooster in a battle for the bird's life. In the Pardoner's Tale, death is personified in the form of an old man. Provide an opportunity for even more comparative analysis by introducing a third, twentieth-century text, Donald Justice's "Incident in a Rose Garden" (<http://bit.ly/2vfHCu5>). Ask students to read the three texts to analyze similarities and differences in the two authors' use of irony, theme, and style, noting their findings in a chart such as the one provided below. Whenever possible, students should cite examples and evidence from the texts. For instance, in the poem, death tells his victim: "Sir, I knew your father./ And we were friends at the end." Students should immediately see the connection to Chaucer's fox in the Nun's Priest's Tale, who tells the rooster, "My Lord your Father ... / [has] honoured my poor house..." (p. 227). After the charts are complete, ask students to compose a written answer to the prompt: how does reading a modern poem add to your understanding of style and purpose in Chaucer's medieval tales?

Literary Technique	The Nun's Priest's Tale	The Pardoner's Tale	Incident in a Rose Garden
Situational Irony			
Verbal Irony			
Dramatic Irony			
Theme of Death			
Author's Style			

Selling Salvation

The Pardoner's Prologue provides students with an excellent opportunity to unpack the structure and meaning of a complex text. The close-reading process focuses on excerpts, or "chunks" of text, promoting interpretation that is deep rather than wide, and fostering critical thinking skills through writing and speaking. Have students conduct a close read from the beginning of the Pardoner's Prologue (pp. 241-42). After each read, one of the following questions can be discussed with a partner or group and answered in writing.

- After the first read, ask students: What is happening in the text? Students should be able to say that the Pardoner is listing the many fake relics he deceives the faithful into buying.
- The second read takes a deeper dive. Students address the question: What is this text beginning to be about? (What central ideas are beginning to emerge? What seems to be the author's purpose?) Students might say that the medieval Catholic Church appears to suffer from abuses and dishonesty, or that Chaucer depicts church leaders as entering the clerical profession for the wrong reasons.
- Finally, after the third read, students focus even closer to answer: Which words and phrases contribute to the text's meaning and tone? Students may cite words such as "sin," "confession," "acquit," and "shrive," and might discuss the "price" of salvation in medieval culture or the contrast between blessings and deceit.

For all three questions, students must return to the text and cite evidence. For more information on close reading, view the following Douglas Fisher video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5w9v6-zUg3Y>.

Students can draw a parallel between the Pardoner and his twenty-first-century equivalent. A 2016 ABC News article entitled "Selling Salvation?" (<http://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=3164858&page=1>) describes the practices of Reverend Peter Popoff, who sells fake spring water and "Dead Sea salt" to be used for prompting miracles. Distribute a copy of this article to the class. Ask students to create a "double-bubble map" or Venn diagram comparing the Pardoner as characterized in his Prologue to Reverend Popoff. Afterwards, discuss with the class their reaction to the article as well as its connection to the Pardoner's Prologue. Questions might include:

- Why does *The Canterbury Tales* portray multiple church leaders and pilgrims as dishonest?
- Are people today really as dishonest and gullible as in Chaucer's time? Are our actions and motivations the same, or different?
- What evidence from the ABC News article or other sources supports your answer?

SYNTHESIZING THE TEXT AS A WHOLE

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITING

1. Explore how Chaucer characterizes women and their roles throughout his tales and prologues. Consider Alison in the Miller's Tale and the Wife of Bath, painted as sinful for enjoying sex. Also, consider Emily from the Knight's Tale, who is never asked her preference about marriage or husband and who prays to the virgin goddess to maintain her chastity. Re-read the Wife of Bath's proclamation: "For take my word for it, there is no libel/ On women that the clergy will not paint,/ Except when writing of a woman-saint" (pp. 276-277). Are women either virgins or promiscuous in Chaucer's text, or is there middle ground? Why or why not? Provide evidence from the text to support your views.
2. The chivalric code and/or chivalric love is illustrated in the Knight's Tale, the Wife of Bath's Tale, and the Franklin's Tale. Is the effort spent and pain suffered by these knights, even unto death, worth the honor? Is love worth it to them? What is Chaucer's view of love? Of the chivalric code?
3. In the comments linking the pilgrim's stories and in the tales themselves, Chaucer capitalizes on his audience's fascination with bawdy humor. What can we learn from what is typically considered low humor? What examples can be found in Chaucer's text?

4. In *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer chooses to couch his critical commentary within a fictional framework. What social, moral, and political issues does he unmask with his satire? What would be his “Top Ten” list of complaints? How do we satirize society today? Are any of our complaints the same? How are writers punished or rewarded for satire? What are the risks and benefits of unmasking society, of uncovering its wrongs? Why might it be necessary?
5. Return to the compelling questions at the start of this guide: *How does The Canterbury Tales serve as a commentary on the culture, politics, and values of both medieval England and contemporary America? How do Chaucer's stylistic choices contribute to the text's overall structure and aesthetic impact?* Ask students to develop a product that answers one of these questions. Students might choose to create a podcast, a slide presentation, an animated video, a website, or a traditional essay. Resources and tools are listed here:
 - <https://www.weebly.com/> (website creator)
 - <http://www.podbean.com/start-podcast> (podcast generator)
 - <https://ed.ted.com/on/711c69NK> (how to make paper slides with a flipcam/ smart phone)
 - <https://www.powtoon.com/> (animated video tool)

MODERN DAY PILGRIMS

Invite students to create their own, modern-day pilgrim. Model the process with the whole class first. Together, brainstorm an identity for a contemporary pilgrim such as a Starbucks barista. Include physical characteristics, character, behavior, and beliefs. Using Chaucer's rhyming couplets as a model, write a few lines of the barista's description. Next, students choose their own pilgrim and write his or her description. Ask students to write their pilgrim's identities on the board so that they can make sure to include multiple social classes and avoid duplication. Afterwards, post student work on the class website in order to form a complete prologue, similar to Chaucer's. As an extension, students can compose a tale for their pilgrim, using one of Chaucer's genres such as romance, allegory, bestiary, or fabliau.

SOCIAL SATIRE DIGITAL POSTER

Satire and social criticism are not restricted to Chaucer's time. Ask students to create an interactive digital poster that illustrates the use of satire as social commentary in contemporary America. As an introduction, ask students to list genres of social criticism they have encountered in school or on social media. Answers might include political cartoons, paintings, comedy skits, tweets, novels like *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* or *Catcher in the Rye*, or news satire such as The Daily Show. Now ask students to select a single topic, and with a partner, create a digital poster that shows how that topic is satirized in contemporary media. Teams may choose to focus on topics related to politics, race, education, poverty, or gender roles. After sharing their posters with the class, discuss with students: how do these contemporary examples of social commentary compare to Chaucer's in *The Canterbury Tales*? What has changed about culture and accepted values? What has stayed the same? How does satire do more than entertain?

Tools to create digital posters include:

- <https://www.canva.com/>
- <http://edu.glogster.com/?ref=com>
- <https://www.lucidpress.com/>

PAIDEIA SEMINAR

Hold a Paideia Seminar on *The Canterbury Tales*. Prior to the seminar, discuss with students what an ideal seminar looks and sounds like, including participation, active listening, and respect for multiple viewpoints. Ask students to set a class goal, such as, “I will contribute to the discussion at least one time,” as well as a personal goal, such as, “I will mention a classmate’s name and extend on or disagree with his thinking.” Students should record their goals on paper or sticky-notes which remain visible during the seminar. During the discussion, take a facilitator’s role. Ask a low-risk opening question to encourage total class participation in a round robin response, such as: Who is the single most important pilgrim in the novel, and why? This question might be provided the night before. Its purpose is to identify main ideas in Chaucer’s text. Then move to a core question for the purpose of analyzing text details, such as: How does Chaucer characterize the church in his prologue and in specific tales?

End the discussion with a closing question that promotes personalization and application, such as: How might this novel’s themes apply to a current social issue? After the seminar, ask students to evaluate their own and their classmates’ speaking, thinking, and listening. Did they meet their class and personal goals? What should the class do differently in the next seminar discussion? How did the Paideia deepen their understanding of Chaucer’s text?

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NOTES

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