



The Canterbury Tales

By Geoffrey Chaucer

Dates Overview:

October 10—Theme discussion; Begin *The Canterbury Tales*; Assign Body

Biography and Envelope Activity: Read *The Prologue*

October 12—Work on Body Biographies and envelope activity/Thesis Statement for Research Project: Read *The Prologue, The Pardoner's Tale, The Wife of Bath's Tale, and The Miller's Tale*.

October 14—Work on Body Biographies and envelope activity/Thesis Statement for Research Project Read *The Prologue, The Pardoner's Tale, The Wife of Bath's Tale, and The Miller's Tale*.

October 18—Quiz on *The Prologue, The Pardoner's Tale, The Wife of Bath's Tale, and The Miller's Tale*. Body Biographies DUE!

October 20—Grammar Quiz; Watch *The Canterbury Tales*

October 25—Envelope Discussion about *The Canterbury Tales*

October 27—Prepare for Midterm; Write in-class midterm essay on theme

October 31—Lecture on Shakespeare; Begin *Macbeth*

Part II: Prologue Study—The Canterbury Tales characters represent the best and the worst of medieval society—a microcosm of Medieval England.

Directions: (100 points) DUE 10/18

1. Read The Prologue of *The Canterbury Tales*
2. Get into teams of two or three.
3. Choose one of the characters from The Prologue out of the hat (some teams will have 2).
4. Use some physical or technological representation of your character, using props or costumes or drawings or mini-models, etc.
5. Summarize the character's description.
6. Use three or more quotes showing how the character's clothing tells the audience about the character. Document with MLA format.
7. Use three or more quotes explaining about your character's/characters' place/places in society. Research the livelihood of the character in the Middle Ages. (For example: If you have the Wife of Bath, research a bit about women in the Middle Ages. If you have the Miller, research a miller's position in Medieval England.)
8. How would character be represented in England in 2015? In America in 2015? Tell your audience what these roles are today.

The Knight: pgs. 114-115

The Doctor: pg. 124- 125

The Nun—Prioress: pgs. 116- 117

The Woman of Bath: pg.125

The Monk: pgs. 117-118

The Parson: pgs.125-126

The Friar: pgs. 118-120

The Summoner: pgs. 130-131

The Franklin: pg. 122

The Pardoner: pgs. 131-132

The Plowman and The Miller: pgs.127-128

The Merchant and The Sergeant of the Law: pgs. 120-121

Audience members should be taking notes on each character based on the envelope topics for Part II.

Canterbury Tales Character Rubric

Requirements	20— YES!	15— Mostly.	10— Okay.	5— Really?	0 No Comment.
Character description and representation includes 3 or more quotations placed strategically on the character's clothing and MLA documented with page number.					
Character description includes 3 or more quotations that explain about your character's/characters' place/places in medieval society MLA documented with page number.					
Character description includes modern placement in British and American society.					
Character description includes all parts, colorfully and creatively.					
Students dress or have visual aids in presentation.					

Part III: Thematic Topics, Motifs, and Literary Elements—50 points

DUE Daily; however, I'll be collecting your envelopes on October 27.

Envelope close reading activity for *The Prologue*, *The Pardoner's Tale*, *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, and *the Miller's Tale*.

Directions:

1. Each student will be given an envelope with **one** of the following close reading topics on it.
2. Throughout his/her reading the student is to **copy 5 passages** onto index cards or small slips of paper and put them in the envelope. Be sure to record the page number, chapter number and speaker of each quote you select.
3. Write an explanation of the quotation in regard to characterization, themes, motifs, and other literary elements.
4. From day to day during the reading of the work, students will be asked to share what they have noted on their chosen topics. The sharing will be the basis of the discussion of the work.

Themes, motifs, and literary elements

1. Influence of astrology: Astrology was considered very important during the Middle Ages. Find references to stars and telling the future or the influences of the stars.
2. Chaucer's attitude toward commoners: Although Chaucer was himself a commoner, he shows some prejudices toward commoners, or perhaps he is bringing to light the attitudes of the nobility. Look for any references either positive or negative concerning commoners.
3. Allusions to historical events: What events are considered important enough and well-known enough to appear in Chaucer's writing? Take note of any and research for a brief summary of what happened.

4. Chivalry / Honor: What does Chaucer say on the subject of chivalry, chivalric code, honor, etc.? Consider references to loyalty, courtesy, generosity, as part of chivalry.

5. Excesses of the church: Where does Chaucer discuss those within the church society and their excessive self-indulgence? Where do they over-indulge, especially where they have taken vows of poverty?

6. Corruption of the church: Where do you see mention of people who are corrupt within the medieval church? You need to look for people who abuse the trust of the people they are supposed to help, people who overstep their authority, people who do not live up to their vows.

7. False appearances / lying: Who is not what he/she appears to be? Who presents a false front to the world? Who blatantly lies? Look for connections between these people.

8. The female role in society: where is there mention of what a woman is supposed to do or be? How is the character in question representative (or not) of the role?

9. Greed / love of money: Many of the characters are guilty of greed. Notice any references to this character flaw. What does Chaucer think of the issue?

10. Abuses of the legal system: Notice incidents and/or mention of those who are involved with the system of law enforcement and the judiciary.

11. Manliness: Mark where being a man or manly is an issue. What characterizes this trait?

12. Use of hyperbole: Part of satire is hyperbole. Where is the exaggeration obvious? Where is it subtle?

13. Criticism of church practices: What common practices of the medieval church are mentioned? Is the reference positive, neutral, or negative?
14. References to nobility/gentility: What constitutes nobility or gentility? Is Chaucer serious or satirical? What might his tone imply?
15. Hypocrisy: Who is behaving hypocritically? Where is there hypocrisy? Where do you see someone not practicing what they would profess to believe? Are there any parallels?
16. Personification: Where does Chaucer use personification? to what effect?
17. Love / romance / courtly love: Notice where this topic is important or discussed. What is the tone? What might be Chaucer's purpose?
18. Male/female conflict: Where is there a battle between the sexes? Who wins? How do the winner and loser appear? Is there trickery involved? What is the implication?
19. Allusions to mythology: Notice any references to mythological characters. Which ones are they? What significance do the characters have within the context of the myth?
20. References to magic: What is the medieval attitude toward magic, as presented in the work? What types of magic? Who performs it?
21. Physiognomy: Where does Chaucer reference the belief that physical characteristics reveal moral character? Look for mention of physical appearance paired with character traits.

22. Animals: How do animals figure in the work? Are they important? Do they tell us anything about the writer or the culture?

23. Clothing: How does Chaucer use clothing to tell us about the characters?

24. Betrayal: Where does a character betray another? What do we learn about the betrayer? How does the betrayed one react? What do we learn?

25. Pride: Take note of mention of the sin of pride. Who is guilty? What, if any, is the outcome of the situation?

26. Narrator comment: Where does the flow of the story stop for the narrator to comment, such as with “it seems to me” or “it seems”? What do these comments tell us?

27. Criticism of women: What is the apparent attitude toward women? Note where they are criticized. What traits are considered bad for a woman?