

Medieval Works

Geoffrey Chaucer

"Father of English poetry"

- wrote & translated his works in English → the first great author to do so; showing the diversity & power of his language → others then followed.
- also wrote Italian, French, & Latin.
- travels abroad enhanced his literary work

- born fairly wealthy → middle class
- favor of the king & other worthies.
- served his king after being ransomed by the French.

The Canterbury Tales

- It's a 'frame story' A story which contains a series of other stories.

- The main frame of CT is:

- a group of pilgrims find themselves in an inn the night before they hit the road to see the Canterbury Cathedral
(Ken Follett's "The Pillars of Civilization")

↳ the host (owner of the inn) suggests that each person tell 2 stories on the way & 2 on the return trip & the one judged the best will be treated to a supper upon their return.

→ 31 pilgrims X 4 stories = 124 total.

- 24 actually written. Then, he died.

↳ in the Prologue, there are 3 characters who are completely blameless & good.

① The Knight

- Perfect
- chivalrous, noble, heroic, honourable
 - valued by others who knew him (162)
 - ~~own~~ w/ those achievements he is modest, never boastful.
 - dressed casually w/ stains of his occupation
- This is a PERFECT character

② The Squire

- curly, pressed, locks → pretty boy
- 'some' service done why: to win the ladies.
- serves his patron, the knight
- athletic, agile, poetic, musical, artistic
- loves all night

③ The Yeoman

- a servant of the knight
- a forester (I guess)
- armed to the teeth → perfectly equipped, shiny weapons ready to use.
- appears to be good at his job.
- a traveler

④ The Wife of Bath (p 64)

- somewhat deaf
- dressed beautiful, not that good-looking.
- 5 husbands. FIVE → all dead.
- 'love's mischances' → knew the remedies
- a strong & prideful woman → found a way of being independent in a time when it was impossible.

⑤ The Nun (p. 56)

- stuck-up (courty kind of grace)

- speaks French, but not the Paris kind.

- she eats daintily as if she does not

eat much and yet her forehead measures

9" across → this is a large woman.

- she weeps for dead mice, & yet beds her pet dogs neat.

↳ dressed pearly & w/ jewelry.

- Should be modest, but appears to be rich & above others.

A

Amor Vincit Omnia

(Love Conquers All)

⑥ Oxford Cleric (p. 60)

- somewhat leech-like on his friends.

- very serious

- likes books, most all for don
- pays back his loans with prayers for those who've given to me.
- seems to not contribute much to society

⑦ Monk (p 57)

- * - all monks had taken vows of poverty, chastity, + obedience.
- he is rich & does what he wants
- enjoys hunting
- disagrees w/ the Church's teaching about his profession.
- old "in nice clothes, supple boots, owns greyhounds, (for hunting) a horse.
- chastity? → a "lover's knot"
- likes to eat. Lots! (Poverty vows?)
- fashionable.

⑧ Friar - (p 58) Nupert.

*- monks spent their lives in monasteries; Friars spent their lives out in the world ministering to the poor.

- This Friar is a mendicant; he is licensed to beg.
- heard confessions for a fee.
- liked the 'pretty girls'
- drank lots: knew barmaids (prostitutes)
- didn't like poor people → preferred rich people
- arbitrated disputes for a fee.
- dressed rich. Shaped like a bell → fat.

⑨ Franklin - a country landowner (p 61)

- cake & wine for breakfast?
- made sure he is fully stocked with food.

- loved eating, hosting, partying
- alcoholism?
- official in his community.
- meticulous.

10. Skipper p 63

- captain of a ship
- on land \Rightarrow awkward.
- heartless soldier \Rightarrow 'walks the plank'
- thief \Rightarrow stole wine
- a pirate \Rightarrow knows hiding places everywhere.
- a great seaman.

11. Doctor p 63

- sounds witchy \Rightarrow the stars are his textbook
- makes \$ from patients illnesses.
- relationship w/ apothecaries

12. Parson - a village clergyman / parish priest.

Parson

- good renown
- rich in holy thought
- didn't care about \$:
 - stay w/ his 'flock' instead of making \$ in London.
 - didn't like asking for tithes.

- holy & virtuous
- lives his life in an exemplary way.
- walks the walk

13. Plowman - a worker

Plowman

- hard working + enjoys it.
- virtuous \Rightarrow helps others
 - \Rightarrow pays his tithes on time.
- not rich.

- "brother" to the Parson - real?
- brother in virtue?

14. Miller - large man

- powder puff
- not very attractive
- wart on nose w/ hair
- mouth like furnace
- nostrils black & wide



- Filthy stories told
- a thug → stole w/ his 'thumb of gold'

15. Manciple - not a learned man, but wise in his job.
- excellent at his job → very funny

16. Reeve - thin

- excellent at accounting
- seemed nicer than the man he works for.

- a carpenter

17. Summoner - scary - looking - pimples, scabs
- spoke Latin to sound smart,
he had "no wits"

- drinker!
- his job is like a policeman + judge for
the church court.

18. Pardoner - hair like rat-tails
- bulging eyeballs

- sold 'true' holy relics to those who didn't
know better

- sang + spoke well in order to get paid.

- a golding or more → homosexual? certainly
not mainly.

- very greedy.

- talented con-man

Sir Gawain & the Green Knight

- anonymous author for this legendary poem.
- was written during time of Chaucer, lost, then re-published in 1839

Writing devices:

- use of alliteration
- strophes (rather than stanzas) of unequal lengths which end in a "bob & a wheel"
 - bob: short line of 1, 2, or 3 syllables.
 - wheel: 4 rhymed lines

The Story:

Set at Christmas-season, on behalf of King Arthur, Sir Gawain accepts a challenge from the Green Knight. G.K. doesn't die, however, & Gawain is obliged to meet him a year and a day hence at the G.K.'s castle.

True to his word he sets out a year later to find the G.K. When he reaches the place, he stays at another castle for several days where he is wooed with

increasing and then by the lady of the house, but he always refuses her advances. Finally, she convinces him to ^{accept} a green belt from her as protection against the magic of the G.K.

Then he meets the G.K., which you can find written in your textbook starting on p. 87.

