

Chaucer's THE CANTERBURY TALES Study Guide

Name: _____ Hour: _____ Date: _____

Prologue Beginning:

1. In what month does this story begin?
2. How many pilgrims are there altogether?
3. How is spring described?
4. Why is Thomas a Becket so revered by the pilgrims?
10. Line 20 tells us the narrator's point of view. What is it?
11. Why are the qualities listed in lines 45 and 46 honorable?

THE KNIGHT

1. The Knight has fought numerous actual battles during the Crusades. What does this tell us about his character?
2. How does his behavior at court contrast with that on the battlefield?
3. How is the Knight dressed?

THE SQUIRE

1. How is the Squire different from his father?
2. Which details illustrate his vanity?
3. What are his chief accomplishments?

THE YEOMAN

1. What is the yeoman's job?
2. How does the description of the Yeoman convey his efficiency and professionalism?

THE PRIORESS

1. What is a "prioress"?
2. What is wrong with the Prioress' attitude toward her dogs?
3. What impression does Prioress make on the reader?
4. How does Chaucer force us to make a judgment about the Prioress? Is she described more strongly as a nun or a woman? Explain.

THE MONK

1. What is a typical monk's existence like?
2. Does Monk follow the strict rules of the St. Benedict Brothers? Explain.
3. How does Monk feel about monastic life?

4. What point is Chaucer making when he describes the Monk's physical appearance in lines 197-211?

5. Do you think the Monk observed a vow of poverty?

THE FRIAR

6. What does Friar do with girl friends he has grown tired of?

7. After reading lines 2239-254, what can you infer about Friar's character or "heart condition"?

1. How is a friar different from a monk?

2. In what ways is the conduct of his life in conflict with the principles of his order?

3. Find the lines that describe Friar's dress. What is significant about the way he dresses?

THE MERCHANT

1. Why does Chaucer think its important to comment on the fact that he doesn't know the merchant's name?

2. What is Chaucer's attitude toward the merchant?

THE CLERIC

1. What is a cleric?

2. How does the Cleric epitomize a typical student?

3. Why was is significant that Cleric has 20 books?

4. How does Cleric repay his benefactors and why is this method important?

THE LAWYER or SERGEANT OF LAW

1. How is Chaucer's attitude toward the lawyer conveyed?

THE FRANKLIN

1. What is a "franklin"?

2. Franklin has made a religion of sorts out of what?

3. What sort of humor does Chaucer employ in describing the Franklin?

WIFE OF BATH

1. Why does the Wife of Bath go traveling?

2. What is significant about the fact that she has been married 5 times?

3. Describe this lady.

4. What happens when any one in the Church tries to be the first in line, other than the Wife of Bath?

THE PARSON

1. How is a parson different from the other churchmen we have met?
2. What is the contrast between Parson and Wife of Bath?
3. What is the significance of the question, "...if gold rust, then what will iron do?"
4. What qualities does he possess?

THE PLOWMAN

1. What is a plowman?
2. What does he represent?

THE MILLER

1. What is a miller?
2. How does his appearance reveal his moral fiber?
3. How does Miller cheat when weighing grain?

THE REEVE

1. What does a "reeve" do?
2. Is he totally honest or does he skim profits? How do you know?
3. How does Chaucer convey Reeve's craftiness?
4. Why might the Reeve ride last?

THE PARDONER

1. What is a "summoner"?
2. What is a "pardoner"?
3. How can an individual be absolved from sin?
4. How does his disheveled appearance reflect his inner depravity?
5. Why is it ironic that the Pardoner sings the offertory song?

FRAMEWORK FOR THE TALES:

1. Where has the narrator stopped to eat and sleep?
2. Who is the host of the inn? What does he suggest?

3. Who will be the judge and what is the prize?
4. How do they decide who will go first?
5. Which 3 pilgrims are presented as the most virtuous members of the group?
6. How many stories must each pilgrim tell on the trip to Canterbury and how many stories on the way back?

SIMILES

Find 5 examples of similes in the Prologue:

ALLITERATION

Find 5 examples of alliteration in the Prologue: