

# Canterbury Tales

Cornell Notes on Themes

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Chivalry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• System of ideals and social codes governing the behavior of knights and gentlewomen.</li><li>• Included ideals of courtly love, which encompasses many minor ideas.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Love is a torment or disease.</li><li>○ Men cannot eat or sleep when they are in love.</li></ul></li><li>• Characters integrate cultural ideals of courtly love into their dress, their behavior, and the tales they tell.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ The squire slept very little because he loved too “hotly.”</li><li>○ The nun wears a brooch with “Love Conquers All” engraved on it.</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Women in the Middle Ages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Women had no political rights in a system that was primarily military.</li><li>• Women were always subservient to men.</li><li>• When they appear in <i>Canterbury Tales</i>, they are usually victimized in some way.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Objects of desire.</li><li>○ Victims of assault.</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Springtime</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Opens in April, at beginning of spring.</li><li>• Springtime symbolizes rebirth and fresh beginnings.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ The Squire is compared to the freshness of the month of May.</li><li>○ The pilgrims embark in the spring, as described in the opening of the prologue.</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>The Importance of Clothing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Descriptions of garments help to define each character.</li><li>• Clothing symbolizes what lies beneath the surface of each personality.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ The Physician’s love of wealth is symbolized in the rich silk and fur of his gown.</li><li>○ The Squire’s youthful vanity is symbolized by the excessive floral embroidery on his tunic.</li><li>○ Stains on the Knight’s tunic symbolize his lack of vanity and materialism.</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Physiognomy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Science that judged a person’s temperament and character based on his or her anatomy and physical appearance.</li><li>• Plays a large role in Chaucer’s descriptions of the pilgrims in the General Prologue.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ The Miller represents the stereotypical peasant physiognomy most clearly.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Round and ruddy, with a wart on his nose.</li><li>▪ Appears rough and therefore suited to rough, simple work.</li></ul></li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Corruption of the Church</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In a century of disease, plague, famine, and scarce labor, the sight of a church ornamented with gold seemed unfair to some people.</li><li>• The Church’s preaching against greed suddenly seemed hypocritical, considering its great displays of material wealth.</li><li>• Distaste for the excesses of the church triggered stories about greedy, irreligious churchmen.</li></ul>

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ They accepted bribes, bribed others, and indulged themselves sensually and gastronomically.</li><li>○ They ignored the peasants begging at their doors.</li><li>• The religious figures in <i>Canterbury Tales</i> all deviate in one way or another from what was traditionally expected of them.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ The Nun<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Rosary seems more like a love token than something expressing her devotion to Christ.</li><li>▪ Her dainty mannerisms make her more attractive to men, but she was never supposed to marry.</li></ul></li><li>○ The Monk enjoys hunting, a pastime of the rich.</li><li>○ The Friar preferred to spend time with the wealthy rather than the poor, who he is supposed to be helping.</li></ul></li></ul> |
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**Geoffrey Chaucer**  
**The Canterbury Tales: Snapshot of an Age**

Define <b>vernacular</b>	
How did Chaucer help to establish English as a legitimate language?	
Give a brief overview of Chaucer's accomplishments listed under the category "Friends in High Places"	
What is iambic pentameter? Why is it important in reading <i>Canterbury Tales</i> ?	
What is a pilgrimage? Where are the people in the tales going and why?	
What suggestion does the Host make that leads to the stories in <i>Canterbury Tales</i> .	
How do the characters in <i>Canterbury Tales</i> represent "everyman"?	

Chaucer places great importance on peoples' appearances in evaluating their personalities. Tell me how you think the following "types" of people would look (dress, hair, eyes, etc).

1. a thief \_\_\_\_\_
2. a liar \_\_\_\_\_
3. a greedy person \_\_\_\_\_
4. a saint \_\_\_\_\_