

Creative Writing Project: Modern Day Canterbury Tales (60 points total)

Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* features archetypal pilgrims as presented through the perspective of the narrator. The General Prologue introduces a variety of people, each of whom is described according to his/her profession. These pilgrims are stereotypes, representing what medieval society (or simply Chaucer himself) thought about these professions. The same thing could easily be done if applied to modern professions. If you hear the words "computer geek," what stereotypes immediately come to mind? Nerd? Pocket protector? Lack of "skillz"? It is easy to build stereotypes based on how society perceives a certain person or group of people.

Your Task: You are a contributing poet in a new adaptation of *The Modern Canterbury Tales*. This story follows the adventures of modern day "pilgrims" as they take a road trip through the United States, stopping in places such as Boston, New York City, the Jersey Shore, Philadelphia, Chicago, Nashville, and Austin on the way to the ultimate modern pilgrimage spot, Hollywood! **As a poet, it is your job to create the description of your contemporary pilgrim that will appear in the Prologue, as well as a Tale that character would tell.**

You may create *any* type of pilgrim you would like (keep it appropriate, please). As long as the "profession" is recognizable, it is fair game. Please ask if you have a question about what is appropriate.

1) Requirements for Prologue Description (25 points):

- Title your poem, "The [Profession]." Write a vividly detailed **description** of your pilgrim, using sensory details, strong verbs, and figurative language.
- In the description, include **physical, mental, personal, emotional, and/or social traits**.
- Some attention should be paid to how this character relates to his/her **profession** – Are they the expert? Do they not really care about it?
- The character's **clothing** should be described in such a way that it contributes to the overall portrayal of the character's personality.
- Through your description, **select some area of the character's personality to either praise or criticize**. Try to imitate Chaucer's use of subtle satire – mockery, irony, sarcasm, understatement, etc.
- Your poem must be a minimum of **20 lines long**.
- The poem should have approximate **heroic couplets** (AABB rhyme scheme/iambic pentameter).
- Illustrate your poem with a **portrait of your pilgrim** on the same paper.

2) Requirements for Tale (25 points):

- Title your tale, "The [Profession's] Tale."
- Remember that the tale will not be about the character you created, but rather a fictional story this character would tell others that reflects that character's beliefs and priorities (in other words, the character in the story is a **persona** for your character). Like the "Wife of Bath's Tale" and "Miller's Tale," the main character in the Tale will be someone who has significant similarities to the character you have created, perhaps in a way that fulfills the wishes or deepest desires of your character.
- Also like the "Wife of Bath's Tale" and "Miller's Tale," the tale should teach some type of moral lesson. It can be **directly taught** by a character making a mistake and learning an important lesson as a result (like the knight in the "Wife of Bath's Tale") **OR indirectly taught** by characters making mistakes and getting away with them in such a ridiculous way that the reader understands the implicit lesson just the same (like Alison in the "Miller's Tale").
- This does not have to be in the strict poetic format of the Prologue Portrait – it may be written in **prose**. Please make sure your prose is as **formal and elevated** as possible though.
- Your Tale must be a minimum of 500 words.

*For both pieces of writing, follow MLA guidelines as closely as possible, but try to fit the illustration of your character on the same page as the Prologue description. Do NOT staple the Prologue description/illustration to the Tale – I may want to hang up your Prologue description/illustration!

3) The final 10 points will be earned by you doing a dramatic reading of your Prologue description (this is the 20 line poem that would theoretically appear in the Prologue). It does not need to be memorized, but should be read with fluency and appropriate emotion. (You do not need to read your Tale aloud – too long).

*****EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY*****

You can earn an additional 5 points if you dress up like your character on the day of the dramatic reading! Yay!

This project is due in class on _____ and to tii.com by midnight of the same day.