

 Prestwick House



Response Journal

Reflections: A Student Response Journal

The Canterbury Tales
Geoffrey Chaucer





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P.O. Box 658, Clayton, DE 19938

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The Canterbury Tales

To The Teacher

In order to allow the teacher maximum flexibility in his or her approach, we have grouped the prompts by sections. The teacher may, therefore, assign specific prompts or allow the students to select one or more prompts from each section

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To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.



The Canterbury Tales

Response Sheet

Name _____

Section _____

Date _____



The Canterbury Tales

Note to Teacher

This Response Journal corresponds with the *Prestwick House Literary Touchstone Classics* version of *The Canterbury Tales*. The selected tales in this book have been translated into Modern English and reproduced in their entirety. As such, some of the content, dealing with themes of a sexual nature, may not be appropriate for some classes. Teacher discretion is advised.

The Canterbury Tales

Pre-Reading

1. Pictures are a type of visual imagery that captures specific moments in time. The cover of a book is often a picture that captures a scene from the story. Other times, the cover can be abstract (featuring a series of designs or collection of pictures) or very minimal (featuring only the title and author). There is a proverb that states “A picture is worth a thousand words.” It means that an image can visually represent a written idea or story; how true is this statement?

Based on the cover image, list what types of characters you expect to find while reading. Beside each type of character, indicate which image led you to that prediction.

2. Books often include a synopsis, located on the back cover that helps potential readers get a general idea about its contents. The best synopsis is one that offers enough information to spark a reader’s interest without divulging too much information about the plot.

Think about the types of information you have seen on the back covers of books and the types of information you find most or least helpful. Then, write a letter to the editor of *The Canterbury Tales* that gives your opinion of the synopsis located on the back of your book. Be sure to include your opinion regarding whether too much or not enough information regarding the plot is revealed.

3. Geoffrey Chaucer wrote *The Canterbury Tales* in the late 14th century, a little more than six hundred years ago. While works of literature contain universal themes, which extend to people in different nations and time periods, sometimes historical events and institutions referenced in the work are irrelevant and unimportant to the reader. For instance, while modern-day readers might understand the idea of corruption in the Church, they would not particularly care about the work of Pardoners, who no longer exist.

If you were Geoffrey Chaucer and you were writing a collection of tales, what are some prominent, 21st century events, achievements, and problems that you would mention in your work? Make a list of at least ten.

The Canterbury Tales

“The General Prologue”

4. There are many different ways to commence writing a text. Some writers choose to begin with dialogue or by introducing characters; other writers may choose to begin by offering background information or details about the setting.

“The General Prologue” begins with an introduction of the story’s setting that uses several different indicators of time, such as calendar months, astrology, and agriculture. Write a paragraph explaining whether you think this is an effective introductory tactic. Then, make a list of other possible ways Chaucer could have started the story.

5. After establishing the time and place of the tale, the narrator explains how he is introduced to the pilgrims whose tales he will reveal. He and the other pilgrims are residing at the same place, The Tabard Inn, and are familiarizing themselves with one another before they depart for Canterbury in the morning.

Getting to know your travel companions can be an easy way to get mentally prepared for a trip. It’s natural to want to know more information about people with whom you will be spending time. However, being mentally prepared is just part of getting ready for a trip.

Write a minimum of two paragraphs describing how you prepared for one particular trip or journey. Do not make your primary focus the things you packed. Did you have to do anything at home or school before you went away? Did you have to learn a new skill or language? Did you have to make an itinerary of the things you were going to do? Include specific details about your preparation, in addition to what you thought and how you felt.

6. In conversing with the other pilgrims, the narrator obtains a good deal of information about them, such as everyone’s class, and even takes note of their appearance. The fact that the narrator gathers all of this information upon first meeting the other pilgrims indicates that he has a very charismatic personality that makes people open up to him. However, not everyone is as comfortable in situations where they must meet new people. Getting to know new people and talking to strangers can be intimidating.

The Canterbury Tales

Imagine you are an advice columnist who receives a letter asking for your advice on how to become better at talking comfortably with people in social settings. Write a letter in response that offers clear advice on how to become more confident and how to engage people in conversation.

7. The Knight is the first pilgrim the narrator introduces. Knights have often been portrayed in books, plays, and movies, but what do you really know about them?

Consider the information you know about knights and knighthood, and do a freewrite about them. If your teacher prefers a timed freewrite, write nonstop for approximately three minutes. Otherwise, give your response in a minimum of two paragraphs. Try to do this freewrite without referring back to the text so you can compare your insight about knights with the description of the knight that the narrator offers.

8. The Prioress has excellent table manners. The narrator praises her ability to eat daintily and carefully, while still managing to be pleasurable company for those she is around.

Write a list of guidelines that could be used in a handbook for those looking for a quick and easy reference on table manners and dining etiquette. Be sure that the guidelines you offer can be successfully followed by an individual who is at least your own age. It may help if you consider different occasions that may require specific rules of etiquette.

9. Despite knowing that “hunters are not holy men,” the Monk is an outdoorsman who enjoys hunting on a regular basis. He is well aware that he is breaking the rules of his religion and has no desire to change his behavior.

Reflect back to a time when you chose to break the rules. What kind of situation was it, and what was the outcome? Describe the situation in a journal entry, making sure to reveal your feelings. Remember that a journal entry is a powerful piece of writing because it allows you to capture your innermost thoughts and feelings as you relay your firsthand experiences.

The Canterbury Tales

10. The Friar is similar to the Monk in that he defies his vocation to pursue personal pleasure. Instead of remaining in his cloister, the Monk prefers spending time in taverns and flirting with pretty young women. Furthermore, rather than use the money the parishioners give him for the Church, he uses it to buy expensive clothing and food. Because of his greed, the Friar only acquaints himself with the rich, the people who can give him the most money.

Imagine that you are one of the poor people who reside within the Friar's district. Write a letter to the Friar describing your feelings about the selectivity of the company he keeps and his inappropriate behavior. Use examples from "The General Prologue," to support your argument.

11. Although the narrator learns a great deal about the Merchant's business, he readily admits that he cannot remember his name. What is it about the impression the Merchant makes on the narrator that makes him unmemorable?

First impressions are very important because they help determine whether one person decides to become more familiar with another. Sadly, first impressions are not always positive and they cannot be done over. For this reason, it is very important to make the best first impression that you can so that people have a good, memorable recollection of you for the future.

Having read the first impression that the Merchant makes on the narrator, explain to a fellow classmate possible reasons why the narrator fails to remember the Merchant's name.

12. Despite not having much money, the Clerk spends much of his money on books. He obviously has a passion for reading and learning, so he does not mind spending his limited income on books instead of food or clothing.

While the Clerk's spending habits may seem unusual and extreme, his actions are essentially sound. People are more likely to spend money on and willing to make sacrifices for things they are passionate about.

The Canterbury Tales

Create a two-column list. On the left side, write at least five things you willingly make sacrifices to have. On the right side of the list, write down what you had to sacrifice to make sure that you received what you listed on the left. Your examples do not have to involve money. For instance, you could also spare time, energy, or a good impression.

13. In “The General Prologue,” we learn about each of the pilgrims through the narrator. For this reason, we don’t get to see multiple characters interact with one another. The pilgrims have such diverse backgrounds that an interaction between them would inevitably be interesting.

Write the dialogue for a talk show, whose special guests include the Five Guildsmen, the Cook, the Sailor, and the Physician. What would the guests think of each other? What would they have to talk about? Write out a conversation they might have.

14. The Wife of Bath has been married on five separate occasions. Marriage is typically celebrated by a large, festive ceremony in which gifts are often given. Giving a couple a wedding gift is a way to show them that you wish them the best of luck as they embark upon what is to be their lifelong journey. Greeting cards often accompany gifts or can take the place of gifts.

Imagine that the Wife of Bath has decided to take another husband, and you have been invited to the wedding ceremony. Create a saying for a greeting card that you might give her. The text should be between ten to fifteen lines long.

15. Through the description of the Miller’s appearance and character, he is presented as an unlikeable character. However, his unfavorable character does not take away from the things that he is able to do either well or reasonably well. In addition to the Millers other skills, the narrator tells us that he writes poetry.

Write a poem of fifteen lines or less from the Miller’s perspective. Reread his section in “The General Prologue” to refresh your memory of the types of things he would likely write about. The poem may rhyme, but it does not have to. Furthermore, the poem can be sincere, funny, angry, or in whatever tone you prefer.

The Canterbury Tales

16. The Pardoner and the Summoner have occupations that are related to the Church. However, each individual engages in activities that are most likely looked down upon, not only by the common people, but also by the clergy.

Imagine you are a person who supervises the Pardoner and the Summoner. You have been asked to write an evaluation of how well they do their jobs. Reread their profiles in “The General Prologue,” making a list of observations about their job performance and work ethics. When you have finished, write a short paragraph on each man in which you write whether he should be fired, promoted, or allowed to keep his current job. Use the text to support your answer.

The Canterbury Tales

“The Knight’s Tale”

17. Duke Theseus has a reputation for displaying great skill in battle. His military prowess has given him great renown in many lands. He has not only participated in many battles, but he has also been victorious in countries whose best knights have proved to be no match for him.

Duke Theseus has gained a great reputation for himself during his many travels. Think of the places you have visited and the impressions you might have left with some people. Create a travel journal that chronicles some of your own adventures. Begin your travel journal by listing the different places you have been (no matter if they’re different towns, cities, or countries) and some of the activities you did at each location. The number of locations you focus on is up to you, but you must have a minimum of two places. After you’ve listed your locations and activities, write a reflection paragraph about your overall experience at each individual location.

18. A group of displaced duchesses and queens Theseus encounters on the road during his journey home persuade him to fight Creon, the ruler of Thebes. The women convince Theseus that Creon is an unjust tyrant for not letting them bury their husbands’ bodies, even if the men were enemies of Thebes. Theseus vows to avenge the wrongs Creon has done against the widows.

Vengeance does not always have to have a negative connotation. In fact, in the case of Theseus, he believes that he is righting a wrong. Was there a time in your life when you felt obligated to right a wrong?

In one to two paragraphs, describe a time when you tried to fix a situation for the better. What did you do to overcome the obstacles set before you? Reveal the outcome of the situation in a separate paragraph. If you cannot think of a particular experience in which you righted a wrong, recall and write about something a friend or family member did.

The Canterbury Tales

19. Arcita and Palamon have fallen in love with the same girl. Although the two are bound to each other as cousins and share the common bond of knighthood, they find themselves at odds and unable to reconcile their differences in the midst of love.

In two to three paragraphs, describe a time when you had a conflict with a relative or close friend. The conflict could have been major, or it could have been a minor argument or misunderstanding. What was the reason for the conflict, and how was it resolved? Describe any frustrations, heartache, confusion, or disbelief you felt during this ordeal and how it changed the relationship between you and the other person.

20. Upon being released from prison, Arcita finds himself lonely. Although he has his freedom, he is prevented from seeing Emily again. In fact, Arcita finds himself jealous of Palamon because although Palamon is still in prison, he is still able to see Emily regularly. Arcita is not coping well with his loneliness.

Sometimes it helps to know that you are not alone and that someone can relate to your experience. Write a letter to Arcita telling him that you understand how he feels, and offer him a few words of encouragement. Even if you have never found yourself in love with someone who did not love you in return, perhaps you have found yourself unable to obtain something that you desired.

21. Both Arcita and Palamon believe that they have the lone right to love Emily. Each man offers sound logic, but the two are both biased and have personal interest vested in the situation. It sometimes takes an outsider to give a better, logical perspective on a conflict.

Decide which knight is more entitled to Emily's love. Create a chart with two columns: one for Arcita and one for Palamon. Then, reread the text and record arguments that both men make for why they are more deserving of Emily. When you have finished, write a brief paragraph in which you argue which man has the best logic and should have the right to love Emily.

The Canterbury Tales

22. Arcita has a dream in which he is visited by the winged God Mercury. This dream gives Arcita specific instructions that give his life a sense of direction and purpose. After waking from this dream, Arcita immediately sets forth to do as he was instructed in his dream.

Recall a dream that you had that inspired you. Perhaps you had a dream that encouraged you to travel, gave you insight into an aspect of your life, or illustrated one of your fears. Describe this dream in detail, and offer an analysis of the dream. In an additional paragraph, explain what actions you took after having the dream and consider its meaning.

23. The narrator offers the saying, “Fields have eyes and every wood has ears,” as an old truth that has stood the test of time. A phrase such as this is considered an adage, a familiar saying that has deep meaning. The statement is an adage because it would have been well known to readers of the Middle Ages.

Create a list of at least five other phrases or adages of your own making. They should be timeless, universal, and offer some wisdom or knowledge. After you have recorded them, explain the meaning of each. Use the saying “Fields have eyes and every wood has ears” as the first one.

24. Sometimes while reading older texts, we come across a custom or practice of which we are unfamiliar. Characters in “The Knight’s Tale” pray and make sacrifices to different gods for guidance, and some modern-day readers may not know who the Roman deities are.

Imagine you have a classmate who is unfamiliar with Venus, Mars, and Diana. Using some background knowledge and clues from the text, explain to your classmate why Emily, Arcita, and Palamon pray to those specific gods before the battle.

25. Saturn, the grandfather of Venus and Mars, seeks to satisfy the gods to whom Palamon and Arcita pray; however, both Arcita and Palamon had been promised victory. As a result, Saturn must come up with a solution so that each god is able to remain truthful and not lose a faithful believer.

The Canterbury Tales

In one to two paragraphs, predict what could happen so that each god is appeased. However, if you see no way that a solution can be made, give reasons to support your argument.

26. The funeral ceremony that Duke Theseus holds in Arcita's honor is one of great extravagance. The ceremony is attended by a great deal of mourners, and the ceremony itself is one that is rich with tradition. There is a good deal of gold, sacrifices, fire, speeches, and games all in memorial of Arcita.

The funeral ceremony is such a large event, that if it had occurred today, it would most likely be a feature story in the newspaper. Create a newspaper article highlighting the details of the ceremony. Remember that a newspaper article aims to tell facts, but it also aims to keep readers interested. With that in mind, do not include too many unnecessary details.

27. Palamon and Arcita have had a long and complicated history. Not only were they once knights who fought alongside each other, but they were also cousins. Now that death has separated the two, there are many things that Palamon may wish he could have said to Arcita before his untimely death.

Assume the role of Palamon and write a eulogy for Arcita that could be read at his funeral ceremony. You may use the text to write the core of your speech, but you could also infer or create information about Palamon and Arcita's history, including information about pastimes they've shared, conversations they've had, or their mutual hobbies or interests.

The Canterbury Tales

“The Miller’s Prologue”

28. In “The Miller’s Prologue,” the narrator warns the reader that the tale the Miller tells is bawdy and inappropriate, but because the narrator has undertaken the job to tell all of the pilgrims’ tales, he feels obligated to reiterate the tale using the Miller’s own words.

Have you ever been forced to say or do something with which you didn’t agree? What sort of obligation were you under? How did you go about fulfilling the task? What were the consequences of your actions? Develop the answers to these questions in a short essay.

The Canterbury Tales

“The Miller’s Tale”

29. The carpenter is newly married to a woman who is significantly younger than he is. Although he loves her dearly, the carpenter is very suspicious of her actions and men’s actions toward her because she is young and beautiful. As would be expected, the carpenter adopts the role of a jealous husband and keeps a very close watch over her.

Trust is a fundamental part of any relationship. The significant age difference between the carpenter and his wife causes him to be insecure and become jealous. The text clearly advises against older men marrying younger women, who may have difficulty being faithful because of the age disparity. What is your opinion on the matter? Write an editorial for a popular young adult magazine on the challenges a couple may face if one person in the relationship is many years older or younger than the other person.

30. The carpenter is very suspicious of his young wife’s actions, and it soon becomes evident that his suspicions are justified. Alison is propositioned by the carpenter’s tenant, Nicholas. If something were to happen between the two, the trust between husband and wife and tenant and host would be broken.

Imagine that you overheard the exchange between Alison and Nicholas. Write a letter to Alison advising against succumbing to Nicholas’s advances. Remind her of all she will be risking if she upholds her oath to Nicholas to fulfill his desire, neglecting the one she has made to her husband.

31. “The Miller’s Tale” features many characters that are in love, although you could easily argue that, for many of them, the relationship is based on physical attraction rather than emotions. From the actions of the characters, love appears to be an emotion that occurs with little or no regard for whom it may hurt or inconvenience.

What are your feelings about love? Do you feel that love is an uncontrollable emotion that should be acted upon without a full consideration of the consequences? How much do you believe in love, and has it ever led you astray? If your teacher prefers a timed freewrite, write nonstop for approximately five minutes. Otherwise, give your response in a minimum of two paragraphs.

The Canterbury Tales

32. Alison is the main cause of action and distress in the tale; however, we are not privy to her innermost feelings. Much of the dialogue Alison participates in is her responding to the advances of a man.

Write a journal entry, from Alison's point of view, expressing her feelings about her current situation. You may wish to include how she may have felt upon initially getting married, how she feels about her marriage now, and her thoughts about her new suitors. This journal entry is merely conjecture, since we do not have any concrete information and are speculating based upon her conversations with the other characters.

33. Nicholas convinces John that a flood worse than the one that occurred in the biblical account of Noah's Ark is quickly approaching. He instructs the carpenter to prepare for the flood and gives him a series of tasks to complete in order to make sure that he and his wife are saved from floodwaters.

Flooding is an event that qualifies as a natural disaster. How would you prepare for a natural disaster? Choose a natural disaster and create a list of bulleted points that could be used as the text for a pamphlet that provides information on preparing for the natural disaster you chose. Make sure you are very specific in your instructions.

34. Absalom, the parish clerk, also seeks to woo Alison and make her his own. In an attempt to increase his success, Absalom goes through great lengths to make sure his appearance is flawless. Not only does he put on his finest clothes, but he also adorns himself with spices and fragrances. He hopes to be appealing to Alison.

What preparations do you undergo when you want to impress someone? Compare how Absalom prepares to visit Alison to how you would prepare to visit someone you like and admire. Take a poll of several of your classmates asking what actions they go through in order to make their best impression.

The Canterbury Tales

35. When reading, it is easy to become attached to certain characters. Most of us find ourselves attached to characters we are either most like or wish we were like. Often, readers empathize with one person in a story, and seeing things through that individual's perspective shapes the reader's impressions of other characters.

Among Alison, John, Nicholas, and Absalom, who is your favorite character? Write a paragraph or two explaining what makes this character your favorite and how your partiality to one character shapes your opinion of the others.

36. Absalom's first utterance to Alison is superfluous and filled with similes and romantic language. Although the message behind Absalom's speech is most likely sincere, his expression of love sounds ridiculous and is unsuccessful.

Pretend that you are a friend of Absalom, and he has asked you to help him write a love poem for Alison, which he will read to her under her window. Your poem should be at least ten lines long and contain at least one simile, metaphor or hyperbole. The lines do not have to rhyme, but they may if you would like. Most importantly, make sure the poem sounds heartfelt.

37. Sequels often offer a continuation of a story that has ended with many unanswered questions. "The Miller's Tale" is one such story that has the potential for a sequel. The story abruptly ends with many of the characters physically or emotionally injured, but nothing more is revealed after that.

Write a sequel to "The Miller's Tale" that continues with Alison's life after the Monday night when the ruse takes place. Does everyone continue to believe John is crazy? Does Alison remarry? Does she run away with Nicholas? Make sure that your sequel gives closure to the original story.

“The Wife of Bath’s Prologue”

38. The Wife of Bath’s relationship with her late husband, Jenkin, was one characterized by mutual abuse and manipulation. Although Jenkin read the Wife of Bath passages from a book about wicked wives with the intention of upsetting her, it can be argued that Alison did not have the right to rip pages from his book. In fact, her actions only incited greater violence and caused Jenkin to hit her in her ear, making her partially deaf.

Pretend that prior to the Wife of Bath tearing pages out from Jenkin’s book, she wrote to you for advice on how to handle the situation. Make a list of five things Alison could do to resolve the conflict between her and her husband.

The Canterbury Tales

“The Tale of the Wife of Bath”

39. Rather than be executed, the knight is assigned the task of discovering the one thing that women most desire. He is expected to report to the queen in exactly one year and a day, and if he cannot find the answer, or if he answers the question wrong, he will be condemned to die.

In a freewrite, attempt to answer the question the queen poses. If your teacher prefers a timed freewrite, write nonstop for approximately five minutes. Otherwise, give your response in a minimum of two paragraphs.

40. The knight's quest to find the answer to the queen's question becomes well known throughout the kingdom. In fact, not only do many women gather when the question is initially posed, but many also gather to await his return. Such an event is newsworthy, to say the least.

Create a newspaper article chronicling the knight's ordeal and announcing his return. Be sure to include details from the text that will give the readers of your article enough information to take interest in and understand how the story has unfolded.

41. The knight must choose between youthful beauty and unattractive dedication from the woman he is forced to marry. Although the knight would naturally prefer to have a wife who is beautiful and faithful, he allows his wife to make the decision for herself.

We live in what many call a “beauty culture,” in which individuals are valued by their appearance. However, how important is physical beauty? Is there a downside to being desirous of beauty? Make a list of the first five words that come to mind when you think of beauty. Then, construct a poem of at least fifteen lines that is based on one of those words. Your poem does not have to rhyme, but it can if you would like it to.

The Canterbury Tales

42. Many movies are based on books or other works of literature. Frequently movie adaptations manipulate and distort a work of literature in order to make it more appealing to audiences, but sometimes they are true to the text. One benefit of seeing a piece of literature turned into a movie is getting a visualization of the characters aside from what you may have conjured in your mind. Seeing characters on a movie screen can sometimes be thrilling, as you get to see someone else's interpretation of the character's appearance and mannerisms.

First, write a paragraph explaining what elements of the tale could be well adapted for a film and what elements could not. Then, choose a movie cast for "The Tale of the Wife of Bath." Create a table with three columns. Label the first column "Character," the second column "Actor/Actress," and the third column "Reason." Complete your chart by writing the character's name in the first column, the actor or actress you think would best represent him or her in the second, and the reason for your selection in the third.

43. Despite his crime at the beginning of the tale, the knight ends up being rewarded at the end. Not only has he been granted his life, but he is also married to a beautiful young woman. In your opinion, does the knight deserve such a happy ending?

Write a paragraph or two explaining your stance on the knight's good fortune. Then, share your opinion with a fellow classmate to see if you agree.

“The Pardoner’s Prologue”

44. The Pardoner confesses to all of the other pilgrims on the journey to Canterbury that he is proud of his ability to manipulate people into giving him money. He sells people false relics that he claims perform miracles, and he preaches against greed and avarice in order to convince the listeners of his sermon to give him money. The Pardoner openly admits that he is a liar and does not practice what he preaches.

On some occasions, we come across individuals in our lives who tell us to act a certain way, but do not act that way themselves. These people may be as intimate with us as our friends and family, or as distant as politicians and celebrities. Think of a person you have encountered or read who advised you or other people to act a certain way, but always did the opposite. How did this person make you feel? Did you lose respect for him or her? Did you learn a lesson from the experience? Write about your experience in one or two paragraphs.

The Canterbury Tales

“The Pardoner’s Tale”

45. The young companions at the beginning of “The Pardoner’s Tale” are accustomed to having a good time. They are an energetic group of men who enjoy drinking, gambling, and swearing.

If you were having a party, would these men be the type of guests you would want? Why? After you have answered this question in a brief paragraph, create a party invitation that indicates the type of guests you would like to have attend.

46. Soon after the reader is introduced to the company of young revelers, the narrator offers us a long discourse on gluttony. Different types of gluttony are discussed, but special attention is given to drunkenness and the overconsumption of wine.

While, today, commercials are usually used to advertise and sell a product, some interest groups use commercials to market an idea and to spread their feelings about a particular topic. Imagine that you are a member of a temperance or anti-drinking organization, and you are creating a thirty-second commercial to air during a prime-time television show. Using what the Pardoner says in the beginning of the tale, write the message you would present in your commercial.

47. A friend of the revelers is found dead, and his body is being marched through the town in a funeral procession. The text reveals little information about his death, and, in fact, the three men learn about his death only after they hear the sound of the corpse bell. This bell serves as an announcement of a corpse being taken to its grave. This sort of announcement is similar to that of an obituary, which announces the schedule of events surrounding an individual who has died.

Typical information found in an obituary includes the person’s full name, date and place of death, birth date, major accomplishments, familial relations, employment, hobbies, education, and funeral arrangements. Write an obituary for the revelers’ friend, using the limited information you have about the man in the text, but inferring and writing additional information.

The Canterbury Tales

48. The group meets an old man, whom they hastily assume is friends with Death. With very little thought, they propose to kill the old man, primarily based on their own irrational conclusions. Fortunately for the old man, he is wise and knows how to talk to the group and get the men to change their minds. The conversation he has with them eventually leads them to spare him and continue on in pursuit of Death.

Reflect on a time when you, too, acted hastily. What was your thought pattern? What influenced your decisions? What was the outcome of the situation? Write two to three paragraphs chronicling the event and its outcome.

49. The young men don't seem to be very reliable or trustworthy. They act out of instinct rather than from reason, and their irrationality causes them to make some extreme choices.

What do you think will happen to the youngest friend who goes into town? Do you think he will act responsibly? Do you think his friends will act responsibly? Make a prediction in one to two paragraphs.

50. The group of friends who remain with the gold makes a plan that is beneficial to them and quite unfortunate for the friend who goes into town. Friends are great to have in both good and bad times. They ensure that you are not lonely, and they act as great support systems. However, friends can also be bad when they pressure you into making bad choices.

Write a letter to a friend in which you recall a time the two of you made a choice that you knew was bad. Discuss the measures you took and how everything worked out in the end. If you and a friend have never made a bad decision together, write a letter to a friend about an imaginary experience.

The Canterbury Tales

51. “The Pardoner’s Tale” is a type of tale called an exemplum, a story in which the plot and resolution reiterates a message given in the preceding sermon. In the beginning of this story, the Pardoner preaches against drunkenness and greed. How does the plot of the tale relate to the sermon?

Pretend that a classmate does not understand how the tale exemplifies the moral message presented in the Pardoner’s sermon. In one or two brief paragraphs, explain to your classmate how elements of the story relate to the motifs of drunkenness and greed.

The Canterbury Tales

“The Nun’s Priest’s Prologue”

52. The Nun’s Priest is called upon to tell a tale that will lighten the pilgrims’ mood after the Monk has given a long, sobering dissertation on the fall of great men.

Write the text for a how-to guide that offers advice for people who want to be the life of the party at any social gathering. Develop at least ten guidelines. Consider actions and conversations should occur and those that should be avoided.

The Canterbury Tales

“The Nun’s Priest’s Tale”

53. This tale’s title is accompanied by a subtitle: “Of the Cock and Hen: Chanticleer and Pertelote.” This is the only tale that does not focus on human characters. Furthermore, each tale told thus far has offered some sort of moral advice. What wisdom could a tale about a cock and hen offer humans?

Create a rough outline in which you predict the plot of this tale. Based on your predictions, develop a list of at least five applicable morals.

54. Chanticleer has a frightening nightmare that causes him to stir in his sleep. He attempts to share his fears about the dream to Pertelote, but she dismisses the dream as nonsense. Instead of being supportive and listening, she is ashamed of his behavior and scolds him.

Imagine that you are Chanticleer and are still seeking comfort from your nightmare. Since you found Pertelote to be of no assistance, you decide to write in a dream journal. In your journal entry, recall the most disturbing aspects of your dream. Once you have finished, attempt to analyze what this dream foretells, or if Pertelote is correct in believing it is meaningless.

55. Pertelote is far from supportive when Chanticleer shares his dream and the fears it rouses in him. Not only does she discredit this dream, but she discredits his manhood as well. This is not the response that Chanticleer expects, and both he and Pertelote are left unsatisfied by the entire situation.

First, assume the role of Pertelote, and write a letter to an advice columnist that expresses your shame and embarrassment at Chanticleer’s cowardly reaction to his dream. Construct your letter using details from the conversation Chanticleer and Pertelote have after he initially attempts to tell her about the dream.

Then, imagine that you are the advice columnist who received the letter described above. Write a response to Pertelote, giving your opinion on topics such as fear, masculinity, and dreams.

The Canterbury Tales

56. Chanticleer and Pertelote have vastly different opinions about the significance of dreams. He believes that dreams hold a great deal of significance and can be warnings about future events, while she believes them to be nothing more than the result of illness.

What is your opinion about the significance of dreams? Explore your thoughts in a freewrite of approximately five minutes.

57. One day, when Chanticleer is alone on the farm, he is approached by a fox named Russel. Russel tells Chanticleer that he has heard rumors about how well the rooster sings. In fact, Russel says he knew Chanticleer's father, and that his father was also an excellent singer. Through the use of excessive flattery, Russel convinces Chanticleer to let his guard down, close his eyes, and stick out his neck, making it very easy for the fox to grab him.

It is no coincidence that Russel, the trickster figure in this tale, is a fox. Although foxes are animals and do not have human feelings or motives, in fiction they are often accredited with being sly and deceptive. However, other animals are also stereotyped and given certain human characteristics. For instance, sheep and lambs are thought to be kind and gentle. Make a list of five other animals that have particular qualities associated with them. Then, in one or two paragraphs, explain why you think it is significant that certain animals are given particular human attributes.

58. "The Nun's Priest's Tale" is considered a beast fable: a story in which animals act and speak like humans, and the outcome of the tale reveals a message about human nature.

Review the tale, and write down what you think is the moral. Then, in two or three paragraphs, write how this tale could be rewritten to present the same message, but through human characters. How would the setting change? How would the relationships between the characters differ? Be creative.

The Canterbury Tales

Wrap-Up

59. It is nearly impossible for an author to please all readers, and it is even harder for an editor to choose which portions of a great work, like *The Canterbury Tales*, to present in a smaller book. Review each of the tales that were selected for this edition. Are there any tales that you liked more than others?

Write a letter to the editor expressing which tales you enjoyed the most versus the ones you enjoyed the least. Be sure to include reasons to support your argument. Also, include a list that ranks each of the tales in order from your most to least favorite.

60. One of the most common questions after reading a book is what you learned from the text. Although we may read for entertainment, usually the situations the characters experience in the plot help us come to conclusions about our own lives, values, and opinions.

Make a list of the five most important lessons that you can take away from the tales within this book. These lessons should not be very specific, but instead, should be general enough to be applicable to the real world.

61. Write a review for Prestwick House's edition of *The Canterbury Tales*. Give the book a rating out of five stars, with zero being the worst and five being the best, and tell potential readers what you liked and disliked about this book.

When writing your review, keep in mind that it should help other people make an informed decision as to whether they should read this book. If you really liked or disliked an aspect of the book, make sure to explain why. Things you may wish to comment on include the writing style, subject matter, and reading difficulty.

The Canterbury Tales

Test

1. Why are the pilgrims going to Canterbury?
 - A. to attend an annual festival
 - B. to fulfill a religious duty
 - C. to escape the Black Plague
 - D. They've all been exiled.
 - E. They are joining the Crusades.

2. Who comes up with the idea of the tale-telling contest?
 - A. the Host
 - B. Chaucer's persona
 - C. the Knight
 - D. the Pardoner
 - E. the Miller

3. What is the primary setting of "The Knight's Tale"?
 - A. Sparta
 - B. Persia
 - C. Athens
 - D. Troy
 - E. England

4. What is Palamon and Arcita's occupation? They are _____.
 - A. knights.
 - B. weavers.
 - C. sailors.
 - D. physicians.
 - E. priests.

5. What is Emily's relation to Theseus? She is his _____.
 - A. daughter.
 - B. niece.
 - C. sister.
 - D. sister-in-law.
 - E. mother.

The Canterbury Tales

6. What prevents Emily's marriage to Arcita?
 - A. Arcita dies an untimely death.
 - B. Palamon marries her first.
 - C. Emily runs away to avoid marriage.
 - D. Theseus forbids Emily to marry Arcita.
 - E. Emily becomes a priestess of Diana.

7. In "The Miller's Tale," what is Nicholas's occupation?
 - A. a carpenter
 - B. a miller
 - C. a clerk
 - D. a merchant
 - E. a reeve

8. In "The Miller's Tale," how is John best described?
 - A. a lusty bachelor
 - B. a hardworking man
 - C. Alison's love interest
 - D. a devout Christian
 - E. a jealous husband

9. John keeps a close eye on his wife to avoid being made
 - A. a cuckold.
 - B. lonely.
 - C. poor.
 - D. a sinner.
 - E. a fool.

10. What does the carpenter do with the kneading-trough and two tubs?
 - A. gives them to Alison as gifts
 - B. brings them to Nicholas
 - C. donates them to the church
 - D. hangs them from the roof
 - E. puts them in the river

The Canterbury Tales

11. What happens when Absalom gets his first kiss from Alison?
 - A. He kisses Nicholas.
 - B. He kisses her buttocks.
 - C. John comes home.
 - D. He falls off his ladder.
 - E. Nicholas hits him with coultter.

12. What does the wife of Bath damage that belongs to her husband?
 - A. his pride
 - B. a book
 - C. a pipe
 - D. his reputation
 - E. his eardrum

13. What crime does King Arthur's knight commit?
 - A. theft
 - B. treason
 - C. adultery
 - D. murder
 - E. rape

14. What does the knight's newly acquired old wife say are wardens over chastity?
 - A. religion and dedication
 - B. age and wisdom
 - C. dirt and age
 - D. love and marriage
 - E. freedom and contentment

15. In "The Pardoner's Tale," for whom are the group of young men looking when they find gold instead?
 - A. the old man
 - B. a young woman
 - C. Death
 - D. a monk
 - E. their deceased friend

The Canterbury Tales

16. What does the youngest friend get from the apothecary?
- A. advice
 - B. poison
 - C. money
 - D. alcohol
 - E. medicine
17. The Pardoner gives pardons for?
- A. sin.
 - B. debt.
 - C. work.
 - D. lies.
 - E. church.
18. In “The Nun’s Priest’s Tale,” what does Pertelote accuse Chanticleer of being?
- A. overdramatic
 - B. cowardly
 - C. proud
 - D. unfaithful
 - E. talkative
19. What does Pertelote believe to be the cause of Chanticleer’s dream?
- A. an overactive imagination
 - B. an imbalance of bodily fluids
 - C. a premonition of events to come
 - D. rotten plants that he ate for dinner
 - E. his guilty conscience
20. What type of animal attacks Chanticleer?
- A. a weasel
 - B. a snake
 - C. a fox
 - D. a wolf
 - E. a rooster

The Canterbury Tales

Test Answer Key

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|----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|
| 1. | B | 6. | A | 11. | B | 16. | B |
| 2. | A | 7. | C | 12. | B | 17. | A |
| 3. | C | 8. | E | 13. | E | 18. | B |
| 4. | A | 9. | A | 14. | C | 19. | B |
| 5. | D | 10. | D | 15. | C | 20. | C |