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The Canterbury Tales
Geoffrey Chaucer

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Prestwick House

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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

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

“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

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 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.